October 1996 Volume 23 Number 5



CURRENTS

in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

in cooperation with
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

Editor: **Ralph W. Klein**
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
(Email: rwklein @ mcs.com)

Associate Editor: **Norma Cook Everist**
Wartburg Theological Seminary

Assistant Editor: **Peggy B. Eldredge**
Chicago, Illinois

Editor of Preaching Helps: **Robert H. Smith**
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Editors of Book Reviews:
Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (312/256-0752)
Kathleen Billman
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (312/256-0778)
Craig Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary (319/589-0200)

Editorial Board: **Mary R. Bischoff, Reinhard Hütter, Connie Kleingartner, Robert Klonowski, Randall R. Lee, Ruth Manz, Richard L. Ramirez, Mark Reshan, Vicki Watkins, Mary Vance-Welsh, Fritz Wehrenberg.**

CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION (ISSN: 0098-2113) is published bimonthly (every other month), February, April, June, August, October, December. Annual subscription rate: $13.50 in the U.S. and Canada ($15.50 overseas). Two-year rate: $25.00 in the U.S. and Canada ($29.00 overseas). Three-year rate: $36.00 in the U.S. and Canada ($42.00 overseas). Published by Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a non-profit organization, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Printed in U.S.A.

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

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

Contents

God's Agents 322
Ralph W. Klein

The Pastor as Agent of Hope 325
Donald Capps

Accommodation to Violence: The Rise and Demise of the Walther League 336
Jon Pahl

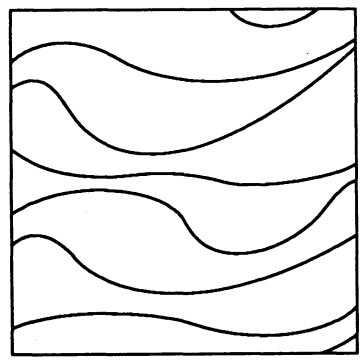
Lutheran Young People's Societies to 1895 347
Brian C. King

Towards a Samburu Christology 356
Dean Apel

Pentecost and Confirmation 368
Theodore Jungkuntz

Book Reviews 372

Drawings by Kate Berntson



Preaching Helps 378
Series B
First Sunday in Advent—The Transfiguration of Our Lord
Contributors: Ministers in Alaska, coordinated by Jim Drury

God's Agents

I write within a fortnight of the downing of TWA flight 800. The evening news still focuses on the daily dives down to the wreckage, and it reports on hopes to find more bodies, more evidence, some meaning, even some healing. In this disaster we see human evil at its cowardly worst.

At about the same time as the airplane crash, Chicago was hit by monster rains, as much as 16" in one day in some places. The result: flooded basements, ruined furniture and houses, damages in the zillions, even a few deaths. Insurance companies call it an act of God.

The trouble with monotheistic faiths, like Christianity, is that they have no real explanation for evil, especially of the "natural" kind. We don't believe in "bad" gods, who cause bad things. Whatever happens, good or bad, can be linked in some way to the one, true God. But the good news about monotheism is that nothing is really outside our God's sphere of interest. Hence in our prayers and in our theology, we remind God of the divine track record and of God's incredible promises; we hope for and even demand an accounting.

But guess who is created in God's image and who rules the world in God's name and in God's partial absence? Evil can also never stray from our sphere of interest and accountability. Compassion and assistance toward victims of natural disaster and the exercise of justice against human evildoers are expected, required, and even made possible for God's agents. Nobody ever said the Christian life would be easy.

Donald Capps describes pastors as agents of hope, who assist others in their struggles to maintain hope, and who testify to, and carry in their very being, the ambiguities that are inherent in hope itself. Hoping is the perception that what one wants to happen will happen, a perception

that is fueled by desire and in response to felt deprivation. Hopes are projections that envision the realizable and thus involve risk. New strategies in psychotherapy called "future visioning" and "revising the past" reflect respectively a kind of realized eschatology and the boundless mercy of God, who is able to take sinful actions of the past and make of them something better than we could ever have imagined.

Jon Pahl correlates the history of the Walther League, the former national youth organization of the Missouri Synod, to the church's accommodation to violent patterns of spiritual formation. The church unquestioningly encouraged youth to join in activities designed to legitimize or support war. Having linked itself so successfully to America for much of its history, the Walther League was essentially destroyed by the tensions that beset American culture during the 1960s. While Lutherans have gone local or congregational in their ministry to youth, they also now seek to distance themselves from former accommodationism. Their hope is to nurture young agents of God in ways that both affirm American culture and that educate adolescents about its problems.

Brian C. King reviews the formation and contributions of national youth organizations across the Lutheran spectrum in the late 19th century. The Sunday School movement and the formation of the YMCA offered important models for later ecclesiastical youth organizations. The Luther and Walther Leagues placed great stress on the printed word, emphasized evangelism, and even called for Lutheran unity. These early societies included young people up to 35 in their responsibilities, but youth work today ends in many cases with the completion of high school. The crusading spirit of our forebears is badly needed in youth ministry today.

Dean Apel reports on efforts to bring the story of Jesus and the tradition of being African into creative dialogue. Joseph Mbiti and others use a Christus Victor model to relate Jesus to pan-African, this-worldly fears and problems. The nomadic Samburu people in Kenya find it difficult to affirm Jesus as human though the author sees hope in images of Jesus as "worthy man" or "paradigmatic warrior," who might challenge some of their tribalism. The missionary movement in the past

erred by making the Samburu religious leaders sedentary; the church must learn now to confess a nomadic Jesus. This report from the front should encourage us all to continue the hard work of evaluating existing theologies and anthropologies in our communities in order to construct appropriate, contextual Christologies for our time and place.

Theodore Jungkuntz takes issue with an earlier *Currents* article dealing with confirmation. He believes it is inadequate to reduce confirmation to "Affirmation of Baptism" since the New Testament reports repeatedly that it is the Lord who confirms the believer with manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In the Lutheran Confessions the manifestation of the Spirit in signs and wonders is accepted as a confirmation, effected by God, of the faith that holds to the apostolic message.

From the cradle to the grave God's agents exercise the divine governance of the world in Christ's name and for his sake. God's agents are the clearest testimony most people get of divine beneficence and God's transforming power. God's agents always strive to replicate themselves for new generations and in new social settings. There is no better name for our assignment and our vocation, no greater challenge to our complacency.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor
God's Agent

The Pastor as Agent of Hope

Donald Capps
William Harte Felmeth Professor of Pastoral Theology
Princeton Theological Seminary

In *Agents of Hope*[1] I explore the idea that what makes the pastor unique among professionals is that the pastor is fundamentally an agent or bearer of hope. Other professionals offer and support hope, but they do this as a part or aspect of other things they do. Pastors, I suggest, are *agents of hope by definition* (or calling), and often this is *all* that they are. A reason they often feel vulnerable is the fact that they have nothing other than hope to offer, and hope is a very intangible thing.

Pastors are intuitively aware that they are agents of hope. I support this intuition. However, I want here to address the problem that while pastors know intuitively that they are agents of hope, and may have some clear ideas about what hope is, theologically understood, there isn't much that pastors can read about the *experience* of hope. What does it mean to hope? What is the experience of hope about? And, more specifically, what are the main elements or constituents of hope?

I will briefly comment on the developmental origins of hope, then set forth a model of the experience of hoping and the characteristics of hope, and then briefly discuss some new strategies in psychotherapy that are supportive of hope, strategies that pastors should find adaptable to the parish context.

I should also note that the inspiration for *Agents of Hope* came from John Bunyan's classic *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Hopeful was the name of the companion who accompanied Christian, the hero of the story, throughout most of his journey to the promised land. When Christian was crossing the River Jordan, his last testing before his entry into the Celestial City, he began to sink and to cry out in despair. Hopeful was there to encourage him, to hold his head above water until Christian felt the solid ground beneath him. This is the image of the pastor that I want us to reflect upon.

The origins of hope

Erik Erikson argues that hope is born in the earliest stage of life—in infancy—and specifically in the infant's relationship with the

---

[1] Donald Capps, *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

mother or mothering one. Hope is thus born in the experience of a reliable other who, as he says, provides "a convincing pattern of providence" in which "hopes are met and hopefulness is inherently rewarding."[2] As the infant grows into a child, hope becomes associated with the *will* and with the capacity to take initiative, so that the child becomes actively involved in realizing hopes. With increasing agency also comes a greater capacity to renounce one's hope, to "transfer disappointed hopes to better prospects," and to train our expectations "on what promises to prove possible." Hope remains aligned with the maintenance of a stable, reliable and verifiable world, but it becomes increasingly identified with change, new prospects and widening horizons.

In infancy, hope is based on specific hopes and has not yet developed into an attitude or spirit of hopefulness independent of these specific hopes. But, in childhood, hopefulness becomes inherently rewarding. Hence, even when some or many of our hopes go unmet, when it would make sense for us to abandon hope, few of us actually do. This is because we have become hopeful selves, and hopefulness has become intrinsic to who we are.

The nature of hope

Like those who write about love, those who have written about hope have frequently commented on the difficulty of defining or describing it. My own efforts to get at the phenomenon of hope suggest the wisdom of making a distinction between "hoping" and "hopes." "Hoping" indicates that we are concerned with a process or form of experience, one that may be compared with other experiences, like "loving," "hating," "creating," and the like. "Hope" or "hopes," on the other hand, concern a phenomenon or thing, one that may be compared with other things, like "beliefs," "judgments," or "skills."

Hoping

I suggest, as a working definition for hoping, that hoping is "the perception that what one wants to happen will happen, a perception that is fueled by desire and in response to felt deprivation."

1. The perception that what is wanted will happen. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian author, was arrested by the KGB in 1974 and forced into exile in the United States. Shortly after he came to the U.S. he told an interviewer, "I have no proof of it; but I have a premonition, a feeling... I think—I am sure—that I will return to Russia and still have a chance to live there." His intuition that he would someday return to Russia was an indication of hoping. He had no "proof" for it, and no specific plan for realizing it, and yet he felt sure that it would someday come to pass. As it turned out, his hoping proved to be true.

I suggest that hoping is a particular kind or type of *perception*. It is the perception (or sense) that what is wanted will happen, and it therefore involves investment of self: "*I* think—*I* am sure." Without the sense that what we want to happen will in fact happen, there is no hoping going on. Of course, our confidence that what is wanted will happen can fluctuate over time. There are times when we firmly believe that a given hope will come true, and times when our confidence sags. Students who anticipate a major exam often go through this up and down cycle. One day they are quite

---

[2] Erik H. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), 116.

confident. The next day they are close to despair. The very fact that hoping produces such fluctuating emotions tells us that emotions play a role in hoping, but hoping is not primarily a matter of emotions. The sense or intuition that what is wanted will happen can persist even when we do not "feel" this to be the case. This disparity between our current feelings and our longer range intuitions suggests that hoping is primarily a perceptual phenomenon. Emotions are involved, but hoping is primarily a way of seeing or perceiving.

2. *Fueled by desire.* Because we are created in the image of God, we are desiring beings. We have longings and yearnings, and these grow out of perceived lacks or needs. Hoping is fueled by desire. We do not hope for what we already have. But hoping is a *persisting* desire. It is more intense than wishing but less intense than craving. Its intensity is expressed in its persistence, as it continues to strive until its object is realized or proven to be unrealizable. Cravings are more urgent but not as lasting. If we crave a certain food and know that we should not have it, we can sometimes talk ourselves into the notion that the craving may pass. We are not as willing to dispense with our desires. So too with wishes. We normally wish about those matters whose outcome we are in no position to influence, even by the simple act of entertaining the wish itself. But when we hope, we not only anticipate that the object of our desire will come about, but we also marshal our own energies and resources to make it so. Wishes have little staying power, little persistence, because they are not so invested with desire. When a wish becomes invested with desire, it is then on its way toward becoming a hope.

3. *Response to felt deprivation.* The third feature of hoping is that it is a response to felt deprivation. Often, what we lack is something that we have never had experience of, but toward which we have a strong sense of wanting and needing. We want the love we have never had, the recognition that we have never been afforded, the joyful life that has never been ours. Other times, what we lack is something we once had but have since been deprived of. We long for the presence of our life's companion, now deceased. We are filled with nostalgia for our childhood home. Our sense of deprivation may also involve something we took for granted until we lost it: our health, our work, our freedom to move about. One reason our hoping is sometimes so difficult to identify or put our finger on is that the lack we feel is deeply personal and difficult to put into words. We sense that our lives are unfulfilled, or that our existence seems purposeless and devoid of meaning. Or we have a deep sense of personal inadequacy, of not having the capabilities we want or need. How to talk about something that we know only by its absence?

The hoping against hope that occurs in the wake of a loss reveals how deeply related hoping is to deprivation.

Deprivations are not synonymous with loss, yet losses are a major cause of a felt sense of deprivation and are therefore of great importance to hoping. The hoping against hope that occurs in the wake of a loss reveals how deeply related hoping is to

> When we hope, we envision eventualities that are not yet realities but nevertheless appear to us as potential realities.

deprivation. Death takes from us the one with whom so many hopes, large and small, were shared. It also makes us desperately aware of our deprivation. If we hope for our loved one to be restored to us, we hope in vain, and we face the stark and bitter truth that our deprivation cannot be erased however long we live. We learn instead that we must make do with secondary hopes, with the compensatory hopes to which we manage in time to orient our lives.

Hoping, then, is the perception that what is wanted will happen, a perception fueled by desire and in response to felt deprivation. Hoping involves all of these elements, and if any one of them is missing, we are probably witnessing something that approximates hoping but is something else (like wishing, or pining, or anticipating). On the other hand, this understanding of hoping reveals that it is not a rare thing at all. We are all creatures of desire, and all of us feel deprived in one way or another, so the necessary conditions for hoping are always present.

Yet, if this is so, why is it that we are so often despairing, so often lacking in the perception that what is wanted will happen? One obvious answer is that we cannot always have what we desire. Our desire is met by hard reality, and something has to give, and what gives, more often than not, is hope. There is another reason, however, that is more subtle and less frequently noted, and this is that we do not know what it is that we desire. If it is difficult to put our finger on why we feel deprived and what we feel deprived of, it is also difficult to know what it is that we really want. This brings us to the matter of our hopes: If hoping involves the perception that what is wanted will happen, what is the "what" that is wanted? What is the "object" of our desire?

Hopes

I suggest the following working definition for hopes: "Hopes are projections that envision the realizable and thus involve risk."

1. Hopes as projections. Because hoping is primarily a matter of sensing or perceiving, we should expect that hopes would express themselves in imagistic form and not as concepts or ideas. If so, this invites us to consider hopes to be projections. In psychology, a projection is the unconscious act or process of ascribing to others one's own ideas or intentions, especially when such ideas or intentions are considered undesirable. We may, for example, ascribe to another person sexual fantasies or aggressive intentions that are really our own. In photography, however, projection is the process of causing an image to appear on a screen. In a sense, both types of projection are based on an illusion, and are therefore inherently false. Yet, we generally view the photographic representation on the screen as artistic, whereas the ascription of ideas or intentions to another person is viewed as inappropriate, unac-

ceptable and often pathological. Paranoia, for example, involves the false belief that someone wants to harm me.

One reason that we take a more positive view of the photographic over the psychological projection is that we understand the photographic projection to be the work of a creative mind, whereas psychological projection is the work of a mind that is mistaken, disoriented, or disturbed. The psychological projection is based on a fundamental error, the erroneous ascription of ideas and intentions to another, and once we become aware of the error, no useful purpose is served by retaining the projection. So we set about the task of learning how to withdraw it, usually by putting something else—an accurate ascription of the other's intentions toward us—in its place. In photographic projection, the image has an artistic function not in spite of but because of its illusory character. Such projections continue to be valuable precisely because they are illusory, and thus allow us to imagine a reality other than our own everyday experience.

Hopes, then, are projections because they envision a future that is technically false and unreal, as it does not exist, and yet is profoundly true and real, as it expresses yearnings and longings that not only exist but are often more real than the objective world. When we hope, we envision eventualities that are not yet realities but nevertheless appear to us as potential realities. Also, because hope is a projection, and thus involves images that play against the screen of the future, hope is a certain way of seeing, of visualizing, or fore-seeing. We see or image forth realities that are not yet present to us, and yet are made closer—almost within reach—by the images we project. In this sense, hopes are always a future projection, but through imaging they make the future more palpably real and present to us. Of course, the flip side of this is that our capacity to project a future can also cause us to despair. As Yogi Berra, catcher and manager for the New York Yankees, is reputed to have said, "The future ain't what it used to be."

Our images of hope are also *self*-projections. By hoping, we project *ourselves* into the future and envision our existence being different from what it is at present. The fact that hoping involves self-projections has inspired some psychotherapists to focus on their counselees' current self-images and their images of themselves as future-projection (what do you see yourself being in the near and more distant future?). By helping their counselees identify these two self-images, present and future, therapists enable them to find ways to close the gap that separates them, usually by assisting them in realizing the future self, enabling it to become more real, more "present," to the counselee. So, when we image the future, envision the not-yet, we place ourselves in this scene, for, after all, it is not some abstract or impersonal future that we are projecting and envisioning; it is *our* future, and thus our own involvement in the image can always be assumed. Even when we envision a future in which we are physically absent, as when we imagine a scene in which our families have gathered to mourn our own death, we have projected ourselves into this future, as we have envisioned ourselves as deceased and as witnessing the scene that stretches out before us.

Because the future is unpredictable and has its own reality, our hopeful projections rarely fit the future with perfect accuracy. This does not mean, however, that such projections should be discouraged or suppressed, for, as Erik Erikson has argued, hope is often the decisive element in *changing* the world of facts. He writes: "Hope not

only maintains itself in the face of changed facts—it proves itself able to change facts, even as faith is said to move mountains."[3] We should also keep in mind that change is inevitable. The future will not be the same as the present, even as the present is not the same as the past. Basing itself on this known fact, hope chooses to anticipate the nature of the changes that may occur. It knows that such anticipations are risky and subject to error. Yet, future projections are in fact realities, as they have impact on the current state of affairs. This is one reason why the capacity to hope was so vitally important to the prisoners in concentration camps during World War II. By projecting a future, hope alters the present. Physically, the prisoners were captives, but inwardly they achieved a margin of freedom to the extent that they were able to hope. To project hopes is to achieve some degree of autonomy in the present, and, by autonomy, Erikson means self-government rather than government by others. The margin of freedom that such projections effect may be slight, but it can be the difference between life and death.

By projecting a future, hope alters the present.

2. *Hopes as envisionings of the realizable.* If hoping involves the perception that what is wanted will happen, it follows that our projected hopes will be envisionings of what is realizable. Hopes are not projections of what we believe to be impossibilities, as the very projection of impossibilities would not make for hope but for hopelessness, and would therefore be grounds for despair. When we hope, we anticipate the realization of what is projected.

If so, this does not mean that hope only envisions *realistic* possibilities. To say that hope envisions the realizable does not mean that it is bound by the practical, the sensible, the proven, or the tried and true. In many situations, we have no way of knowing on the basis of prior experience what is or is not realizable. Sometimes, we realize more than previous experience would have indicated is possible. In other cases, we realize much less. So, hopes are not based on calculations of what is realistic on the basis of prior experience. Instead, they are based on the view that the future is open, and that the future is to some degree amenable to our efforts to make a difference.

When we tell someone to be realistic, we often plunge a knife into hope itself, as such admonitions often create a spirit of quiet despair. Parents often tell their children to be realistic—about themselves, about their abilities and capacities, about their future prospects. Pastors often tell young couples who are about to be married to be realistic—about the problems they will inevitably face, about the dangers of relying on romantic love to see them through the crises of married life, and about the misplaced trust in marriage to effect change in their personalities, habits, attitudes and behavior. Certainly, children and young couples need such admonitions, and, no doubt, parents and pastors are qualified to offer them. Yet the adoption of a realistic approach can erode a hopeful approach to life, as it may cause us to settle for a less full and vital life than would in fact be accessible to us. As already noted, hopes change

[3] Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, 117.

the world of facts. They enable our children to accomplish more that *we* ever thought possible, and they enable young couples to experience marriages that may in fact be far happier than those of the adults who are cautioning them not to expect more from marriage than they can realistically hope to experience.

There are always more possibilities than a realistic assessment of our situation recognizes or acknowledges. The question then becomes, not "What is realistic to hope for?" but "What is possible *for me*?" One reason we resent admonitions to be "realistic" is that we suspect that they are not based on intimate knowledge of ourselves, but instead on a knowledge of humanity in general, or some group or category of humans with whom we are being identified on the basis of age, gender, race, or cultural background. We feel that if the other persons really knew us, in our own unique individuality, they would not be voicing these admonitions, or would at least express them very differently.

The question "What is possible *for me*?" points instead to the role of self-knowledge in the formulation and realization of hopes. Based on what we know about ourselves, we may anticipate that certain things are possible for us and others are not. We weigh the possibilities that are in front of us in light of our understanding of ourselves, our temperament, our traits, our motivations, our values. What we envision to be realizable is thus profoundly influenced by what we understand ourselves to be.

We know, of course, that the realization of certain possibilities does not depend entirely on us. But we also know that who we are has a powerful influence on what we can anticipate in the future. If we envision ourselves becoming medical doctors some day, but also know that we do not have the personal motivation to endure years of medical training, or that we hate science or cannot stand the sight of blood, it should become clear to us, sooner or later, that becoming a medical doctor is not a real possibility for us. On the other hand, if we know that we do have the motivation to endure prolonged medical training, and that we love science and do not hate the sight of blood, becoming a medical doctor is a real possibility for us. It is not a certainty, as there are many factors besides these that could affect the outcome, some of which are entirely outside of our control. (Keats discovered while in medical training that he was incurably ill; which is why he became a poet instead, and died in his early twenties.) But, with hope, the issue is not certainty but possibility, and genuine hope is based on what is possible *for us*. The point is not that we should be realistic about our chances for realizing this or that, but that we should make an effort to know ourselves and to entertain those hopes that are not contradicted by what we learn.

3. Hopes involve risk. Because they involve desires that may or may not be realized, hopes are inherently risky. It is all too easy to idealize hopes, to declare that they are inherently good as they manifest a positive attitude toward the future. Yet, because the future is open, there is always the risk that our hopes will *not* be realized. Disappointment, demoralization, even feelings of devastation may follow. Given the risks involved, we sometimes keep our hopes to ourselves, so that if they do not materialize, we will not have the added humiliation of public failure. However, concealing hopes from others does not work because our hopes are revealed more by the way we live our lives than by what we say. A couple who have been dating for several months do not have to tell us in words that certain hopes are associated with this relationship.

If, in time, we no longer see them together, we know without being told that certain hopes have not been fulfilled.

To hope, then, is to place ourselves at risk. We risk the failure of our hopes and the shame and humiliation that often accompany the failure of hopes. When our hopes fail, we take it very personally because in hoping we invest ourselves, putting our very existence on the line.

If one risk of hopes is that they set us up for possible failure, another danger is that they may direct us to unworthy goals or cause us to overlook other objectives that are more desirable. We can become captive to certain hopes precisely because we judge them to be more realizable than others. Some hopes are realizable but the price is too high. One may become the top salesperson in the firm—a long desired goal—but find that the price in terms of shattered personal relationships, weakened personal integrity and broken personal health was far too high. Or one finds that the achievement of professional success does not bring the anticipated personal satisfaction of financial security. There are also instances when the realization of some cherished hope leaves us confused or apathetic, as we no longer have the goal that previously energized us. Unfulfilled hopes cause despair, but fulfilled hopes often cause depression, apathy, and boredom. People who discern that they are especially prone to such reactions in the wake of hope's fulfillment—people with self-knowledge—will often entertain more than one hope, or hopes that build on one another, so that when one hope is realized they have already oriented their lives toward another. As Erikson puts it, "It is in the nature of our maturation that concrete hopes will, at a time when a hoped-for event or state comes to pass, prove to have been quietly superseded by a more advanced set of hopes."[4]

Another risk is that we become so oriented toward the attainment of our hopes that we neglect the satisfactions our present situation already affords. This is often used as an argument for curbing our desires and for being content with what we have. But a more useful perspective is to realize that our current situation is, in part, the fruit of various past hopes that have been fulfilled, and we should not therefore neglect their continuing meaning for us. We may need a hope-beyond-hope to sustain us through the period of depression or apathy that follows the realization of a given desire, but there are also times when our envisioning of still another hope causes us to overlook the satisfactions that previously realized desires afford.

Hope has a restless quality to it. By definition, it is oriented to the future. It should not automatically be curbed or stifled, but it is not everything, and sometimes it needs to be balanced by other perceptions and experiences. When we experience satisfaction in our present reality, we allow love an equally significant place in our lives. Where hope is always oriented to the realizable, love is appreciation for what we already have. So a discerning life—a life of wisdom—is based on our capacity to balance our hopes and our loves, and not to allow our lives to be dominated by one or the other.

Still another risk in hopes is their consequences for others. There are times when our hopes, if realized, will make life more difficult for others, especially those who are dependent on us. Knowing that our hopes may carry risks for others, we may decide they are not worth the price that others may have to pay for them, and we resign ourselves to their unfulfillment. We may con-

---

[4] Erikson, 117.

tinue to harbor resentments against those who inhibited the realization of these hopes. Some people carry such resentments to their graves: "If only Jim had been more courageous and less practical." "If only I had trusted my own judgment instead of listening to Liz, with all her objections and 'what ifs.'" In turn, children of parents who sacrificed their own hopes for "the sake of the children" may carry through life the sense that they were the unwitting cause of a parent's disappointment, or were made the scapegoat for a parent's inability to take the necessary personal risks involved.

Thus, as future projections that envision the realizable, hopes are risky, and are typically experienced as such. Hopes can be exciting, scary, or unnerving. Unlike reveries, musings, and daydreamings, hopes anticipate real changes, and because they do, we should not romanticize hope as though it were an utterly harmless activity. Hopes can have tremendously positive outcomes, but they are also responsible for harm. One test of our maturity as persons is our ability to hope in ways that do not put other individuals at unacceptable levels of risk. Other tests of our maturity are the willingness to accept higher levels of risk for ourselves than will be required of others, and our ability to make intentional, self-conscious efforts to minimize the costs of our hopes to others.

Hope and the reframing of time

I want now to comment briefly on methods that are currently in use in psychotherapy that encourage hopefulness for the future. These methods fit within the category of reframing methods, which I discussed at some length in my book entitled *Reframing: A New Method in Pastoral Care*.[5] The two methods that have particular bearing on my reflections here are presented in a book by two Finnish psychotherapists, Ben Furman and Tapani Ahola, entitled *Solution Talk*.[6] The one method is called "future visioning," the other is called "revising the past."

One test of our maturity as persons is our ability to hope in ways that do not put other individuals at unacceptable levels of risk.

Future visioning. In "future visioning" the counselees are asked to project themselves into the future (several weeks, six months, a year from now) and to describe their life now that their problem has been resolved, and to explain what they believe made the change possible. The method of "future visioning" is revealing for what it precludes. By focusing on a time in the future when the problem has been "overcome" rather than upon the past where the problem is assumed to have originated, the persons involved in the situation can be seen as mutual helpers rather than as obstacles. They are not the objects of blame, as usually occurs when

[5] Donald Capps, *Reframing: A New Method in Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

[6] Ben Furman and Tapani Ahola, *Solution Talk: Hosting Therapeutic Conversations* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992).

the therapy focuses on underlying causes of the current problem. Also, the counselees' own narrative of how the problem got resolved is potentially as worthy of a plan for its resolution as anything the therapist might have proposed. The therapist may simply give the plan his or her blessing. For example, one of the authors was a consultant to a mental health facility. The health team met with a teenage boy whose treatment wasn't going well. When he was asked to envision himself six months from now—doing much better—and to explain how these positive results came about, he mentioned that a particular staff psychiatrist had befriended him and helped him get better. This was not, however, the psychiatrist who had been assigned to this boy; it was one he watched working with other patients. So on the basis of the boy's future visioning this psychiatrist was assigned to him, and he began to show improvement immediately.

Theologically informed readers of Furman's and Ahola's book are often quick to note that what underlies their future visioning method is a kind of realized eschatology. The future is already here, in the present, so that what we have been hoping for—our heartfelt desires—are already being met. What their cases show is that clients are quite willing to engage in the imaginative act of future visioning, and that, when they do so, they have a lively perception of having made the future present.

Revising the past. The other method that involves a reframing of time for the sake of a more hopeful future is Furman's and Ahola's notion of "revising the past." They note that we tend to view our past as the source of our problems, and argue that as long as we view it this way we set up an adversarial relationship with ourselves because our history is an integral part of us. This adversarial relationship with ourselves can be reduced, if not overcome completely, by viewing our past as "a resource, a store of memories, good and bad, and a source of wisdom emanating from life experience." The past is no longer viewed as "the source of our problems" but is seen instead as "resource for solutions." The authors relate how they encourage their counselees to see past events that they have interpreted as liabilities as being, rather, sources of strength. They tell about a woman whose mother put her in a dark closet for hours when she was a child. This woman had gone on to become a gifted art teacher, helping children use their imaginations through drawing. When she related how her mother had confined her to the dark closet, the counselor (one of the authors of the book) did not minimize the trauma she had suffered, namely, that she was the victim of child abuse. But he asked her the question: "What did you do in the closet to keep yourself from going crazy with fear?" She answered, "I used my imagination. I thought of myself being somewhere else, out in the fields, or in a park." Then he said, "And isn't this what you are now doing for the children you teach? Isn't your experience of coping with being locked in a closet a source of your gift as a teacher?" She had not previously made this connection in her mind.

The method of "revising the past" is designed to change a person's perception of what is possible for him or her as far as the future is concerned, this change being made possible by changing the meaning of certain past events. This method is also based on the rather odd assumption that the past is as open and as possibility-filled as the future is. This may seem utter nonsense, for only a fool believes that the past can be other than what it was. Yet there is also wisdom—a kind of foolish wisdom—in the affirmation of the openness and revisability of the past,

That the world and we ourselves exist at all is because it is God's nature to be hopeful.

for it says that what is open about the past is the meaning or significance we assign to it in the present. In support of this view, we have the biblical Joseph's contention that the turning of his brothers' act of treachery into something providential was an act of God. "Revising the past" may also be theologically understood as being grounded in the boundless mercy of God, who is able to take sinful actions that we or others committed in the past and make of them something better than we would ever have imagined.

Which is to say that God is the original and eternally Hopeful Self, who uses the agency that is God's own to keep the future ever open for new possibilities. That the world and we ourselves exist at all is because it is God's nature to be hopeful. We exist because God, in response to God's own felt deprivation, was fueled by desire, and perceived that something new could come into being. As James Weldon Johnson, author of the poem "The Creation," puts it, "And God walked out on space and said, 'I'm lonely, I'll make me a world.'"[7] This world that God made is a *self*-projection, a world into which God, from the very beginning until now and forever after, has projected God's very own self.

But this was a self-projection that carried great risk for God, as hopes, once realized, take on a life of their own, having effects that were not originally intended. Hopes are wonderful things, but they are also dangerous, a fact to which the world, and especially the history of humankind, is tragic testimony. This is why it is so essential for us to believe that God remains a Reliable Other who has not abandoned us, and why it is important that some of us be pastors, ones who assist others in their struggles to maintain hope—helping them keep their heads above water—and who testify to, and carry in their very being, the ambiguities that are inherent in hope itself.

---

[7] James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 17.

Accommodation to Violence: The Rise and Demise of the Walther League

Jon Pahl
Valparaiso University

Since 1960, Lutherans, along with many mainline Protestant groups, have lost their national youth leagues.[1] Because a failure to sustain faith across generations will inevitably erode institutions, the reason these organizations to serve youth declined ought to be interesting to students and devotees of Protestantism in American culture.[2] And one specific case—that of the Walther League—suggests that Protestants lost their youth leagues because the leagues functioned to accommodate youth to violent patterns of spiritual formation and education that mirrored the dramatic growth of American popular culture and national power.[3]

Begun as the ecclesiastical equivalent of an army, and existing for much of its history to train the sons and daughters of German immigrants in the conventions of American culture, the Walther League was part of that process through which young Lutherans in the United States became members of a national church. And when the nation collapsed under its own violence during the nineteen-sixties, so did the Walther League. Fortunately, a more para-

---

[1] Surprisingly little work has been done on the history of youth. See Franklin B. Gillespie, "Youth Programs of the United Presbyterian Church—An Historical Overview," in *Journal of Presbyterian History* 59 (Fall, 1981): 309-82, and J. Warren Smith, "Youth Ministry in American Methodism's Mission," in *Methodist History* 19 (June, 1981): 224-30. I tell the history of the Walther League in full detail in *Hopes and Dreams of All: The International Walther League, and Lutheran Youth in American Culture, 1893-1993* (Chicago: Wheat Ridge Ministries, 1993).

[2] The best general history of "youth" in the U.S., although somewhat deaf to religious themes, and somewhat dated, is Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

[3] The Walther League was an independent Lutheran youth auxiliary, but grew increasingly linked to The Lutheran Church—

doxical path, whereby youth can learn both to affirm American culture and resist its violence, may be on the horizon among a new generation of youth leaders for the church.

Youth leagues as ecclesiastical armies

Youth leagues began in the late nineteenth century in militant and missionary contexts: the church needed "soldiers" for Christ.[4] Some of the very earliest Walther League societies—the league was founded in Buffalo in 1893—thus sponsored "field exercises" and "military drills" for members. More generally, Leaguers across the nation revealed their stripes in the songs they favored. An early League anthem, "*Heil, Uns'rer Liga, Heil*," was a march composed in 1911, and in good imperialist fashion hailed the Walther League as an organization destined to fulfill God's "*Bundesplan*" (covenant).[5] Early Walther Leaguers (before 1950) also found "Onward, Christian Soldiers" so conducive to spiritual nurture that they wrote their own arrangement of the tune, under the not-too-creative title of "Onward, Walther Leaguers." (One verse included a line that decried a world beset by "dark popery."[6]) Even the "official" Walther League anthem, penned in 1928, "One and All Are We," was a march, whose last stanza went, in part: "Lord, direct us, onward, upward, battling for the right." Early Walther Leaguers were formed by a decidedly martial spirit, at least musically.

More substantively, the Walther League grew rapidly during periods of war by asserting a pro-American attitude: initially in the Spanish-American conflict in 1898-9, and continuing through the two World Wars. During the war with Spain, Leaguers in Winfield, Kansas heard a lecture on the theory of a "just war," and "every person in the audience was convinced that the present war is a just one."[7] Although history has had a different opinion, the young Kansas Lutherans weren't alone in their support of American expansionism.[8] Thus, as the war

---

Missouri Synod in the course of its history. I explore the hypothesis about the relationship between youth groups and violence in more detail (and in conjunction with Catholic and African American histories), along with some of the more hopeful recent developments, in "From Purity to Practice: Christian Education of Youth in the U.S., 1930-1990," forthcoming in a volume to be edited by Dorothy Bass and R. Scott Appleby.

[4] The best-known of the youth agencies are the YMCA and the YWCA, both of which have in most locales become completely secularized. On the Y's, see C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (N.Y.: Association Press, 1951); Kenneth Scott Latourette, *World Service: A History of the Foreign Work and World Service of the Young Men's Christian Association of the United States and Canada* (N.Y.: Association Press, 1957); Clifford M. Drury, *San Francisco YMCA: 100 Years by the Golden Gate* (Glendale, CA: Arthur Clark, 1963); and Nancy Boyd, *Emissaries: The Overseas Work of the American YWCA, 1895-1970* (N.Y.: Woman's Press, 1986). Much work is in progress in these areas, as evident by an E-Mail network on Y history founded in 1994 by Nancy Marie Robertson with over fifty scholars. For a broader overview of selected Protestant efforts, see Mark H. Senter III, *The Coming Revolution in Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), who unfortunately misses the significance of this contextual feature in the rise of youth ministries.

[5] *Der Vereinsbote* 19 (April 1911): 86.

[6] *Der Vereinsbote/Walther League Messenger* 24 (January 1916): 204.

[7] *Der Vereinsbote* 6 (June 1898): 65.

[8] See for instance, Richard E. Welch, Jr., *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

began to produce U.S. victories, Leaguers in North Carolina found reason to celebrate the fourth of July in 1898 with "a spirit of thankful... rejoicing" not seen "since the days that our fathers set their signatures to the Declaration of Independence."[9] Finally, one Leaguer provided a rationale in support of the war likely to persuade many Lutherans when he linked the war against Spain in Cuba and the Philippines with a broader crusade against "the Romish church," and concluded that although "Rome dies hard... nevertheless she must die."[10]

During WWI, German-Americans were widely suspected of disloyalty, and occasionally were persecuted.[11] Young people were particularly vulnerable to suspicion, and consequently were particularly eager to demonstrate patriotism. Thus, when the League changed its official language from German to English, membership nearly quadrupled. The Leaguers, concerned to demonstrate true "American" character, also undertook projects to support the war effort: they distributed literature, mailed care packages, and raised funds. A. A. Grossmann, business manager of the League and director of the "war work," explained that "service—service to our boys has prompted [the projects]. Are you willing to accommodate yourself?"[12] Surely, Grossmann used the right word.

During the buildup to WWII, some League leaders, like other German Americans, began by supporting Hitler, and only gradually accommodated themselves to the national perspective. Dr. Walter A. Maier, for instance, the famed *Lutheran Hour* preacher, penned a 1933 editorial in the *Walther League Messenger* entitled "Hitler Shows the Way," blaming "newspapers dominated by Jewish influence" for the bad press Hitler had received.[13] By 1939, Maier had faced the facts. "In the last five years, one of the most terrifying anti-Jewish movements known to history has reached its appalling climax.... Anti-Semitism is anti-Christian." And by 1945 Walter A. Maier had resigned as editor of the *Walther League Messenger*, claiming "I cannot tolerate any suggestion that I tone down any emphasis on our American and Christian heritage."[14] Later the same year at a Lutheran Hour rally in Chicago Stadium with 15,000 in attendance, Maier preached under a large cross, but under an even larger American flag. The nation had been accommodated.

More broadly, after war was declared in 1941, the Walther Leaguers demonstrated their support for the conflict in manifold ways. They developed a "Thirty Point Program" that repeated many of the strategies—rallies, honor rolls, gift packages, and fund-raising—that had been developed during WWI.[15] The *Messenger* printed stories of Lutheran war heroes, including one account of a twenty-one year old marine flyer and former Leaguer and Valparaiso University student, Howard Bollmann, who

---

[9] *Der Vereinsbote* 6 (July 1898): 93.

[10] "Lessons of the Times," *Der Vereinsbote* 7 (September 1898): 14.

[11] In a rare case of attention to the laity, Fred Meuser, "Facing the Twentieth-Century," in E. Clifford Nelson, et al., *The Lutherans in North America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980): 400, discusses anti-German sentiment during WWI in detail.

[12] A. A. Grossmann, "To Our Readers," *Walther League Messenger* 26 (March 1918): 235.

[13] Walter A. Maier, "Hitler Shows the Way," *Walther League Messenger* 41 (April 1933): 461.

[14] Walter A. Maier to Walther League Executive Board, 25 May, 1945. Maier Papers, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis.

[15] See, among many sources, the "Walther League Loyalty Declaration and Program," *Walther League Messenger* 49 (March 1942): 372.

survived a dramatic ocean rescue after his plane went down in the Pacific.[16] And Leaguers across the nation of course went marching off to war: many League districts could list on an "Honor Roll" dozens of young men who "gave their lives" for the nation.

The Walther League was part of that process by means of which young Lutherans in the U.S. became accepted members of a national, if not a nationalistic, church. Thus, the chief event sponsored by the Walther League each year was its "convention," complete with banners of the state delegations, parliamentary procedures, long speeches, elections, and other trappings of American political life. For the earliest Walther Leaguers, these events were clearly training in democracy. For later Leaguers, they were all but redundant: one Leaguer from the fifties recalled that "the primary order of business every year seemed to be where we were going to have the next year's convention."[17] The Walther League thus existed to accommodate young Lutherans to the best of American culture; unfortunately, what the United States came to do best over the course of the 20th century was go to war. What did it mean, then, for the education and nurture of Christian faith in young Lutherans in the U.S., when the church did business exactly like the state, and when the church unquestioningly—even enthusiastically—encouraged youth to join in activities designed to legitimize or support war? Confessional Lutheranism had always stressed a paradox between the "two kingdoms," whereby a Christian both transcended and submitted to civil authority, but without blurring the two. In 20th-century U.S., the two blurred dangerously, and nowhere more than for youth, who both fought the wars and were young in faith. It should hardly be surprising, then, that upon their return to the U.S. at the end of WWII, many G.I.'s and former Leaguers showed little interest in the Walther League's new "Program for Peace." As one put it in an interview with me, we "wanted to forget the war and buy all the goodies [we] hadn't been able to."[18] And in the fifties, the League accommodated their desires both to forget and to consume.

Most notably, the Walther League accommodated the market, and the post-war affluence, with a vengeance.

Accommodating to cultural conventions: the fifties

Throughout the 1950s, the accommodation of the Walther League to American national culture and its violence proceeded. Young Lutherans now "belonged," and they were eager to demonstrate they were "with it." Most notably, the Walther League accommodated the market, and the post-war affluence, with a vengeance. The violence of American culture had become more subtle; the hot war had gone cold, but in fact the violence had escalated.

---

[16] "I Sing 'A Mighty Fortress,'" *Walther League Messenger* 51 (April 1943): 420.

[17] Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams*, 235.

[18] Stan Boie, "Interview with Jon Pahl," 28 July 1992, p. 2. Transcript in possession of author.

High school aged Americans began to work outside the home during the fifties. Only 17 percent of teenage boys had worked outside the home in 1944; by 1954 as many as 31 percent did so. New *Messenger* editor Alfred P. Klausler noticed the trend: "I do not begrudge our young people their new wealth," he wrote. "I am concerned," he continued, "that many of them have not learned to spend (or save) their wealth. The recent clothes fads, known as the 'hip style,' are supported by youth with too much money to spend."[19] Despite Klausler's protest, the Walther League generally did all it could to ride the spending tide during the post-war affluence. "Little Walt's Wares," a glossy twenty-page catalog, thus tried to steer some of the youth's wealth toward League offices. Walther League consumers could purchase traditional League paraphernalia like finger rings, lapel buttons, and pennants, but also account books, stationery seals, postcards, pencils, luggage tags, book ends, napkins, gift wrap, and more, all embossed with the Walther League emblem. From the section "Washables 'n Wearables," for another example, Leaguers could order items like windbreaker #666, "ideal apparel for cool evenings." "Gifts Galore!" the catalog accurately trumpeted to the Leaguers, who obviously were accommodated enough to affluence to make the merchandising effort (it was catalog #54) worthwhile.

More generally, during the fifties the league helped young Lutherans accommodate themselves to all sorts of variations on what was coming to be called "pop" culture. Leaguers played in, and watched, the growing number of public sporting events across the nation. Some of them learned to overcome the sin of syncopation and even like Elvis. Their parents gave up, for the most part, on prohibitions against dancing. Leaguers listened to the radio, read comic books, and began to watch TV. They began to take rides in cars, and occasionally even stopped to park. Leaguers in Mt. Rainier, Maryland, even staged a "Roman Banquet," later immortalized as the fraternity "toga party." "Everyone," the correspondent to the *Messenger* pointed out, "wore white sheets to resemble Roman togas.... The meal was eaten in a reclining position.... At intervals guests were given the opportunity to clean their hands in a community finger bowl passed around by a slave."[20] If not exactly slaves to the market, Lutheran young people surely were getting used to it. The options were dizzying; what did a theology of "justification by grace through faith" have to do with it all?

Lutherans responded to the affluence of the fifties by developing an extensive national bureaucracy, which "ran" their League through carefully orchestrated "programs." The Walther League had built a national headquarters building in Chicago in 1943, and in the years since the League began had created officials to fill the space. The officials then created the programs—there were new ones every year. But as the national budget expanded, income did not always keep pace; Lutheran youth simply weren't buying enough "Windbreaker #666s." Consequently, the League sought increasing resources from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which had also accommodated market affluence with success. The League had been officially recognized as the "youth auxiliary" of the Synod in 1923, but the budgets of Synod and the League became increasingly intertwined

---

[19] Alfred P. Klausler, "Any Month," in *Walther League Messenger* 62 (February 1954): 50.

[20] "League Mirror," *Walther League Messenger* 61 (July 1953): 31-32.

until by 1960 there was little practical distinction between the Walther League and the work of the Missouri Synod Board for Young People's Work. In the era of "the grey flannel suit," young Lutherans had learned to accommodate themselves to bureaucracy.

Finally, the Walther League generally accommodated young Lutherans to the anti-communist consensus that prevailed throughout the onset of the atomic era. Leaguers once again were called to march off to war, in Korea, and to support the effort at home. After the hot war turned cold, *Messenger* editor Klausler penned articles questioning the most blatant of McCarthyism, but more commonly the League programs featured headlines such as "Beware of Communist Culture!"[21] Generally speaking, though, the anti-communist consensus of American culture simply remained unquestioned, as Leaguers withdrew from cultural criticism in fear, and through the distractions of popular culture. A Leaguer named Martin Marty saw the trends already in 1950:

> Ours is a generation that was to inherit the brave new world, [but] our fathers passed on to us the sorriest excuse for a utopia this globe has seen. The catastrophe of these five decades removed purpose from life, producing, instead of happy men, hollow men. And now we have hatched a Monster that we can never tame. Man can bear to live in the background of the bomb only because he is still sufficiently clever to invent distractions that keep him from thinking about it.[22]

Distracted from how accommodated they had become to the violence of the bomb, most Lutherans rested content with their youth League and its comfortable place in the culture, just as the culture itself began to come apart.

Generation wars: the sixties and after

The Walther League, having linked itself so successfully to America for much of its history, was essentially destroyed by the tensions that beset American culture during the 1960s. Three issues in particular were critical: civil rights; ecumenism or internationalism; and the emergence of a counter-cultural "youth movement" to oppose the anti-communist consensus that had led the U.S. into the Vietnam conflict. In each case, Lutherans were torn in two directions, reflecting the polarizations within American culture. Without a clear tradition *distinct from* accommodation to the culture, when the culture came apart, so did some Lutherans. The "culture wars" of the eighties and nineties were thus preceded by the "generation wars" of the sixties and seventies.

The battle over civil rights was the first flash-point. The *Messenger* had pledged in 1946 to "hit, and hit hard, any manifestations of racial discrimination in the Christian church," but prior to 1960 most Lutherans paid little attention.[23] That changed among Walther Leaguers when in 1963 the League officials invited black comedian and activist Dick Gregory as the keynote speaker for the international convention in Washington, D.C. 3,500 Lutheran youth heard Gregory describe being frightened of lynchers, being frightened of police, and being frightened of a society where "they'll

---

[21] Alfred P. Klausler, "Any Month," *Walther League Messenger* 62 (July 1954): 42.

[22] Marty Marty, "This I Believe," *Walther League Messenger* 58 (January 1950): 10.

[23] "Editorial Window," *Walther League Messenger* 55 (September 1946): 15.

give [me] a job, for $1 an hour, and starve [me] to death."[24] Gregory knew, in ways most Lutherans did not, that violence was built into the markets of American culture. The letters of criticism began to arrive at the Chicago Walther League offices. Gregory had been "controversial"; he was "a night-club entertainer"; youth "should not be exposed to the racial tensions of the times."[25]

The letters increased when, in 1965, the League published a series of articles on Judaism that called not for conversion of the Jews, but for dialogue. Editor Klausler explained: "Lutherans since the days of the Reformation have given at least tacit consent to various forms of anti-Semitism."[26] Some weren't so tacit. Members of St. John's Lutheran Church in New Haven, Michigan, sponsored a resolution for the upcoming synodical convention that criticized the League for "publishing articles [the one on Judaism was mentioned explicitly] which tear down rather than build up the faith of our young people and deny plain Scriptural truth." Members of Our Savior's Lutheran in Ridgecrest, California, cited the article on the Jews as "false doctrine," and accused the League of having "departed from the high principles and lofty goals... carried out so successfully by the sainted Dr. Walter A. Maier."[27] Other resolutions argued in the same vein: the Walther League was destroying the faith of youth.

And, in a sense, it was. American culture was polarizing along generational lines, and Lutherans, accustomed to following the culture, seemed to have little choice but to follow in the carnage. Thus, Walther League leaders began to favor counter-cultural speakers and causes for "their" youth, which in turn alienated those who felt (understandably) that the League existed to promote accommodation with and loyalty to the national culture. The flashpoint came when League officials selected folksinger Pete Seeger to be a "Voice from the Wilderness" at the 1965 Walther League convention, in Squaw Valley, California. Seeger was best known for his hit recording of "We Shall Overcome," but had also been called before Joseph McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee in the fifties, where he had been accused of being a communist. The resolutions hostile to the Walther League now began to pile up in synodical offices, and overt hate mail arrived at the Walther League headquarters. One "Christian Mother" sent this letter to League staffer Paul Schreivogel:

> Schreivogel: what a name. Yes a fitting name for a Communist, for surely a Communist you must be to "stick up" as you do for such a *skunk* as Pete Seeger. It is all just plain "Satanic" of all the Great outstanding American Christian men who would be glad to speak to our youth, you insist on this (Commie low down lier [sic]). Let me ask you just one question. "What do you think the Saviour would have to say to all this Satanic uproar?" Be not deceived God is not mocked. There is also a judgment day for *you*. Why don't you get out of the Lutheran church? Yes, better yet why not get out of America and go to Rusia [sic].[28]

Another letter writer was more global in denunciation, simply requesting that the

---

[24] "Dialog: An *Arena* Feature," in *Arena* 72 (November 1963): 9.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Wayne Saffen, "A Lutheran Looks at the Jews," in *Arena* 73 (April 1965): 3.

[27] *Unpublished Reports and Overtures* (Supplement to *Convention Workbook: Forty-Sixth Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*) (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 39-43.

[28] "A Christian Mother" to Paul A. Schreivogel, 17 May 1965. The letter is postmarked from Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Walther League "stop corrupting our youth and blessing it with the Lutheran label. Fold up and die nice!!!"[29]

In the sixties, in short, violence overcame America, and no one knew it more than youth, who were most vulnerable to it. JFK was assassinated in 1963, Malcolm X followed two years later, and the number of young Americans (average age, 19) dying in Vietnam rose annually through 1970.[30] In such a chaotic situation it is understandable that some would seek to regain control by targeting scapegoats. Some youth targeted their elders, denouncing anyone over thirty as a pawn of the "Establishment." Some elders dismissed anyone with long hair and bell-bottoms as a "radical" like the Weathermen who were bombing buildings on college campuses around the country. Thus, the generation wars of the sixties (it was surely more than a "gap") helped to destroy the Walther League. By 1967 the Executive Director, Elmer Witt, had resigned, and the League executive staff was reduced from nine to three. The Leaguers voted to become "issue-oriented" and "youth-led" at their 1968 convention, which all but assured the League's demise. Between 1965 and 1970 the total income from contributions to the League dropped from approximately $150,000 to barely over $2,000. Funds promised from the Missouri Synod through its Board for Young People's Work also evaporated, in part because the entire Board was voted out (in a purge foreshadowing later trouble for the Synod as a whole). By 1972 the Walther League headquarters building had been sold, with proceeds put into a trust fund administered by former League leaders. The "issue-oriented, youth-led" League published a newsletter, *Bridge*, for a few years out of various apartments around the Chicago area, but by 1977 the Walther League no longer existed.

In the sixties, violence overcame America, and no one knew it more than youth, who were most vulnerable to it.

Charles Sauer, a member of the League Board of Directors which both participated in and suffered from the debacle, summarized what had happened:

> [The Missouri] Synod covered its hard-nosed resistance and political expediency in the garb of procedure and due process.... We are still recoiling from the cruel hand dealt to our young by unthinking, unrelenting, mistrusting, and mischievous adults. The care of our young had become an issue. Our young themselves had become a political football.... People, young and old, assumed poses and postures.... [But] these were Missouri's young, nurtured in Missouri's ways, and not a splinter group of "Weathermen."...[And] Missouri's adults were ...not co-conspirators of the Military-Industrial-Complex out to destroy the youth of the nation.... We were all held hostage by our own ignorance, sparring

[29] See *Hopes and Dreams of All*, 279.

[30] For a nuanced theological reflection on this era, see Walter T. Davis, *Shattered Dream: America's Search for its Soul* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994). For another perspective, see my "A National Shrine to Scapegoating?: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, DC," in *Contagion: A Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 2 (Spring, 1995):183-98.

> with shadows while our substance wasted away. But how could we know? Our history was lined with a thousand mirrors.[31]

And most of them reflected the culture.

The ironies were ample. Lutherans had for so many years been trying to belong that they had unconsciously desired to assimilate the cultural patterns of American life,

Day to day church work with and for adolescents is now largely decided on the local level.

and had (often unconsciously) taught them to their young. Lutheran youth had thus been nurtured less in the ways of Missouri, or of Luther, or of Christ, for that matter, as they had been nurtured in the ways of America. Much of this was healthy and necessary; Lutherans made a great step when they started speaking English. But America had also become a culture united around violence between 1893 and 1950. Five ground wars, numerous skirmishes, the buildup surrounding the cold war and "the bomb," the subtle economic violence of the market, and an even more subtle war of words had been waging across the culture. Despite efforts to base their attitudes and behaviors in Scripture and tradition, then, both the liberal "rebels" and the conservative "reactionaries" among Lutherans mirrored the political factions that tore apart American culture in the sixties along racial, gender, ideological, and generational lines. By creating enemies out of each other, Lutherans reflected little of Christian faith, but had accommodated much of American culture.

Recreating America: beyond generation wars

Since the sixties, Lutherans—like most mainline Protestant groups—have "gone local" or congregational with their ministries to youth. Minimally-staffed denominational youth offices provide literature, arrange for training and certification of local "youth ministers," and sponsor occasional "youth gatherings" that have replaced the former conventions of the youth leagues. These gatherings would make an interesting study in themselves of both continuity and discontinuity in youth ministry. On the one hand, they obviously no longer have any overt (or implicit) political purpose or structure. Lutherans no longer need training in democracy (although, given voting patterns, one might wonder). On the other hand, the national gatherings clearly accommodate youth to the American taste for spectacle and consumption. Youth pay their way to the gatherings, and "buy into" it in other ways (I don't know if the gatherings still feature unsold "Windbreaker #666s," but they surely feature T-shirts).

Nevertheless, day to day church work with and for adolescents is now largely decided on the local level. Some Lutherans avail themselves of the resources of Lutheran Youth Encounter, but this generally means that they pay for the services of a

[31] Charles Sauer, "The Walther League: An Interim Report submitted to the Wheat Ridge Foundation Board of Directors and the Walther League Council and Trustees," May 1972, p. 27.

one-shot "music ministry" team to visit the parish and "enrich" a worship service or two. Others connect their young people with a local evangelical group, like Youth for Christ or Campus Life, or use the resources and programs of Youth Specialties, Inc., a California-based evangelical marketing effort. These groups began later than the Walther League, among culturally less-accommodated fundamentalists, and thus endured the generation wars of the sixties as nationwide agencies to help youth negotiate the transition into American adulthood. That Lutherans would make use of them may reflect vestigial practices hearkening back to the "good old days" remembered by some, on the one hand, or desperation by people who know of no alternative, on the other hand. The "burnout" rate for youth ministers, in any event, remains high.[32]

And young people themselves, of course, are falling victim at rates well beyond the national average to violence. The numbers are numbing. On a typical day in 1990, 604 teenagers contracted syphilis, gonorrhea, or AIDS; 8,000 were raped, stabbed, beaten, shot, or abused; and 23 died from gunshot wounds.[33] The suicide rate for adolescents tripled between 1960 and 1990; violence had become the leading cause of death among American teens; and private psychiatric beds became the fastest growing segment of the American hospital industry.[34] Adolescents, who after all are ripe for intellectual and critical thought, perceptively recognize that their cultural leaders are often corrupt, and that the industries of their nation are heavily invested in war or preparation for war. As one adolescent put it to Robert Coles: "Did *we* invent war and crookedness and corruption? All this sleaze today—look where it's coming from.... There are a lot of hypocrites around."[35]

There are also, of course, youth ministers, cultural leaders, and organizations of integrity which involve adolescents in a paradoxical, critical affirmation of American culture. For instance, for the past year thirty-five to forty students at Valparaiso University met weekly as a Campus Chapter of Habitat for Humanity. The group is one of over 900 Campus Chapters of Habitat for Humanity across the U.S. By the nature of the work they do, these students are involved in intergenerational encounter, as they write grants to AAL to gain funds for home building; as they pray together to "turn ground" on a first home; as they discover the extent of the problem of poverty housing in the U.S. while selecting a family with whom to partner; as they negotiate with subcontractors to volunteer labor and supervise construction; even as they hang drywall. Since the sixties, opportunities like this for youth to participate in small-group, intergenerational, focused ministries that provide real service to communities have expanded dramatically.[36] Groups like Lutheran Volunteer Corps, events like "servant events" sponsored by denominational bodies, and "spring break

---

[32] See for an illuminating case study, William R. Myers, *Black and White Styles of Youth Ministry; Two Congregations in America* (N.Y.: Pilgrim Press, 1991).

[33] See Janet M. Simons, Finlay Belva, and Alice Yang, *The Adolescent and Young Adult Fact Book* (Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 1991).

[34] See William R. Myers, "Youth between Culture and Church," in *Theology Today* 47 (January 1991): 400-409.

[35] Robert Coles, "Adolescence," in *Sojourners* 17 (April 1988): 17-18.

[36] See for instance Tony Campolo, *Ideas for Social Action*, ed. Wayne Rice (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, Inc., 1983), and *Handbook of Youth Ministry*, ed. Donald Ratcliff and James A. Davies (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1991).

trips" led by local youth ministers nurture Christian adolescents in ways that both affirm American culture and educate adolescents about its problems. Thus, the plot of any complete history of youth ministry in the U.S. would have to be one not so much of decline, as of diffusion.[38] The national programs may have ended; but the idealism and energy of youth continues to be directed into Christian life paths of compassion that affirm, critique, and in effect recreate American culture.

In this teaching, the mode of adult presence to youth (or the "moral compass" adults provide) is less vital than the trust of youth adults exhibit. This is not a moral matter, but a theological one, and one that Lutherans can speak to with confidence. Generation X has become faceless because its members fear being victimized by the systemic violence of America.[39] This fear is nothing but the old human fear of death; to which Lutheran adults who understand grace and practice a faith active in love can respond with courage and compassion. The opportunities are endless: an incarnational theology that affirms the bodies and beings of adolescents and challenges them to devote themselves to the glory of God can find expression on a basketball court, in a classroom, through a choir or band, through social service, and even through the military. But the age when Lutheran ministry to youth uncritically accommodated itself to American cultural norms and conventions has ended. We have seen what accommodation to the nation and to the violence of the market has brought us. The future may never again see glorious gatherings of young Lutherans in Chicago Stadium under a huge American flag. But small groups of youth are continuing to have their hopes and dreams gathered together with the prayers we offer, under the cross, on the campuses, and in churches and communities across the United States. And that is a foretaste of the feast to come.

---

[38] See on this plot-line the many works of Robert Wuthnow, notably *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); and *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* (Princeton University Press, 1991). See also R. Stephen Warner, "Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," in *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (March 1993): 1044-93, which argues against a simple "decline" or "secularization" plot for American religious history and favors a more nuanced thesis which highlights the voluntary character of religion in the U.S.

[39] See William Mahedy and Janet Bernardi, *A Generation Alone: Xers Making a Place in the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), which picks up the theme of violence from the first chapter on.

Lutheran Young People's Societies to 1895

Brian C. King
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Early Lutheran youth societies

> Oh Christians leagued together,
> to battle for the right,
> Arise and don your armor,
> put the foe to flight,
> We've given our allegiance
> to serve without surcease,
> The mighty Lord of Armies
> and gentle Prince of Peace.
>
> All hail, our royal colors
> for kingly lives unfold,
> Beneath our Luther ensign,
> black, red, white, blue and gold.

The "Luther League Rally Hymn," sung for the first time November 10, 1893, at the Luther Day Celebration in New York City, embodied the energetic spirit of the Lutheran young people who organized themselves into various congregational, state, synodical, and national societies during the mid- to late nineteenth century.

Many pressures contributed to or hindered the formation of these first Lutheran young people's societies. In order to understand why these societies were formed one must first have a sense of the context out of which they evolved and their place in the history of the Christian youth movement in the United States.

The Christian youth movement in North America was imported from foreign shores. The two most important components of this early American youth movement were the Sunday School and the YMCA, both of which were English exports. The Sunday School movement was begun by Robert Raikes in England and had as its purpose the education of children, using the Bible as a textbook. Already present in major cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia by 1790, the founding of the American Sunday School Union in 1824 ensured that the growth of the movement would follow closely on the heels of America's westward expansion.[1]

By 1841 the so-called "Industrial Revolution" was well underway in England and the United States, and its negative impact

---

[1] Mark Senter III, *The Coming Revolution in Youth Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 56, 85-86.

upon young adults was already a concern. Young adults who came to the cities for work in the factories and shops were confronted by poor housing, crime, violence, sexual temptation, and a host of other "worldly ills" which threatened their Christian faith and values. In an effort to address the lack of Christian support and nurture available for young adults confronted by such things, George Williams, an Englishman involved in the dry goods industry, began a Bible study for young men who worked in that trade. Williams' group provided the impetus for the first Young Men's Christian Association which was formed in London on June 6, 1844.

Four years later and three years prior to the organization of the first American YMCA in Boston, C. F. W. Walther, the founder of the "German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States" (the modern Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod) founded the first young people's society among Lutherans anywhere in North America. Walther was one of the earliest Protestant leaders to recognize the need for a program of instruction for young people after confirmation. Walther often stressed the importance of youth work through his lectures at Concordia Seminary, his sermons, and articles on youth work which he published in the periodical *Der Lutheraner*.[2]

On May 7, 1848, at the urging of Walther, the young men of Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Missouri, formed the Trinity *Jungmänner-Verein* (young men's society).[3] The purpose of this society was "to provide one or more students desiring to prepare themselves for ministry with the necessary means." The society's membership was open to confirmed young men who belonged to the Lutheran Church. Meetings were to be held once a month, and a chairman, secretary, and treasurer were to be elected.[4] The pastor at Trinity, J. F. Buenger, reported in 1851 that typical meetings of this society included society business, entertainment (usually a reading from a "practical or useful book"), and "when necessary, Christian admonition...[was] given in a brotherly manner."[5]

The Trinity Young Men's Society numbered seventy members three years after its founding. However, enthusiasm for such societies was not limited to Trinity. The idea spread quickly, and by 1852 there were young men's societies organized in congregations in Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Fort Wayne, and New York. In 1855 there were at least twenty-three organized young people's societies in the Missouri Synod.[6]

It is noteworthy that soon after its organization, the society at Trinity admitted young women. In 1852 separate young women's societies were begun at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago and at Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Louis. However, it was not until 1868 that a group of young women at Trinity formed a separate young women's society.[7] Despite some early attempts at a coeducational approach to young people's ministry, separate young

---

[2] Clarence E. Peters, "Developments of the Youth Programs of the Lutheran Churches in America" (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1951), 84.

[3] Jon Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All* (Chicago, IL: Wheat Ridge Ministries, 1993), 4.

[4] J. F. Buenger, "Aufforderung zur Bildung von Junglingsvereinen," *Der Lutheraner* VII (June 24, 1851): 168.

[5] Buenger, 169-70.

[6] Peters, 86.

[7] Gerald Jenny, *The Young People's Movement in The American Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1928), 19. Peters, 86.

men's and young women's organizations were the norm in most Lutheran churches until the early years of the twentieth century.[8]

In 1856 a call was issued in *Der Lutheraner* for "all German-Protestant-Lutheran young men" to join a newly established "Evangelical Lutheran Youth Society for Missouri, Ohio, and Other States."[9] This endeavor marked the first attempt to form a denomination-wide youth federation in any Lutheran body. Unfortunately, the effort failed within a year for reasons which are not entirely clear. Gerald Jenny, author of *The Young People's Movement in The American Lutheran Church,* believed that pressures related to the impending Civil War may have hastened dissolution, while Jon Pahl, the author of *Hopes and Dreams of All* (a history of the Walther League), speculates that the marriage of the organization's first president left a leadership vacuum which was never filled. Despite this initial failure, the dream of a denomination-wide organization had been planted and would persist until conditions were once again amenable to such an undertaking.

Although C. F. W. Walther provided the impetus for the earliest examples of Lutheran youth work in the United States, many other early examples could be found beyond the confines of Missouri Synod congregations. For example, the organized youth work in the current Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) can trace its roots through the old Iowa Synod as far back as the early 1870s when there were efforts made to start youth societies in various congregations. These *Jungen-Vereins* were either separate young men's or young women's groups and, like their Missouri Synod counterparts, they were conducted in the German language.

Another ELCA predecessor body was the old Augustana Lutheran Church. As early as December 22, 1852, the Rev. Lars P. Esbjorn reported leading separate meetings for young people "where prayers and exhortations... [were] intermixed with catechetical instruction." However, the earliest organized young people's society in the Augustana Synod for which there is any available record was the *Ynglingforening* of the Freemount congregation in Lindsborg, Kansas, which originated sometime between 1873 and 1876. Similar societies in the Augustana Synod were founded in Moline and Andover, Illinois, as well as Des Moines, Minneapolis, and St. Paul.[10]

It is noteworthy that soon after its organization, the society at Trinity admitted young women.

At about the same time the earliest strands of the Luther League in America, which eventually became the official youth program of the United Lutheran Church in America, appeared in Lewistown, Pennsyl-

[8] Peter C. Hinrichs, "Youth Work in the American Lutheran Church" (B.Div. thesis, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA, 1950), 4.

[9] M.P. Estel, "Allen Deutsch-Evan.-Lutherischen Junglingen Zur Gefalligen Beachtung," *Der Lutheraner* XII (May 20, 1856), 158-59.

[10] Martin E. Carlson, *Youth March: A History of The Augustana Luther League* (Minneapolis: Augustana Synod Luther League, 1947), 17-22.

vania. There in 1875 Dr. J. M. Reimensnyder organized a "young people's religious society" in his own congregation. With this as a beginning he sought to form similar societies throughout eastern Pennsylvania and New York. By 1889 many of these societies were brought together in the first permanent synodical federation of young people's societies in American Lutheranism.

Church societies offered a means of keeping young people "in the fold" and free from some of the perceived sectarian influences...

Despite the lack of any denomination-wide federations or associations among Lutheran young people's societies between 1855 and 1889, the number and individual strength of these societies increased during that period. This growth came in response to, and in spite of, a variety of pressures, both inside and outside of the church.

In *The Coming Revolution in Youth Ministry*, Mark Senter postulates three roughly fifty-year cycles in the history of the Christian youth movement in the United States. The first cycle covered the period from the founding of the American Sunday School Union in 1824 to 1875 when the Supreme Court handed down a decision in the case of "Stuart vs. School District No. 1 of Kalamazoo." That decision permitted tax money to be used to fund public high schools.

According to Senter, the Sunday School emerged as the most widely spread agency for working with youth during this period. The first cycle also saw the rise of young men's temperance societies, singing schools, and young people's missionary societies which attempted to minister to the needs of young people from puberty to their late twenties and mid-thirties (a far different definition of "young people" than what is understood today by that designation). These groups sought to combat "worldly temptations," provide socially acceptable opportunities for fellowship and recreation, and encourage Christian benevolence and endeavor.

The majority of Lutherans who emigrated to the United States during the nineteenth century encountered a religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity unlike anything they had ever encountered before. Many sought to preserve their particular ethnic, linguistic, and doctrinal heritage as is evident in the number of different synodical affiliations which existed prior to and after the Civil War.

Church societies offered a means of keeping young people "in the fold" and free from some of the perceived sectarian influences that were present in the non-denominational societies. The youth were trained for leadership in the church, educated in their native tongue, and kept safe from the uncertainties and temptations present in secular society. Still, the Lutheran young people's societies had their critics.

Jon Pahl identifies three of the common criticisms of youth societies held by Lutheran leaders during the late nineteenth century. First, some pastors felt that a youth group in a church would cause disharmony. They believed that granting power to young people would undermine the power and

authority of the pastor and the elders. Second, youth societies were considered an American novelty. The new societies threatened to supplant more traditional methods of ministry to young people, such as the German Lutheran practice of *Christenlehre* (instruction in Christian teaching to youth). Third, insofar as the society model had worldly origins, what assurance did parents and clergy have that these societies would not promote smoking, drinking, playing pool and other worldly vices?[11]

Despite their critics, people like Walther recognized the potential of the Lutheran youth societies to attract young people, address the problems faced by the church and its youth, and equip young men and women for ministry and leadership in the church. For these reasons, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, the dream of national associations of Lutheran young people moved closer to realization.

National and synodical Lutheran youth associations, 1880-1895

In 1880 the United States entered the second cycle of youth ministry. Senter believes that the second cycle began when Francis E. Clark, a young pastor in Portland, Maine, founded the Young People's Society for Christian Endeavor on February 2, 1881. The society reinforced the desire of young people to grow in their faith commitment and strengthen their Christian endeavor. It stressed accountability in the form of a pledge to uphold two commitments. First, members were expected to be at every meeting. Second, once a month each member spoke concerning his or her progress in the Christian life. In addition to its emphasis on mutual accountability, the Society for Christian Endeavor included young people of both sexes.

Similar societies were formed in a large number of other congregations which represented a variety of denominational affiliations. Clark was soon overwhelmed by requests for information about the new venture, and he responded by authoring a book entitled *The Children and the Church*, which was a manual for beginning new chapters. The book enabled the movement to quickly spread across the United States and as far away as Foochow, China. More evidence of the popularity and success of this movement could be seen at the Boston convention of the Society in 1895 where 56,435 people gathered only 14 years after the Society held its first meeting.

Although each Society for Christian Endeavor was overseen by the host church and pastor, the international conventions and other gatherings gave the movement an interdenominational flavor. It was at this point that many denominations recognized the potential for distinctive denominational societies which could help to prevent the diffusion of denominational loyalty and mobilize young people in the service of the church.

The 1889 formation of the Epworth League of the Methodist Church made it the first denominational youth program in the United States. It was followed in short order by the Baptist Young People's Union of the American Baptist Convention and the Westminster League of the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1891. Meanwhile, efforts to form denomination-wide youth societies in the Lutheran church bodies of North America were making great progress.

In many ways, the 1880s were a turbulent time for American Lutheranism. Though the Lutheran bodies in the eastern and southern United States, i.e., the General

[11] Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams*, 10-11.

Synod, the General Council, and the General Synod of the South, were growing closer as evidenced by their cooperation in publishing the *Common Service* (1888), the synods of Missouri, Iowa, and Ohio were still engaged in a heated debate over predestination. The 1880s also marked the high-point of Norwegian synodical disunity. Nevertheless, youth societies in all of these bodies continued to gain membership and strive for synodical and even inter-synodical unity.

According to Clarence Peters, as early as 1881 the Lutheran Young Men's Society of Trinity Lutheran Church of Buffalo, New York, a congregation of the Missouri-dominated Synodical Conference, had appointed a committee to study the possibility of a denomination-wide youth organization.[12] By this time the Trinity Society already had an active "Women's section," but despite its ambitious dreams of a synodical union of young people's societies, the idea languished until 1892. That year the Societies of Trinity Lutheran Church and St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Buffalo, representing about 150 members, united to become the General Organization of Lutheran Young People's Societies of the Synodical Conference. That July they also printed the first issue of their newspaper, *Der Vereinsbote* (The Society Messenger).[13]

Der Vereinsbote became an important tool for pushing the idea of a denomination-wide union of young people. Printed almost entirely in German, articles warned German-speaking parents about the dangers of reading materials available in the English language and encouraged them to send their youth to Lutheran young people's meetings where they could be sure of the wholesome content of the messages and the use of the German language.

In *Der Vereinsbote*'s second year in print, a convention was held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Buffalo, New York, from May 20-23, 1893, and what would become *Die Walther Liga* (The Walther League) of the Missouri Synod was founded. Sixteen delegates from twelve societies representing 693 young people in the Synodical Conference gathered together for the four-day convention and ratified a constitution. The synod-wide organization that had been attempted in 1856 took root at that auspicious event and would influence millions of Lutheran youth in the Missouri Synod before it ceased to exist in 1977.

Efforts to form synodical organizations in the congregations of the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South were also making progress during the 1880s. As was mentioned before, Dr. J. M. Reimensnyder was instrumental in the creation of the "Luther Alliance of the Susquehanna Conference and Synod" in 1889, which was the first permanent synodical federation of Lutheran young people's societies within the United States.[14]

At about the same time, in April, 1887, members of the *Jugend-Maennerverein* of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, New York City, appointed a committee to negotiate the formation of a city-wide organization "first, to centralize the endeavors of the various young people's Lutheran societies in New York City for the purpose of strengthening and furthering the growth of the Lutheran Church; secondly, to enhance the intellectual improvement of its members; and thirdly, to promote a spirit of friendly intercourse among them."[15]

As a result of the committee's work, representatives from six different societies

---

[12] Peters, 88.

[13] Pahl, 16.

[14] Jenny, 41.

[15] *Luther League Review*, XXI, No. 9, p. 9, as quoted by Jenny, 43.

met on April 19, 1888, to form the "Central Association of Young Men's Lutheran Associations of New York City." The Central Association then began to publish *The Young Men's Lutheran Review*, a monthly newsletter which chronicled the work of the various young men's societies in the Central Association. The high ideals of the organization can be gleaned from the lead article of the April, 1889, edition of the Newsletter:

> Of all the developments that mark the progress of Christianity during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, perhaps none are so prominent or universal as the efforts put forth by the many and various societies of young men of their respective communities in the cause of Christ.
>
> All careful observers must admit that such efforts are of the most vital importance to the successful evangelization of the world, because the young men of every nation have in their keeping the destiny of that nation, and the result will be either for or against the kingdom of Christ, just in the proportion in which the churches have recognized and utilized these mighty forces for the work of that kingdom, or else have been recreant to their trust and have allowed the spiritual life to become dormant."[16]

Inspired by the success that societies in New York City had in centralizing their efforts, similar efforts at centralization spread throughout New York and Pennsylvania. On May 30, 1893, six district associations representing about eighty individual societies combined at Utica to form "The New York State Luther League," just one week after the first national convention of the Walther League was held. The New York State Luther League was the first state federation of Lutheran youth in the country.

On June 25, 1894, ten district leagues organized to form the "Luther League of Pennsylvania" at Harrisburg. By October, 1895, there were also state Luther Leagues in Kansas, Illinois, and New Jersey. The time was right for the formation of a national organization.

On October 30, 1895, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the constituting convention for the Luther League in America brought together no less than 381 delegates representing 6,000 members in twenty states and the District of Columbia. It was to become the largest Lutheran youth organization of its kind. One "doctor of divinity" was quoted as having said: "This convention is an epoch in the history of the Lutheran Church in America." Said another: "Its influence will be felt toward the uplifting of the Church more than any other event which has taken place in 50 years of her history."[17] There could be no doubt that the first convention of the inter-synodical Luther League in America marked a momentous time in the history of the youth movement in American Lutheranism. The *Luther League Review*, which had once been the *Young Men's Lutheran Review*, reported the event and itself signified the immense change that would come about following that convention.

Conclusions

The founding of the Walther League of the Missouri Synod and the inter-Lutheran Luther League in America meant that all of the major Lutheran communions in existence during the latter portion of the nineteenth century had jumped on the young people's

---

[16] "A Plea For The Central Association," *The Young Men's Lutheran Review* (April, 1889), 1.

[17] "First Convention of the Luther League of America," *Luther League Review* (November, 1895), 1.

No organization or ministry similar to the young people's societies or comparable in their scope has evolved to fill the void left in our church's ministry to young adults.

societies' bandwagon or, as the preceding historical account demonstrates, helped to lead the way. These youth societies, while experiencing the same dizzying pace of merger and change as their supporting church bodies, managed to provide a vital service to the young people they ministered to and, at the same time, they enhanced the overall ministry of the church they served.

One lasting contribution of the early Lutheran young people's societies was their emphasis upon the use of the printed word. Publications like *Der Vereinsbote*, *The Young Men's Lutheran Review*, and similar organizational publications would become a hallmark in the history of synodical Lutheran youth organizations not only because they provided an important means of promoting and uniting individual societies through common understandings but also insofar as they became an outlet for the education of young people through the inspirational articles, Bible studies, and devotional material they often contained.

With the exception of *Der Vereinsbote*, these youth publications were often printed in English as a means of providing the English-speaking children of non-English-speaking Lutheran immigrants with quality reading material. It is more than likely that these publications also helped to spur the transformation from immigrant languages to English in adult Lutheran publications. *Der Vereinsbote* and most other German language publications made the switch to English during or soon after World War I.[18]

The evangelistic nature of many of the early Lutheran young people's societies was another one of their contributions to the overall ministry of the church. In the name of evangelism and outreach, these organizations sought to mobilize young people both inside and outside the church in collective Christian endeavor. Furthermore, these societies were a strong voice calling for Lutheran unity at a time when disunity was prevalent. Although it would be difficult to establish the degree to which the young people's societies influenced inter-synodical cooperation and unity among Lutherans, their role cannot and should not be underestimated. Abdel Ross Wentz, in *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, states that "The Luther League spread over all the general [Lutheran] bodies and trained the rising generations of church members in Lutheran unity."[19]

At the close of the nineteenth century the members of the various Lutheran young people's societies made other contributions to the life and mission of the Lutheran congregations to which they belonged. An article in the *Young Men's Lutheran Review* identified several of these:

---

[18] Pahl, 105. Hinrichs, 13.

[19] Abdel Ross Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 271.

> The missionary spirit has been particularly active among the young people... and numerous instances could be mentioned where associations have aided individuals and struggling congregations in all directions who have appealed to them for aid... Ernest [*sic*] efforts have been made to keep the newly confirmed to the church... There has been better attendance of young people at the church services, and the pastors have been aided in their work in many instances by the young people.[20]

A century after the founding of the Luther League in America, the ELCA is confronted with a variety of questions in regard to the state of youth ministry in the church today. It is ironic that many of the concerns which eventually led to the formation of the Luther League in America in 1895 remained in 1995. It is also ironic that the direct descendent of an organization that initially began as a ministry to young adults from ages 16 to 35 now serves the needs of young people in grades 9-12 and ages 14-18. Although the current Lutheran Youth Organization plays an important role in the ELCA's ministry to young people, no organization or ministry similar to the young people's societies or comparable in their scope has evolved to fill the void left in our church's ministry to young adults.

"Where are our young adults?" This is a question that is still being asked in the congregations of the ELCA. As we consider why it is that many young adults have retreated from active participation in the life of the church, maybe it will be helpful for us to consider the struggles and the triumphs of the past. Perhaps Senter is correct in believing that the day of young people's societies has come and gone. But as we seek to address the current needs of our church's young adults and how we may best minister to them and involve them in ministry, maybe it will help us to recall the energetic, crusading spirit that was at work over one hundred years ago:

> Then onward be the war cry,
> and onward still so long,
> As we have self to conquer,
> souls to cheer with song,
> Let sound the martial music,
> ring out the bugle call,
> To rally for the conflict,
> our people one and all!
>
> All hail our royal colors,
> for kingly lives unfold,
> Beneath our Luther ensign,
> black, red, white, blue, and gold.[21]

---

[20] "What Has The Past Year Done For Our Lutheran Young People?" *The Young Men's Lutheran Review*, January 1892, p. 5.

[21] "The Luther League Rally Hymn," *The Young Men's Lutheran Review*, November 1893, 3.

Towards a Samburu Christology

Dean Apel
St. Pauls Evangelical Lutheran Church
Palmer, Kansas

> *For this is the true faith that we believe and confess: That our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man. (Athanasian Creed)*

How does one communicate the biblical insights of one African (Athanasius) to another? Among my many challenges as a pastoral intern among the nomadic and largely non-Christian Samburu people of Northern Kenya was how to convince them that Jesus Christ, of whom they had heard little or nothing, was both God and man and that for them and for their salvation he had come down from heaven and been crucified (Nicea).

This essay is a thought experiment which I wish I would have had the insight and resources to attempt before I left for Kenya. But the basic principle is easy to understand and apply even on the various borders between faith and unfaith in America: find out who the people believe God is, what they believe human beings are, and then set the Jesus of the Bible (not necessarily of the Western church) free in their culture to empower the people toward this remarkable confession that Jesus Christ is both God and man.

I begin with a short review of African Christologies. Then I give a brief description of Samburu culture, possible directions for a Samburu Christology, and possible methods to set the living Jesus of the Bible free among them.

The challenge of African Christologies

Most African approaches to Christology understand the dialectic of contextualization as a continuing dialogue between the living Jesus Christ (as mediated through the tradition) and the various living cultures of Africa. Therefore, for example, the "Final Communique" of the 1977 Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians delineated five sources for doing African theology:

1. The Bible and Christian heritage
2. African anthropology
3. African traditional religions
4. African Independent Churches
5. Other African realities

I think there are good reasons for enumerating each of these sources. But the basic dialectic is between the story of Jesus as passed down through Bible and tradition and the story of being African.

If the basic "rules" of Christology are that Jesus is fully God and fully human, then such information will have to be filtered through African ideas about what God and humanity are. These cultural ideas will have to be modified, as they stretch and grow in conversation with Jesus. But it would be a mistake for Westerners to assume that their categories for humanity and divinity are in all ways either coterminous or superior to African categories. In fact the African categories will in many ways prove to be closer to the biblical understanding of divinity and humanity (Imasogie 48; Sanon 94).

A problem immediately arises when one uses the term "Africa": What is "Africa"? The physical land mass named Africa by Europeans contains thousands of distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious groups. But there is no single African worldview, and so a generic African theology would obscure the many differences which exist between the various tribal groupings. Africa is not a single entity with which Jesus can hold conversation.

There are several reasons some African theologians want to work toward a unitary African theology and Christology instead of legitimating a theology for the separate cultural and linguistic groups. First, some believe that there is a "core of Africanness," a unity of belief and practice on which to build such a theology. Second, a unitary African theology is required in order for African Christians to make a contribution to the worldwide church and in order for the African Christians to resist the Western monopoly on theology. Third, African tribalism, which threatens both political and ecumenical unity in many African countries, will only be exacerbated by allowing each tribe to have its own theology or Christology. Fourth, the peculiarities of the various tribes are being compromised in the melting pot of modernization, mass media, and urbanization. Through these processes the modern African is becoming more of a cultural unity. Fifth, a particularist approach usually focuses on the culture of the males and thereby legitimates the oppression of women which exists in many African cultures.

As powerful as all these arguments are, I still advocate a particularist approach. The goal of contextual theology is to communicate the gospel to particular communities and individuals, not to "humanity-in-general." Most African attempts at Christology are based on a sedentary lifestyle and oriented toward a worldview which contains the "living dead" or "spirits" or "chiefs," none of which exist among the Samburu. Of course, any local theology will have to be conscious of the evils of tribalism and patriarchy, but it can only do this by first plunging into the particularity of the various worldviews. We can only hope that Christians in various tribes (African, American, European, etc.) will recognize that they are one family in all their diversity. In the meantime we will have to be happy with Christologies and not one monolithic Christology, a circumstance which the church has been able to endure through the centuries.

Selected Christologies in Africa

Imasogie (55-63) describes the basic outlines of the "core of Africanness," which most African Christologies address. This African worldview places humanity in a multi-dimensional universe populated by a "vital force," spirits, ghosts, the ancestors, and God the Creator. This African world is a multi-dimensional community, and the individual is defined by his/her various relationships within family and clan, with the

"living dead," with spirits, with the earth, and with the Creator God. Each individual passes through several age grades (marked by ritual thresholds) which indicate changes of status vis à vis other members of the community.

The activities and attitudes of the ancestors and the spirits are not always easily discernible. That is why there are methods of divination and diviners to determine what the causes of misfortune are. When one knows the cause(s) of a particular misfortune, (s)he may make reconciliation with the member of the community, whether living, ancestor or spirit. Such reconciliation can be effected by various sacrifices and reconciliation rites. There are also charms and amulets which can protect the wearer against the attacks of spirits, ancestors, or living relations.

John Mbiti was one of the first Africans to try his hand at academic African Christology. He suggested that the best model would be *Christus Victor:*

> The greatest need among African peoples is to see, to know, and to experience Jesus Christ as the victor over the powers and forces from which Africa knows no means of deliverance. (1972:54-55)

Related to this model are other models which conceptualize Jesus as the *Great Ancestor*, i.e. as the One who like the ancestors determines the fortune of the descendants. As ancestor, Jesus is upheld as an example and as a mediator between the Creator God and the humans. Imasogie (79-84) also believes that an emphasis on Jesus' power over these random forces is the best way for a Christology to address African reality.

A related christological approach is to consider Christ as *Healer*. Illness, demon possession, and infertility are three of the "random forces" which Africans face almost daily. The traditional healer first determines which broken relationship has caused the misfortune and then suggests the ritual which can reconcile the broken relationship and thereby alleviate the misfortune. In the Gospels, Jesus does both—and suggests that his love is more powerful than any possible brokenness (Mbiti 1973: 403).

Mbiti recognized early (1972: 56) that for Africans to see Jesus as human, they would have to know that he had gone through his own rites of passage and had his own genealogical pedigree. If Jesus were postulated as the perfect Human, he would have to be an example to the Africans of how they might pass through their various rites of passage. Penoukou's African anthropology posits humanity as an historical "becoming," a dynamic project. Jesus is unique (1) in showing how a human might relate directly to the Creator in this becoming and (2) showing us how to make the final rite of passage from elder to ancestor (32-33). Sanon (92) shows how Jesus might not only be an example of the perfect human, but how he might be considered the Master of Initiation, the one who teaches us how to properly pass through the rites.

This is a corollary of the African *Christus Victor*. African fears and problems are this-worldly: hunger, illness, possession, infertility. There really is no "hell" in most African cosmologies. "Works" or a person's moral character do not usually result in punishment or blessing in the afterlife, according to African cosmologies. Furthermore, the African view of "sin" is not the same as for Western theology. While many African myths suggest a primordial separation from God, the brokenness of that relationship is not a primary factor in the daily life of most Africans (Mbiti 1973: 408). Instead the most relevant issues are relations with other humans, ancestors, and spirits.

Perhaps this focus on this-world soteriology can also partially explain the emergence of African liberation theology. Of course, the social analysis component of liberation theology is a Western import. Traditionally Africans would have interpreted poverty and oppression as epiphenomena of their multi-dimensional world. But with the knowledge of social analysis and of God's special "option" for the poor and oppressed, some Africans form a Christology which conceptualizes Christ as one who is in solidarity with suffering and an agent to change the socio-political structures (colonial, neo-colonial, international trade), which keeps them poor.

"Chief" is another possible christological category. But it is problematic for a number of reasons. First, many, if not most, African tribes traditionally do not have political structures which include a chief. "Chiefs" were largely a creation of colonial times. Second, legitimization of that type of polity may increase intra-tribal oppression and hierarchialization. On the other hand, in analogy to certain biblical, messianic expectations, Jesus as chief does communicate some attributes of Christ. For example, the chief in some African cultural systems functions as an intermediary between the various dimensions of the world. Jesus similarly could be considered as the intersection of humanity and divinity.

Another challenge to contextualization of theology in Africa is the great number of African independent churches. In Kenya, for example, it is estimated that adherents to such movements will outnumber Protestants by the year 2000. Some of these groups appear more pagan than Christian; others do a better job of contextualization than mainline churches do. All of them suggest different ways that Africans can experience Jesus with less Western theological infiltration. Many of their Christologies use a less "sophisticated" (less Western?) methodology to carry on the conversation between Jesus and the various African realities. The churches must now consider and evaluate such approaches for their own use.

> The goal of contextual theology is to communicate the gospel to particular communities and individuals, not to "humanity-in-general."

I'd like to note two features of the above Christologies. First, most of the theologians cited above have done their biblical homework. They show how these various Christologies are actually rooted in the New Testament, but overlooked or subverted by the modern Western worldview which is concerned with different questions. Second, most are aware that the suggested Christologies have the potential to transform the traditional worldviews. Thus, for example, if Jesus is considered to be a chief, the culture's view of chiefdom will be transformed in the direction of suffering and servanthood.

I believe we can praise God for so quickly planting the church in Africa and for the genuine conversation occurring between the Christian tradition and African culture. However, as a Lutheran I am concerned that not as much attention has been given to Christ's salvific work on the cross. I recognize that sin/brokenness with the

Creator/God is not a major issue for most Africans, but it is a major issue of the Bible. Mbiti goes so far as to suggest that the salvation which Africans want is possible without a cross! (1973: 417) This is the primary location where the living Jesus of tradition will have to communicate something new to African experience.

As we move now to consider the Samburu, it will become obvious that they navigate a very different cultural world than that suggested by the above analyses. Therefore the christological answers given above cannot fully answer Samburu questions.

Samburu culture and religion

By 1991 estimates, the Samburu of Northern Kenya had a population of 125,000 (Pavitt 1991:18). They live in the lowlands and mountains of Samburu District in a pastoral economy. Cows are the economic and aesthetic center of their culture. The average homestead will have 80 cows, but "one herd in five is less than half this size, and one in 15 will have more than double" (Spencer 1965:2). In addition each homestead will have any number of sheep, goats, donkeys, and occasionally camels. Because the land and climate can sustain neither agriculture nor year-round pastures, the Samburu are nomadic. They move the herds almost constantly in search of pasture and water. But it is only the warriors (young unmarried men between 14 and 30 years old) who travel with the cows. The elders, women, and children stay in semi-permanent settlements and tend a small herd of cows, whose milk supplies the nutritional needs of the family.

Of all the tribes in Kenya the Samburu are unique in having retained much of their traditional culture in spite of government and mission attempts at "modernization." This is due both to the pride the Samburu have in their own culture and to the social structure of the culture which allows a certain amount of innovation and adaptation.

The Samburu's unique religion corresponds to their unique lifestyle and social structure. I will only mention a few of the most important points here. In addition to my own experience, this information is taken from Spencer, Fumagalli, Pendenzini, and Pavitt (see Bibliography).

First, it is helpful to note the differences between the Samburu worldview and the generic African worldview described above. In contrast to many African agricultural peoples, the Samburu do not have a developed sense of the afterlife. The ancestors are not a continuing reality after death. In fact, traditionally a corpse was simply thrown to the hyenas and the dead person's name was not mentioned again. Also, spirits and ghosts do not make up a large part of the Samburu worldview.

Second, there are few "ritual experts" in Samburu society, or perhaps better said, nearly everyone is a ritual expert. The *laiboni* is a kind of astrologer/physician who is able to prophesy about rain and drought, give advice about propitious times for rites of passage, and who has some special knowledge of herbal medicine—although every Samburu elder should know how to use most of the medicinal plants of the forest. Occasionally witches and diviners are consulted from the surrounding Turkana and Rendille tribes. But there is not as much fear for unknown relational brokenness as among agricultural Africans.

Third, fear of the curse *(ldeket)* is very common. The curse may be exercised by any Samburu over another Samburu when (s)he feels that (s)he has been wronged. The curse is usually threatened publicly, and the elders usually try to settle the problem before the curse is actually invoked. If en-

The Samburu's unique religion corresponds to their unique lifestyle and social structure.

acted, the curse is guaranteed to bring the indicated doom (death, infertility, unmarriageability) on the accursed. *Nkai* (God) will enforce the curse if the accusation is just. If the accusation is untrue, *Nkai* will simply ignore the curse. Firestick elders, who are the ritual leaders of the warrior age-set, have a specially powerful curse over the warriors. The biological family of a wife have a special curse over their in-laws.

Blessing is the opposite of the curse and much more frequently exercised. It concludes nearly every meeting, the leave-taking of the warriors and cattle for further fields, and the harangues which the elders often conduct over young people.

Certain Samburu clans have totemic associations which indicate the content of their curses: fire, thorn, elephant, scorpion etc. If one is cursed by a member of the clan which has the scorpion as totem, for example, the accursed is likely to die of a scorpion bite. If one is blessed by a member of that clan, they will be protected from scorpion bite.

Fourth, the highest value for Samburu people is respect *(nyanyit)*. A worthy person is one who shows generosity, solidarity, and loyalty to family, clan, age-set, and tribe. Independence of action and accumulation of wealth is tolerated only within the limits of these social values. This is probably why, for example, there are no Samburu witches. Even the *laiboni* and the knife-holder at the circumcision ceremonies are somewhat marginal figures in the society, never really integrated as worthy members of it, but instead only respected as necessary. The Samburu make decisions by consensus. The elders and other interested people gather together to make particularly important decisions. Such councils follow a protocol as rigorous as parliamentary procedure.

Fifth, the Samburu have a developed oral literature consisting of proverbs, songs, prayers, stories, and speeches.

Sixth, the Samburu are a people of prayer. They pray perhaps more often than the average Western Christian. During communal prayers the eldest elder or a worthy man will stand among a group of crouching Samburu and ask for *Nkai's* blessings while shaking a staff in the air. After each petition, the praying group will squeeze their hands together and say *"Nkai."* The prayers are usually requests for good weather, for human and animal health, wealth, safety, and fertility.

Seventh, The Samburu are monotheists whose God has some striking similarities to YHWH of the Old Testament. Pedenzini (1978) has attempted to write a theology of the Samburu based on their prayers. He finds many traditional Christian attributes of God embedded in these prayers. "God is one, a single being, who lives, so they say, somewhere in the sky, but who is fully aware of and involved in every event on earth" (70). God is imagined in certain metaphors: as a human (74-82), as a shepherd, as a mother, as a judge (119). God is providentially active in every function of the universe (84). God is the Guarantor of the social structure: "God metes out justice by punishing the person responsible for the infringement of a social con-

cretion" (97). God is immanent and transcendent: *kelakua Nkai etaana*, i.e. "God is far and yet is near" (112).

Eighth, Priest (1990) and Hillman (1992) give special attention to ritual "sacrifice" among the Maasai. A similar taxonomy of ritual slaughter/sacrifice needs to be worked out for Samburu culture. When I discussed or participated in Samburu rituals, I never felt as if they were sacrifices to please God. Most of them seem to be fellowship meals for human-human reconciliation or for certain rites of passage. Even the Christian Samburu liken such ceremonies to the Eucharist.

Possible directions for a Samburu Christology

There are at least three important written attempts at contextualization among Maa people (in this case all three concern the Samburu's cousins, the Maasai). Donovan's book (1978) has become a classic case study of the contextualization process. His attempt was to leave everything Western behind and communicate the simple gospel. I share his concern that the phaseout of missionary involvement occur as soon as possible, but I wonder if Donovan really provided a long enough time span so that there would be a constant and accurate witness to the tradition, especially to the Bible. His book does not focus on Christology but does discuss Jesus' humanity.

Priest (1990) mostly examines and compares biblical and Maasai ritual slaughter/sacrifice. His basic question seems to be whether Christian Maasai can with good conscience continue their rituals or not. There is no mention of Christology or theology at all, despite the title of the book.

Hillman (1992) catalogs Maa religious ritual and belief and makes a strong argument for the witness of the Maa religion to the worldwide church. But outside of some suggestions for transformation of social relationships and ritual, Hillman doesn't seem to think that Christianity will need to change very much about Maa culture, least of all Maa religion.

None of these approaches focuses either on theology in the larger sense or on Christology in the more specific sense. The last section of this essay will discuss some suggestions for "doing theology with the Samburu" that will affirm the approaches of Donovan, Priest and Hillman. But the question remains: How could Jesus Christ become the norm and center of Samburu reality? How could Christ become the Definition of Humanity and of *Nkai* for the Samburu? Of course, just like Westerners, the Samburu will need more than one christological model to approach dialogue with the living Jesus. But the suggestions offered here may be ways to start.

As for all people, it will be difficult for the Samburu to see Jesus as both divine and human. On an evangelistic safari within my first month in Samburu land, I noticed that our Samburu interpreter translated my internship supervisor's Swahili *Yesu* with the Samburu *Nkai*. I listened carefully afterwards to the preaching and Bible lessons and *Yesu* was usually translated as *Nkai*. Once when we passed a certain holy tree, my traveling companion said that it was the "Jesus tree," when he meant the *Nkai* tree. During Christmas of 1991, I travelled in certain outlying areas by foot with some paintings of the birth of Jesus. The people were so amazed that Jesus had once been a baby. For many Christian Samburu of that area Jesus and *Nkai* had become interchangeable terms.

These incidents are anecdotal and could be attributed as much to the preaching and teaching approaches of the missionaries as

anything else. (It must be at least partly a translation problem as well since until that time no Lutheran missionary had ever used Samburu language in preaching and teaching.) But there may be another more basic reason that it is difficult for the Samburu to see Jesus as human. The Samburu distrust any individual who gains too much recognition or power in the community. As Pendenzini says:

> Among (the Samburu), in fact, anyone who holds any particular position of power or tries to exploit it for egoistic interests rather than for the common good is always looked upon with deep distrust, and seen as a threat to the social and political norms and values of the society. (124)

It can be difficult for the Samburu to understand how any human individual could also possess the status of *Nkai*, and therefore the Jesus whom the missionaries always talk about cannot be considered a human. Here are some ways in which the human nature of Jesus might be presented.

The men—and I must interject here that oppression of women in Samburu culture will need to be addressed throughout the contextualization process—who are respected in Samburu society are those who exhibit the primary value of respect. Such a man embodies the ideals of the social structure, but is not perceived as using his social status to exploit others. A worthy man may, in a sense, be the first among equals in Samburu deliberation sessions. He cannot unilaterally make any decisions, but his wisdom and experience may guide the consensus of the community.

The Samburu might be able to experience Jesus as a "worthy man" on the contextualization model suggested above. The setting of Jesus' teaching in the New Testament parallels Samburu council meetings where the people gather on a level place under a tree to discuss. Perhaps the Samburu could imagine Jesus as an elder who was/is especially good at summarizing the discussion and offering suggestions for action. There are many NT examples of Jesus holding conversation at table and other informal settings of which discussion is a component.

One problem with a "worthy man" Christology is that Jesus was never an elder. We don't know if he ever married, and since he died at 33 he died before reaching the age where many Samburu become elders. Jesus in Samburu society would have belonged to the warrior age-grade up to his death. Could Jesus be considered a paradigmatic warrior? A Samburu warrior may be admired for his bravery and self-sacrifice on behalf of his age-set, clan, or tribe. Jesus might be considered a warrior in the sense that he too exhibited bravery and self-sacrifice on the cross (although the Samburu would find amusing the fact that Jesus cried out in his pain). Of course, that would depend some on how the Samburu could understand the cross. From my experience, they do not seem overly concerned about sin or their brokenness vis à vis *Nkai*. But I think uplifting Jesus as the paradigmatic warrior might be a way to introduce them also to the meaning of the cross.

As in the case of the worthy man, holding up Jesus as an example of warriorhood would challenge traditional Samburu social expectations. The warriors are usually expected to be sexually promiscuous, and bravery is exhibited by fearlessness in human-human combat. Holding up Jesus as a warrior would expand and challenge Samburu self-understanding.

And how might Samburu women understand Jesus as a human? This is a more challenging question and another quantum leap from my experience. I think a place to start would be Jesus' countercultural rela-

Traditional missionary strategies among the Samburu and other nomads is directed at making them sedentary.

tionships with women in his own society. For women to see themselves as disciples of Jesus on an equal level with men (cf. Lk 8:1-3; 10:38-42; John 4) can be in creative tension with normal role expectations. Women are allowed to attend and speak at Samburu council meetings. But they rarely have the same degree of influence as men.

Another helpful approach to the humanity of Jesus may be to consider Jesus as the one who progresses through the rites of passage. I think Jesus could be integrated into these rituals in two ways. First, as the one who has passed through the rites in a worthy manner showing the way to be a child, warrior, and elder. The final rite of passage, death, is as yet undeveloped in Samburu culture. This is another point where the story of Jesus might open a new dialogue with Samburu culture. I'm not sure introducing the "living dead" of other African tribes into Samburu society is the answer. But extolling Jesus as the one who has worthily passed even the threshold of death may help them to consider the afterlife. At least for the men, this would also be a way to imagine a more ideal warriorhood and elderhood.

Second, the teachers/mentors of the warriors are the firestick elders, two agesets older than the warriors. These are the ones who instruct the warriors in what it means to be a Samburu, who pass on the stories, the rituals, and the herbal knowledge. Jesus could be considered as the firestick elder who gathers the warriors to instruct them. Jesus often took the twelve (and perhaps some women) apart for special instruction.

When one recognizes the vast repertoire of Samburu proverbs and riddles, a Wisdom Christology immediately suggests itself. I think a focus on wisdom has good potential as a contextualization approach. But it is difficult to imagine how it could be helpful to hypostasize the wisdom latent in Samburu culture and then go on to the next step and identify that hypostasization with Jesus. Of course, Jesus as a worthy man would have been conversant with such wisdom. And a clever Christian Samburu could eventually compose proverbs and riddles which pass along the teachings of and about Jesus.

As presented above, the Samburu God, *Nkai*, is remarkably similar to YHWH of the Old Testament. The Parent and Shepherd theologies which come to prominence in the New Testament are also in Samburu culture. This may partially explain why the Samburu are so quick to recognize Jesus as *Nkai*.

One area in which the witness of Jesus could continue to challenge Samburu culture is tribalism. I was often astounded by Samburu hatred for neighboring tribes, especially for the Turkana. I've even seen Samburu evangelists brandish weapons in the presence of some members of these other tribes. The unity of Christ's love could be emphasized to show how God's inclusive salvation extends over all tribes. I used Paul's teaching in Galatians and the story of the Good Turkana (the Good Samaritan) with some success. Donovan (52)

found tribalism a challenge among the Maasai as well.

Another continuing challenge for the Samburu church will be soteriology. There are numerous rituals within their culture which can be considered redemptive analogies. As I have indicated, many, if not most, of the ritual sacrifices are fellowship meals for forgiveness and reconciliation between humans. One especially significant one is the reconciliation ritual following a murder. The murderer's family must slaughter a cow to be eaten together with the family of the murdered. Afterwards those families share a bond more powerful than that between in-laws. The analogy to the cross is obvious. What is not so obvious to the Samburu is that they have offended God as severely as murderers have offended the families of their victims. It is difficult to know whether to preach more "law" or simply pray that God's love will become as deep and real for the Samburu as God wants.

"Doing theology with the Samburu"

I have taken this section heading from Priest's book even though I think he has done theology *for* and not *with* the Maasai. The same accusation could be leveled against this essay. The Samburu need their own theologians. The training of such people needs to be a major priority along with the affirmation of those in the society who are already doing theology. Why hasn't a nomadic theology emerged out of modern Africa by now? Mostly because biblical and theological schools and scholars are sedentary. When one takes nomads out of their environment for 20 years of Western-style education, the ones who have succeeded are usually no longer nomads and perhaps as ashamed of and unable to dialogue with their own people as a Western missionary.

Several factors militate against modifying missionary strategy for nomadic peoples. First, most missionaries prefer to be sedentary themselves. Second, drought and famine can create relief camps which persist long after the drought. Third, most development work, but especially school work, tends to devalue the traditional nomadic ecological strategies for living in their environment. Hillman writes:

> ...we have established communities of beggars whose self-respect, dignity and authority over their own children, have been undermined by our misguided charity.... The schooling experience available to those children makes no pretense at preparing them for life within their own socioeconomic and ecological zones; much less does it orient them toward the pursuit of wisdom and the refinement of human values. (60)

In short, the traditional missionary strategies among the Samburu and other nomads is directed at making them sedentary. If they become sedentary it will mean either that they will continually rely on food brought in from elsewhere or they will migrate to urban and agricultural areas to find work. Both those things are happening now. But what will happen to the Samburu who continue to pursue the nomadic way of life?

I believe that for them the church must become nomadic and must be able to confess a nomadic Jesus. This means that the various traveling family groups will learn Christian songs and a simple liturgy which they can carry in their hearts and their heads wherever they go. But it will also mean that some Samburu will need to be trained in Bible and theology so as to be the traditioners for their own people. Such evangelists will also have to be nomadic. It will mean

a demanding lifestyle. Because of the distances between traveling groups, such evangelists would need to be invested with authority to give communion and perform baptisms. These matters would have to be worked out with the leadership of the national church.

And how should such evangelists be trained? For some years, there will also be a need for nomadic missionaries who are as good at listening as preaching, missionaries who learn the language, the songs, the stories, the rituals, the proverbs, and the lifestyle of the Samburu. Then they can model what it means to hold conversation with Jesus, to hear his instruction and to share with him Samburu hopes, desires, and insights. The emphasis would not be on writing volumes of theology, but on developing a Christian oral theology which is never complete but always ongoing.

> A nomadic church should not be, after all, so strange a concept for Christians.

After some years, a training center could be established to bring evangelists and elders and grandmothers in for more concentrated teaching. But I think it could be a mistake to send Samburu out of their home areas for any length of time. And there would eventually need to be some kind of instrument for the larger Samburu church to gather and deliberate, and to monitor evangelist and congregational activity. But there is enough initial work to do now while hoping for some such instrument to emerge later.

A nomadic church should not be, after all, so strange a concept for Christians. The people of Israel held worship and council with their God for forty years in the wilderness. The church admits that we are "aliens and strangers on earth"..."looking for a better country" (Heb 11:13, 16). Nor should it be difficult for us to imagine a nomadic Jesus. Didn't the one who once set his tent among us (Jn 1:14) promise to be with us wherever we walk until the end of the age (Mt 28: 20)? We can feel joy in the Jesus whose legs are strong to walk with and whose store of wisdom is limitless enough to hold council with the Samburu all their days.

Conclusion

How could this thought experiment help people who minister in very different situations in the U.S.A.? I'll leave that mostly up to you and the Spirit. But I hope that it at least suggests some alternative ways to think about Jesus in the context of your own congregation and community. And I hope it encourages you to begin the hard work of evaluating the existing theologies and anthropologies in your communities which make Christology problematic. My final hope is that you and your congregations can develop strategies to allow the living Jesus of the Bible to live with you in your worlds, challenging you to grow toward him.

Bibliography

Appiah-Kubi, Kofi , and Sergio Torres (eds.). *African Theology En Route*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979.

Donovan, Vincent J. *Christianity Rediscovered*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982.

Fumagalli, Carl Tarcisio. *A Diachronic Study of Change and Sociocultural Processes Among the Pastoral Nomadic Samburu of Kenya, 1900-1975*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, SUNY at Buffalo, 1977.

Hillman, Eugene. "Maasai Religion and Inculturation." *Louvain Studies* 17 (1992) 351-76.

————————, *The Roman Catholic Apostolate to Nomadic Peoples in Kenya*. Maryknoll: Probe, 1980?.

Imasogie, Osadolor. *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*. Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1983.

Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969.

————. "Some African Concepts of Christology," in *Christ and the Younger Churches*. London: SPCK, 1972.

————. "το αγιον πνευμα as an African Experience," in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley. Cambridge University Press, 1973.

Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians, 1977 Ghana "Final Communique," in Appiah-Kubi and Torres (eds.) 1979.

Pavitt, Nigel. *Samburu*. London: Kyle Cathie Limited, 1991.

Pendenzini, Giles. *Samburu Prayer: A Religious Experience in Living Words*. M.A. in Anthropology Thesis, Catholic University Press, 1968.

Penoukou, Efoe Julien. "Christology in the Village," in Schreiter (ed.) 1992.

Priest, Doug Jr. *Doing Theology with the Maasai*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1990.

Sanon, Anselme T. "Jesus, Master of Initiation," in Schreiter (ed.) 1992.

Schreiter, Robert J. (ed.) *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992.

Spencer, Paul. *The Samburu*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.

Pentecost and Confirmation

Theodore Jungkuntz
Ann Arbor, Michigan

An article in *Currents* by Stephen Goodwin and Lewis Groce ("What Are We Confirming?"—June 1995) took me back twelve years to the publication of my book-length study entitled: *Confirmation and the Charismata* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983). It is obvious that the authors were unfamiliar with my research, so I would like to rehearse its basic argument here and capture the moment for the dialogue that I believe still needs to take place. For it is simply inadequate from the perspective of the New Testament as well as of the Lutheran Reformation to reduce "Confirmation" to what the *LBW* calls "Affirmation of Baptism."

First, I find it amazing that Goodwin and Groce could attempt to answer their own question ("What are we confirming?" without a *single* reference to the New Testament. As I thought about the meaning of "confirmation," it occurred to me to consult a concordance. The yield on "confirmation" was very meager and not very helpful, but the study of the verb forms ("confirm" and "confirmed") proved illuminating and it is here that I would like to begin. Relevant passages are the following:

Mk 16:20—"the Lord... *confirmed* the message by the signs"
Rom 15:8—"*confirm* the promises given to the patriarchs"
1 Cor 1:6—"The testimony to Christ was *confirmed* among you"
1 Cor 1:8—"[Jesus Christ] will *confirm* you to the end"
Heb 2:3-4—"[salvation] as declared... and... *confirmed*... by signs and wonders"
2 Pet 1:19—"And we have the prophetic word made more sure" (=*confirmed*)

A review of these passages in their contexts reveals that the word "confirm" (Greek = *bebaioo*) is used of the Lord as he makes good on God's promises to the believer by "confirming" him/her with manifestations of the Holy Spirit (signs, wonders, spiritual gifts). Having noticed this, it was not a great stretch to reflect theologically on the meaning of Pentecost and to recognize that before the apostles were released to evangelize 3,000 people into the kingdom (Acts 2:28-41) they were "confirmed" as they experienced the fulfillment of the promise upon which they were prayer-

fully waiting—"you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5); "...and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he [Jesus] has poured out this which you see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

What happened at Jesus' baptism? He did not *become* the Son of God in that event (unless you hold to that heresy), but he was, in effect, "confirmed" as the Holy Spirit was manifested upon him (Lk 3:21-22) and he was equipped for carrying out his appointed ministry (Acts 10:38).

What happened to Jesus at his transfiguration? He was "confirmed" once again as he was prepared for his imminent "exodus" (Lk 9:28-36). However, not only he, but also his chosen disciples were "confirmed," even as we learn from the account of the event in 2 Pet 1:16-19.

What happened to the apostles on Pentecost? They did not become believers on that day, but they were "confirmed" in their faith and were thus emboldened to serve as Jesus' appointed witnesses (Lk 24:48-49; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:33).

And what is to happen to us Christians as we believe the promise given to the New Testament church (Acts 2:38-39)? We can identify with the Corinthian Christians of whom it was said that "in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony to Christ was *confirmed* among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will *confirm* you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:5-8). Later in this same letter we hear Paul say that such "manifestations of the Spirit" (i.e., "confirming signs") are given "for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7).

It is clear that in the New Testament confirmation is not tied to a rite (as is baptism), but it is an experience ("manifestation") of the Holy Spirit; it is repeatable and ongoing (Acts 2:4; 4:31; Eph 5:18); it equips and emboldens for witness and ministry (Lk 24:48-49; Acts 1:8; 2:37-41); it is God in Christ who does the confirming (Acts 2:33; 1 Cor 12:4-11); and it is the testimony to Christ and the faith which clings to it that is confirmed (Mk 16:14-20; 1 Cor 1:4-9; Heb 2:3b-4; 2 Pet 1:19).

Confirmation and the Lutheran Reformation

The article by Goodwin and Groce does an adequate job of summarizing what happened to confirmation as a "rite of the church" through the efforts of the Lutheran reformers. However, if instead of looking for what these reformers did with the *rite*, we look to see what they did with what the New Testament describes as an *experience* ("manifestation"), a different picture begins to emerge. We discover that "spiritual experience" and "manifestations of the Holy Spirit" play a more decisive role than we "means of grace" and "Word and sacrament" Lutherans have been given to believe. Not that our emphasis has been wrong! But has our emphasis become a reductionistic grid imposed upon both the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions such that wherever the role of "spiritual experience" is alluded to, it is dispensationally relegated to the dustbin of history? This subject is too large to pursue in this article, but a few hints can be given.

In addition to frequent references to the sacraments as signs and seals which confirm faith in the promises (AC XIII, 1—Tappert, p. 35; Apol XII, 42—Tappert, p. 187; FC SD VII, 53—Tappert, p. 579; VII, 116—Tappert, p. 589; FC SD XI, 37—Tappert, p. 622) the Confessions also refer to "confirmation" occurring through various "spiritual experiences" such as "good

works," which as "fruit of the Spirit" *confirm* terrified minds to believe more firmly that their sins are forgiven" (Apol. IV, 276—Tappert, p. 148; cp. FC SD IV, 33—Tappert, p. 556).

The Large Catechism agrees with my assessment that at Jesus' baptism a "confirmation" was also taking place:

> ...you should honor and exalt Baptism on account of the Word, since God himself has honored it by words and deeds and has *confirmed* it by wonders from heaven. Do you think it was a jest that the heavens opened when Christ allowed himself to be baptized, that the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and that the divine glory and majesty were manifested everywhere? (LC IV, 21—Tappert, p. 439)

In the article on the "Person of Christ" in the Formula of Concord we find an answer to the question of "*who* does the confirming" by the reference to Mark 16:20 and the words:

> ...*he* [the ascended Jesus] is everywhere present to rule not only as God but also as man, from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth, as the prophets foretell... and as the apostles testify that *he* worked with them everywhere and *confirmed* the message by the signs that attended it. (FC SD VIII, 27—Tappert, p. 596)

Thus even though the Confessions do not elaborate the point, it is clear that the manifestation of the Spirit in signs and wonders is accepted as a "confirmation" effected by God of the faith that holds to the apostolic message.

Once one stops evaluating the position of the Lutheran reformers merely on the basis of what they say about the "Rite of Confirmation" and instead note what they say more generally on the role and place of "spiritual experience," one begins to see their agreement with what we have seen to be the New Testament teaching on "confirmation." For instance, Luther says the following when commenting on Jesus' words in John 14:21—"I will love him and *manifest* myself to him":

> Thus this is a sermon not only of words but of experience as well. To be sure, Christ begins with the Word, when he lets us hear the gospel and receive Baptism and the sacrament. But the devil comes on the heels of this; he assails and hinders us on all sides, in an attempt to check and obstruct the Word. At this point, experience must enter in and enable a Christian to say: 'Hitherto I have heard that Christ is my Savior, who conquered sin and death, and I believed this. Now my experience bears this out. For I was often in the agony of death and in the bonds of the devil but he rescued me and manifested himself. Now I see and know that he loves me and that what I believe is true.' (LW AE 24, 151)

Thus "spiritual experience" which is grounded in the Word (that is, experience which is the fulfillment of promise) functions as a faith-*confirming* gift of *God.*

Ecumenical implications

One gets the sense that we are just at the beginning of a renewed discussion of the role of confirmation in our theology and practice. These matters were discussed thoroughly in the generation preceding the *LBW* (Arthur Repp's book, cited in the Goodwin/Groce article, was published in 1964, over thirty years ago!); however, since the so-called "charismatic movement" was then just in its infancy, the impact of this movement with its emphasis on "spiritual gifts" and the experience of being "baptized with/in the Holy Spirit" could not yet be integrated into the discussion. That is what

prompted me to write *Confirmation and the Charismata* (1983).

Now seems to be the time to relate properly in our theology and practice what is not divided in the New Testament canon but what has been divided in our denominational experience of Christianity. The article by Goodwin/Groce is only a reminder of where things stood in 1964 and a red flag warning that we must resist any understanding of confirmation that is no more than "Affirmation of Baptism" (affirmation by *whom*? I ask). Perhaps before we can answer their question, "What are we confirming?," correctly, we must direct our attention to the New Testament and not merely to tradition and the history of dogma and liturgy. In fact, as we do so, we will discover that the New Testament requires us to rephrase the question and ask: "What is *God* confirming, and how?" As we study these matters together with our minds open to what the New Testament teaches, I believe we are in for some pleasant surprises ecumenically speaking, especially if we allow the recent book by Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991) to contribute to the discussion. *(See a review of this book later in this issue. Ed.)*

I believe we are in for some pleasant surprises ecumenically speaking.

Book Reviews

Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries. By Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991. xiv and 354 pages. Paper. $12.95.

Pentecostalism has had its own way of interpreting those pesky "baptism in the Holy Spirit" passages in the new Testament, whereas Lutheranism has by and large simply wished to sacramentalize and ritualize what in the New Testament is clearly linked with spiritual experience and the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Or when recognizing that the latter is indeed the case, Lutheranism has for the most part taken the other way out by dispensationalizing these New Testament events and pacifying itself with the assurance that we simply "have it all" in the event of water baptism.

This book, authored by top-notch and respected Roman Catholic scholars, will block these Lutheran dodges of scriptural authority for all who have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches through the witness not only of the New Testament but also that of the authors of eleven post-biblical texts from the first eight centuries of the church's history. Almost the whole of the Mediterranean seaboard bears witness to the fact that the apostolic paradigm, that is, the charisms, including the prophetic, were imparted during Christian initiation.

McDonnell writes: "I have been looking for three elements in the authors studied: (1) a sign of the prayer for the descent of the Spirit, usually the imposition of hands, but also anointing, (2) praying for the descent of the Spirit, (3) an expectation that the charism will be manifested, and/or the actual manifestation" (p. 315).

As Lutherans review their practice of Confirmation, would it not be helpful to investigate the understanding of the New Testament church and this also as it was understood and represented by the church of the first eight centuries? Can we possibly recover the significance of the fact that we "have it all" in water baptism, if we don't test that truth by discovering what was included in that "all" in the understanding of the church in its first eight centuries? Will the first be last and the last first as we bequeath the full spectrum of the charismata to the Pentecostals and comfort ourselves with the reductionistic truth that at least our names are written in heaven? (Lk 10:17-20)

In this ecumenical age are we not able to learn from our brothers and sisters both horizontally and vertically? As Lutherans we confess both the apostolicity and the catholicity of the church. Let us go and learn what that means by including in our studies the book by McDonnell and Montague.

(For those who would rather not steal—a book of 368 pages for under $13 is a steal!—a thirty-page, popular pastoral document which presents the essentials of the biblical texts and those from the early church has been prepared by the above authors. It is entitled *Fanning the Flame: What Does Baptism in the Holy Spirit Have to Do with Christian Initiation?* and sells for $1.95—a lesser steal.)

Theodore Jungkuntz
Ann Arbor, Michigan

The Stained Glass Ceiling. By Sally B. Purvis. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995. xv and 108 pages. Paper. $11.99.

"They live as exceptions, and yet what they exceptionally are is conventional" (p. 85). By way of summary, Sally Purvis describes the two women, senior pastors whose ministries are the focus of study for this work. Through narrative style the reader is engaged in the impact of their ministries and the lives of their congregations.

We read that these women transgress the cultural roles which could marginalize them. They do so by maintaining multiple memberships in several cultural groups. Their success

comes through crossing boundaries and combining groups in unconventional ways.

Calling a woman as senior pastor is a risk to the congregations. While this risk is never specifically defined, the examples suggest that there is a shift of power structures. One of the pastors is described as enhancing, enlarging, and streamlining existent structures (p. 95).

The cost to the women clergy is possibly easier to identify. Purvis describes the cost as the confrontation, suspicion, challenge, and isolation which the senior woman pastor must face with every new group, crisis, or situation.

This brief study of two women presents the reader with a couple of difficulties. Feminist Congregational Research tools (pp. 10-15) describe a process which is hard to follow through the narrative text. Other than describing the presuppositions of the researchers, the reader is not provided with insight as to the problems or strengths of these tools until the concluding remarks. There we learn that a primary claim for a single woman's leadership style cannot be substantiated.

Serious consideration was not given to the effect of the previous pastors. While their personalities are mentioned, their attitude toward women clergy is not examined. Additionally, only passing mention is made that both congregations experienced a major conflict involving the previous male pastor. The effect of this conflict upon the power dynamics is not studied.

In spite of the complicated research methodology, *The Stained Glass Ceiling* offers the reader, lay and clergy, the affirmation that the care and leadership of two congregations were not compromised by their decisions to call women as senior pastors. These two women are using the conventional role of the senior pastor to broaden the range of possible social constructs for the people of God to whom they minister.

Elaine G. Siemsen
Riverside, Illinois

Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis. By L. Gregory Jones. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. 313 pages. Cloth, $28.00; paper, $18.00.

The practice of forgiveness is one of the most basic teachings and disciplines of the Christian faith. L. Gregory Jones powerfully argues, however, that it is also one of the most misunderstood aspects of both Christian practice and social ethics because it has been unjustly neglected in both the Western church and culture. This book therefore fills a surprising void because there have been comparatively few theological discussions of forgiveness in recent years. The result? The church, which in the U.S. finds itself often in "psychological captivity" to Western culture, has tried to practice forgiveness according to "therapeutic models" which make forgiveness either too easy (Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of "cheap grace") or too difficult (when violence becomes seen as the only effective response to injustice). Jones' goal is to provide us with "a stereoscopic vision that seeks to reorient our thinking about the presuppositions and implications of forgiveness." Bonhoeffer's concept of "cheap grace" provides the dominant theological background for Jones' project.

The first chapter provides the reader with a wonderfully insightful overview of Bonhoeffer's theology and life as it relates to forgiveness, especially his struggles with forgiveness in his imprisonment at the hands of the Nazis. Bonhoeffer's life embodied for Jones costly forgiveness and reconciliation. In contrast, cheap grace was "the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession." Jones fully concurs with Bonhoeffer and concludes, "Cheap grace offers consolation without any change of life, without any sense of either dying or rising in Christ. Indeed, cheap grace does not require any embodiment; Bonhoeffer concluded that 'cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God.'"

Jones emphasizes, using Bonhoeffer as an example, that forgiveness is more than a single act or an event. It is rather a lifestyle which needs

to be learned and practiced "like a craft." Forgiveness is thus a way of life which must be embodied, it is a craft with very distinctive practices of community, personal confession and absolution, spiritual disciplines, prayer, justice, punishment, remembrance, forgetfulness, power and love.

But can Jones' Christian praxis of forgiveness also respond to the difficult cases of "loving the enemy," even when this includes those massively violent acts which have so dominated our world in the 20th century, e.g. in Nazi Germany, South Africa, Rwanda, Bosnia, etc.? Jones does not shrink back from such global challenges. Indeed, he finds that it is the growing reality of violence which makes the Christian craft of forgiveness all the more necessary in the modern world. But in order to understand concretely the lifestyle which embodies a forgiveness which is costly, just, and grounded in the biblical witness of Christ's life, death and resurrection, one must look to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The whole middle section of the book is dedicated to demonstrating why a trinitarian identification of God is crucial for an adequate account of forgiveness: the Father who desires communion, the shape of God's costly forgiveness in Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit which "leads believers to live lives of forgiveness in community."

In the power of the Spirit, Christians are enabled to unlearn bad habits and patterns of sin and evil and learn instead a life of holiness which leads to communion with God and neighbor—and to loving one's enemies. Jones argues that it is God's triune activity which should move Christians beyond a limited understanding of forgiveness which collapses Jesus' life, death and resurrection into an account of atonement and the forgiveness from individual guilt.

Jones' theological analysis quickly exposes how naive and superficial both the Christian and the Western cultural practice of forgiveness has become. Furthermore, he readily draws the reader into his arguments by a creative use of literature and film to exemplify points. Jones' theological analysis is a careful and thoughtful one, building upon feminist insights concerning the nature of sin and community together with a broad Barthian outline of the trinitarian doctrine. Jones is above all convincing as he describes the life of forgiveness as a craft, a comprehensive way of life grounded in the life of the Trinity that is far richer than often thought.

But despite these insights, or maybe because of them, one is left with such a yearning to know more, to better comprehend Jones' notion of the "harmony of the Trinity," and to see concrete models of Jones' embodied forgiveness. Is Jones' Trinity merely a reflection of Barth's trinitarian doctrine, or have some new elements been added? Furthermore, what does a community which embodies forgiveness à la Jones look like? Does Jones see examples of such communities today in South Africa, Bosnia, or Rwanda which have actually experienced violence? Or must we look to the past for models? Does Jones feel that the Medieval monastic movements embodied a model of Christian life which would still be valid today? Or would Jones prefer Bonhoeffer's experiment of community in Finkenwalde (not as much directly referred to in the book as Bonhoeffer's individual witness in prison)? In forcing us to see forgiveness more holistically and comprehensively, more as lifestyle than single act, one wants to know if Jones has actually experienced such a community, a community today which is faithfully living out the craft of forgiveness, "loving their enemies," in the midst of violence and hatred.

The sign of any good book is that it can inspire a sequel. It would be extremely stimulating to see Jones work on a second volume, this time written from the perspective of Christian communities today who are actually trying to live out the life of forgiveness within extremely violent situations. How would their real experience of embodying forgiveness inform or challenge Jones' theological analysis? We truly are just beginning to understand the Christian praxis of forgiveness!

Richard Bliese
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System. By Avery Dulles. New York: Crossroad, 1994. v and 228 pages. Paper. $14.95.

Avery Dulles' views on a number of theological topics should receive wider circulation with the publication of this paperback edition of his 1992 work. The book's 12 chapters, each based on published or unpublished papers from 1981-1991, engage such questions as the problem of theological method, the normative status of scripture and tradition, theology's relationship to philosophy and the physical sciences, the proper autonomy of university theology, and the future of ecumenical theology.

Dulles writes for those perplexed by the plethora of current theological options and the loss of consensus on how to properly adjudicate them. The solution offered by this prolific Catholic theologian is quite traditional: Although theology is an *autonomous* critical reflection on the content of the church's faith, it must nonetheless remain *accountable* to that faith. Accordingly, it must take seriously the pronouncements of the official church magisterium.

Contrary to those asserting that doctrines are mere "expressions" of inner attitudes (Lindbeck's "experiential-expressivist" category), or literal descriptions of divine states of affairs ("cognitive-propositionalism"), Dulles argues for an "ecclesial-transformative" account. This "post-critical" option, designed to steer between the subjectivism of the former and the objectivism of the latter, openly acknowledges faith's priority to understanding. On Dulles' account, human participation in the life of the church constitutes a symbolically-mediated encounter with a reality possessing a "plenitude of meaning" surpassing human conceptuality. Thus, while there are similarities with the general "cultural-linguistic" approach, Dulles distances himself from any construal which reduces dogmatic statements to mere rules "regulating the conduct of the worshiping community."

There is much merit in this book. The historical discussion of the relationship between tradition and scripture is illuminating and balanced. (Dulles rightfully points to the insufficiency of *sola scriptura.*) A sagacious final chapter argues that the ecumenical discussion must relearn an appreciation for the conflicting *truth* claims of the traditions. In the midst of overwhelming popular pressure for theologians to "just agree," it is refreshing to find a voice proclaiming that the question of truth is more important than the psychology of consensus.

While the book is lucid and well written, its topical format and chapter brevity do not allow adequate opportunity to establish some of its key points. Nonetheless, pastors, students, theologians, and all interested in Catholic theology (as all Lutherans should be) can profit from its reading.

Dennis Bielfeldt
Grand View College

Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology, Solidarity, and Modernity. By Johann-Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann. New York: Orbis Books, 1995. 206 pages. Paper. $18.95.

Thoughtful pastors will find much to ponder in this book, especially relating to issues of peace, justice, and the Christian perspective on modern society. How much of what the Christian believes about society is merely modern conditioning? Do Christians believe in human freedom? How does a truly biblical understanding of life enhance human relationships? Is there a Christian basis for political involvement that doesn't fall into an ideological or ethnic prejudice? What is the nature of an authentic Christian discipleship? What is the church intended by God to be? What is the social significance of the cross? If you are looking for answers for some or all of these questions, this book can be helpful indeed.

The book gives a good introduction to the thought of two of the most influential theologians of the last three decades. Both reclaim Christian eschatology from psychological/existential categories and emphasize public consequences of the Christian faith. Both propose that the conflicts and contradictions between faith and society are symptomatic of a theology that has lost its way. Both relentlessly seek a critical partnership between faith and modern society

that would not diminish either.

Metz and Moltmann are prophetic in proposing a public voice for Christian theology. Their concepts of rationality and modernity bridge the life of faith and modern reason. Each emphasizes the importance of our consideration of human suffering and injustice but in different ways. Metz describes the functioning of "dangerous memory" that points the direction of history's consummation. Moltmann describes in trinitarian terms how God suffers with us and what this means. Although there is much in common between Metz and Moltmann, there are also interesting contrasts.

David Reinhart
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross. By Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. 230 pages. $24.95.

Robert Hammerton-Kelly, a Research Scholar and Lecturer at Stanford University, utilizes the theory of René Girard regarding the origin and nature of violence to interpret Paul's understanding of the cross. According to Girard, violence is the result of deformed and imitative human desire that becomes both acquisitive and conflictual. He views religion as transforming this human violence into "sacred violence." Religion claims a divine will for transferring the violence to a substitute victim, thereby diverting it from destroying the human community. Girard considers prohibition, ritual, and myth as supporting this notion of the sacred.

Hammerton-Kelly uses chapter one to explicate Girard's comprehensive theory about sacred violence, and in chapter two he develops a method of interpretation for reading Paul based on this theory. The nub of his argument is that the "Cross of Christ is not a sacrificial mechanism but the deconstruction of sacrifice" (60). In other words, Paul comes to understand the cross as exposing the "sacred violence" of Judaism (as representative of all religion) which is expressed in its exclusiveness and scapegoating and is rooted in the sin of humanity. For Paul, the cross of Christ undermines this human construction of religion and makes possible "the new community of freedom and mutual acceptance" which witnesses to gracious activity of God in Jesus Christ. (See chapter 3.)

In the remaining chapters, Hammerton-Kelly unfolds the implications of this analysis of Paul. He defines sin as desire and argues that Adam's transgression involves a "deformation of desire"; thus he connects Girard's "sacred violence" and Paul's notion of original sin (chapter 4). Next Hammerton-Kelly concludes that after his conversion Paul viewed his own former persecution of the Christians as a manifestation of this sacred violence, since the Judaism he knew represented a construction of religion in conflict with God's will. Within this context, he explains how in Romans 9-11 Paul struggled to fit the opposition of most Jews into the plan of salvation (chapter 5). Hammerton-Kelly then argues that Paul comes to see the Mosaic Law as contributing to the exclusiveness and violence of Judaism and thus opposing the primary divine Law that both prohibits "mimetic rivalry" and commands the "love of the neighbor." This is why there is a vigorous debate over the proper way to interpret the Torah in most of Paul's letters (chapter 6). Hammerton-Kelly concludes his argument by claiming that Paul understands the Cross of Christ as initiating a new community wherein the reformation of human desire is possible. In its identification with Christ as nonviolent victim, the church exists by faith, hope and love—all expressions of living which comprise the new alternative to the old religion construed as sacred violence.

In the conclusion, Hammerton-Kelly anticipates the charge that his view of the Pauline criticism of Judaism easily leads to anti-Semitism. If read closely, he nuances his interpretation of Paul and argues that his reading of Paul need not lead in that direction. He concludes that "the sacred violence Paul discovered in Judaism is present in all religion, including Christianity" (9) and that "Paul did not reject the authority of Torah as such but only a certain Jewish interpretation of it" (9).

This book invites a careful reading in order to evaluate the legitimacy of this Girardian interpretation of Paul. Clearly Hammerton-Kelly's application of Girard's theory to Paul's under-

standing of the cross results in numerous fresh and insightful explanations of Pauline texts (e.g., Rom 7:7-25), but it will take some time for scholars to test the overall validity of the book's thesis. In any case, this volume is worth reading. Pastors and teaching scholars will discover it to be an immense stimulation for their pondering of Paul.

James L. Bailey
Wartburg Theological Seminary

Briefly Noted

Proverbs. By R. N. Whybray (Eerdmans, $19.99). After a long hiatus, we finally have a first-rate commentary on Proverbs in English—and several more are in the final stages of preparation. Here's how W. sums up the book's message: Proverbs is addressed to individuals and their personal concerns. Yahweh rewards and punishes in accordance with the principles of justice but remains free and inscrutable in his decisions. The teaching of Proverbs should be seen as complementary to that of the historical Israelite religious tradition and not opposed to it. *RWK*

Old Testament Interpretation. Past, Present, and Future. Edited by James Luther Mays, David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards (Abingdon, $19.95). These eighteen essays in honor of the recently retired Gene M. Tucker describe the most significant developments in OT studies in the second half of this century and sketch out the future horizon. Tucker has been a leading figure in the massive development of the Society of Biblical Literature and its publications. Norman Habel, the only Lutheran among the essayists, writes on social justice research and concludes: "The source for authority in relation to social justice lies not in the text of the Hebrew Scriptures but in the experience of the suffering reader. And the reader may not be the highly trained scholar or cleric, but the oppressed community whose suppressed voice may be heard in some limited way through the scholar." *RWK*

Frederick Danker's *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* was a trustworthy guide to the basic tools of biblical interpretation for both Testaments in its first three editions (1960, 1966, 1970). It combined the history of the tools, suggestions for use, and biblical illustrations—all done with wit and purple prose. Now Danker updates it to take account of new tools, new editions, and—to some degree—new computer based resources and research tools (Fortress, $18). **MTBS** covers biblical texts (including translations), concordances, lexica and grammars, Bible dictionaries, Judaica (with a separate chapter on the Dead Sea Scrolls), archaeology, geography and social world (in a chapter titled "Contextuality"), and commentaries. The sections on archaeology and social world are rather spotty in coverage, compared to the other sections. Two other shortcomings are more serious. There is no discussion of the resources now available on computer, e.g. the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae data base, the comparable data bases for Greek inscriptions and papyri and Latin literature, the availability of early Jewish literature on CD-ROM, and the programs to access them. And there is nowhere in this book a discussion of the integration of these results of research with these tools into a coherent unified interpretation or of the problem(s) of hermeneutics. But what is there is stunning and deserves wide use.

Edgar Krentz

Books reviewed in *Currents* can be ordered through the **LSTC Book Center**
1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615
(312) 256-0753

Preaching Helps

First Sunday in Advent—The Transfiguration of Our Lord, Series B

Noonday Dark, Midnight Sun

"Lighten Our Darkness" is the title of one of Douglas John Hall's stunning books. Of course he stole the title. These words are one of the primal screams of humankind.

The wonder of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany is that God answers our cry, and the mystery of these seasons is that the divine response is so odd: a voice in the wilderness, the cries of an infant lying in a manger, the sound of outpoured water in the Jordan River.

Who better to enlighten us about the threat of darkness and to lead our contemplation of the wonder of light than the inhabitants of Alaska? They didn't invent SAD (Sun Affective Disorder), but when they talk about the darkness and the light, they do so with the authenticity that comes from deep personal experience.

Pastor Jim Drury of Sitka Lutheran Church in Sitka shepherded (sled-dogged?) a process involving more than a dozen fellow Alaskans to give us the material for this issue. His own contributions and those of all the others are identified by means of their initials in the following pages. It got a little complicated, and I hope I have them all straight!

Here are the folks who contributed. JHD and CJ are **Pastor Jim Drury** and **Cynthia Johnstone**, church secretary extraordinaire (among other things), of Sitka. From First Lutheran in Ketchikan: SB, KB and SH are **Pastor Stan Berntson, Kate Berntson** (our artist), and **Sherry Hewett** (who identifies herself as a feminist Christian). CM is **Pastor Carroll Marohl** of Petersburg Lutheran in Petersburg who wrote exegetical overviews for Advent and Christmas and worked with several anony-

mous fishing families to produce the material for the Second Sunday after Christmas. KO is **Pastor-Pilot Ken Olson** who plies the waters abound Prince of Wales Island in the Motor Vessel "Christian," a converted 60-foot seiner carrying word and sacrament ministry and all kinds of assistance into remote communities. BE is **Brenda "Alaska Rose" Egelby**, AIM, assistant to the bishop, Alaska Synod. AGJ is **Pastor A. Gordon Johnson** and RAS is **Roger Severson**, a management consultant, both of Resurrection Lutheran in Juneau. DP is Alaska Synod **Bishop Don Parsons** and JS is **Dr. John Stamm**, Director of Related Services for the Anchorage School District and PLTS Board member. Jim Drury wanted me to include a special salute to **Pastor Larry Rorem** and **Laura Rorem**, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Juneau, for their prayers and support and for their ongoing advocacy on behalf of the least in Alaskan society.

The listing of all these names and places reminds me that preaching is always itself a wonder and a mystery. It is a complex act of communication involving the spirit, the preacher, the hearers, and all the experiences we have had of other people impinging on our consciousness as preachers and hearers. And we preachers and hearers of today are in some kind of marvelous conversation with the prophets and apostles and communities of yesterday. When it's working, we are all moving through the darkness toward the light, led by the pillar of fire who is none other than Jesus Christ.

Light in darkness is the theme of the art work freshly produced for this issue by Kate Berntson of Ketchikan. She usually works in watercolors but switched to pen and ink to enliven this issue.

Thanks to her and to Jim and to all our northern enlighteners. And to all of you, "Good preaching!" in days of darkness and in seasons of light.

Yours most cordially,

Robert H. Smith
Editor of *Preaching Helps*
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
2770 Marin Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94708

ADVENT: An Advent-ageous Time



Advent is truly an "advent-ageous" time to stand before God's people and explore with them the wonders of the second coming of the Christ.

Advent 1 begins with images of fire that reveal the power of God's presence in the midst of a people who are desperate for guidance and help. The same hint of desperation is apparent in the Corinthian congregation. They had completely forgotten how charismatically gifted they were. They were waiting for the Lord to reveal himself to them. Mark tells about that revelation happening with the coming of the Son of Man with power and glory! It is expected that the faithful are to be witnesses to that coming. The key concept here is preparatory vigilance.

Advent 2 begins with an Old Testament double imperative: "Give Comfort! Speak tenderly!" The prophet's tone is one of mercy and love. Comfort and tender words are not the norm then or now. They usher in a new time. And they are going to be needed as one approaches the final fiery conflagration of the Judgment in which the old universe will be annihilated (2 Peter 3). With such strong words and negative imagery, the gospel is truly "advent-ageous" since it introduces Jesus as the *Kyrios*. John, the fiery prophet-messenger from God, introduces the One who will come to be known as the prophet of mercy and forgiveness.

Advent 3 is a day destined to talk about the Promised Land! The Old Testament lesson is the source Jesus quotes in Lk 4: 18-19. In it we are told of the arrival of the messianic era. The figure of John the Baptizer is featured again. This time he announces Jesus to be the true Light that is coming. John, like Elijah and other forerunners and prophets, are merely the first glow of the coming day.

On Advent 4 consider it a treat to delve into the under-used pages of 2 Samuel. Explore the God-promise given to David and the peace and security that promise provide, as David is told his dynasty will reign forever! Praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit erupts from the closing verses of Romans 16. With that doxology ringing in our ears, we approach the "advent-ageous" ending of this season with Mary being told she's going to have a baby. As a recipient of grace, Mary is being prepared for what shall be. The full impact of grace upon one's self can be a bit frightening. There is no need to apologize for your fear. Mary didn't. For with the grace comes another gift, peace. This truly is an "advent-ageous" beginning! CM

First Sunday in Advent December 1, 1996

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Isaiah 64:1-9
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

"From the Pew. . ."

I have prayed this prayer countless times. Alone in my room I would turn my face to the ceiling or the wall or to the stars in the night sky. And I would cry to God. *"Make yourself known to me!"* I pleaded in my loneliness. And then as I felt abandoned, unloved, I accused myself for not being "good" enough. I came to think of myself as unclean, "clothed in the filthy rags" of my own unrighteousness, completely unworthy of God's love or concern, even to call on his name.

Then I read the Word. The *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us. I began to get a sense of the power of God's love. I remembered rumors of God's deeds in other people's lives. Hope became mine as I pondered creation. A childlike trust directs my faith.

Advent reminds me to hope. Hope for love, for peace, for Christ's second coming. Is this writing of Isaiah's placed in Advent to remind us that prayers are answered? The *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us. Advent is the "anticipation of [Christ's] coming to which I desperately and passionately cling." (Walter Brueggemann)

Now when I pray I still, sometimes, feel that my words fall on deaf ears. But at other times I am content to believe that God's almighty and everlasting love will have the last word. And that Word is Jesus.

How can I teach my children to hope? Christmas happened two thousand years ago. Christ has already been born. Why do we have Advent? Pretending that we're waiting for God's son? Perhaps the pulpit could speak to the concept of Advent, the four week season and the larger perspective of Jesus' second coming? CJ

". . . to the Pulpit."

For me, the Isaiah text is "anticipatory socialization," a Stephen Ministry term meaning to get ready for something in advance, as in preparing for a loved one's death or getting ready for some momentous change in life. We practice this all the time, don't we, by whatever name we call it?

There is no "pretending" in this season. No make-believe. For four weeks we live in "anticipatory socialization" getting ready for Christmas. Why? Because Christmas will get us ready for all the rest of Christ's comings. Child in the temple. Adult in the wilderness. Teacher calling disciples. Messiah preaching, teaching, and healing. Jesus dying. *Kyrios* living.

By the time you read this, I will have most likely proclaimed the gospel over the grave of one of my members. Here, in the early days of June, we anticipate Christ's coming. Margaret knows this, accepts it, and thus each day has been transmuted by faith from the ordinary into the miraculous; truly, her time is *kairos* rather than *chronos*. And, as Cynthia remarked above about the "larger perspective of Jesus' second-coming," Margaret is teaching us that, like the first coming, the second coming holds no fear for the children of God.

Isaiah's plea has come true for us. That old saw about being careful about what you pray for may not be as bad a homiletical roadmap to follow after all! The cognate to that could also be "Be careful what you preach. You may get it back!" That's the danger of these Advent sermons and prayers. When we pray for the heavens to open and the Lord to come down, the Lord will come down! JHD

Second Sunday in Advent
December 8, 1996

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
Isaiah 40:1-11
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

"From the Pew. . ."

The coming of Christ foretold by Isaiah
To give hope to God's people,
they sing *"Alleluia!"*
Our hearts, like a mountain, unyielding
to hope; Our valleys of despair,
a prophecy for a rope.
The laws of the land created by man
Like houses built on foundations of sand.
A hope for a future two thousand years past,
Today we still look for a peace
that will last.
The Prince of Peace; He will come again.
Will our misery in our sins, then,
finally end?
We wait for a Savior to take us to freedom.
Safe from our hurts and into his
kingdom.
We long for the arms of love and protection,
Secure in God's grace and free
from rejection.
Our task as God's people is to share the
Good Word; To soften the hearts
of those who've not heard. CJ

". . . to the Pulpit."

(Suggested hymn tune: Earth and All Stars.
As always, before use, ask permission.)

1. Wheelchairs and ramp, crutches and
walkers, sing to the Lord a new song.
Hearing aid and cane, Braille text and Signer,
sing to the Lord a new song.
Refrain:
Our paths will God's Words make straight.
God's Word will stand forever.

2. Grieving and sad, tearful and hurting,
sing to the Lord a new song.
Outcast and lost, stranger and hopeless,
sing to the Lord a new song.
Refrain:
Our paths will God's Words make straight.
God's Word will stand for ever.

3. Joyful and free, children and least ones,
sing to the Lord a new song.
Stumbling and blind, hurting and dying,
sing to the Lord a new song.
Refrain:
Our paths will God's Words make straight.
God's Word will stand for ever. JHD

Third Sunday in Advent December 15, 1996

Psalm 126
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

"From the Pew. . ."

The curling, snarling, leaping flames devoured the soul and the breath of everything within their 140-foot high grasp. Fickle winds drove and dragged the fire in every direction. The fire was so hot it melted cars into molten pools bubbling around stinking tires. When it was over the earth lay ashen and the spirit of the people was faint.

No human lives were lost, but fire fighters searching for hot spots stepped into that ash and were badly burned by hidden and sudden heat. At one point the winds swirled, and, surrounded by fire, they deployed their protective blankets and the flames burned over them. A beloved dog, a life companion, lost. Still clinging to hope, his master sent friends to look—he couldn't come himself. All that was found was a skeleton, the flesh consumed by the behemoth called fire.

But the spirit of the Lord could not be consumed. Those newly homeless were given the garland of a temporary home with another family for as long as they needed it. They received the oil of free medical care for themselves and their animals. They received a mantle of clothing freely and quickly given from the closets of those who still had closets. Strangers cared for the hundreds of sled dogs evacuated. Horses saved were tethered and grazed in church yards. The righteousness of God showed in the wet eyes of his people as a Dalmatian puppy was laid in the arms of the sobbing fire fighter who had lost his home and his beloved dog.

There were oaks like the Red Cross, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Social Services, and the Salvation Army, who came with skill, experience, and knowledge, placing a relief plan into immediate action. The planting of the Lord grew as every church in the area joined to help in the recovery led by the oaks of relief, and people raised their heads declaring that they would repair the ruined cities and, as the blessed rains fell, the earth brought forth green shoots of hope in the blackened, bleak, naked forest.

The Good News of deliverance comes in different ways. The people of this community had no thought for themselves as they gave whatever they had to those who were burned out. Perhaps the most important thing they gave was hope and a listening ear.

The Good News, Jesus Christ, is coming. Listen for him. He comes not with the rage and roar of a fire but with the songs of the angels. Be ready to see the radiance of his light.

Rejoice completely with your whole being. Know that you too are covered with a blanket, a blanket of righteousness.

Wait and prepare, but while you wait, rejoice, for we are a people whom the Lord has blessed. Christ is coming... soon. BE

". . . to the Pulpit."

If the first great theme in the Bible is deliverance from bondage, then the second might be homecoming from banishment. The people addressed in Isaiah 61 are an oppressed people, a scattered people. They long to be brought home again from their place of exile.

And Isaiah proclaims the joyous fulfillment of their longing. The people who have felt the heel of the Babylonians upon their necks are about to experience a great reversal of their fortunes. They will rise from dishonor to everlasting joy. Their homecoming will continue in perpetuity. That is

the promise of our text from Isaiah.

There is some legal language here, but it is most of all rich in natural and common imagery, drawn from farming and the carpenter's shop. The cap stone to the passage speaks of the "sprouting of righteousness and praise," as if these gracious gifts grow straight out of creation. (Luther said that the second article of the creed always leads us back to the first article.)

Isaiah leads us to contemplate exile and homecoming. Early in the Gospel of John it is said: "He came to what was his own (to his own home) and his own people did not accept him." That sounds like a meditation on Luke 4. Note that Jesus is in Nazareth "where he had been brought up." He entered the synagogue "as was his custom." There, Jesus quotes directly from the first words of our text. These words are a wake-up call to the rich and powerful to truly "come home." Especially the poor and lowly would be heartened by thoughts of a year of jubilee. If Jesus had just held his tongue at that point.

But he continues, and before he gets through, their hearts are uncovered. Rich and poor, the home town people want to kill him. The larger context of Isaiah makes us think of the one who suffers in order to bring back the lost from their scatteredness and homelessness.

Jesus' great parable of homecoming is, of course, that of the son with the lower status (Luke 15). After wasting his inheritance, he comes home to a father seemingly oblivious to any wrong done by his wayward son. It is justice transformed into grace which, lifted on high, draws all home. KO

Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 22, 1996

Psalm 89:1-4
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

"From the pew . . ."

The king is in his house, the ark of the covenant is in a tent. Herod is in his palace, and Jesus will be born in a barn. I live in a new home, and the homeless freeze on the street.

The Lord God says, *"Why? Why, after all I have done for you, is there no home for my freezing, homeless, lost children? I washed you in baptismal waters and have been with you wherever you have gone. I took you and made you something. I made you my child."*

"But Lord, look at the Habitat for Humanity homes we built last summer. Look at these three families who have real homes!"

"But why is there no home for my freezing, homeless, lost children?"

"What do you want me to do, Lord?"

"Build me a house of God. Go and pick up my freezing children and take them to safety. Write your checks, but also go to your new home and get the blanket off that warm bed and give it to one of my lambs who has neither. I have appointed a place for my people and you are in that place. Help my people. Build me a house made of people with open hearts. Make the doors of my house stand open so that its warmth and light revive my freezing, homeless, lost children. Get ready. My son is coming. I tell you this, child, my house and your house shall be one."

My house is decorated. My church has a lovely tree all decked out in white Chrismons, and the red poinsettias shout,

"We're here! We're ready! Ready for Christmas!" We want to sing carols. Why can't we sing carols, it's almost Christmas? Ah, but we must wait and prepare. We must anticipate and yearn for the Christ-child. My son will be home for Christmas and I've been preparing for a month. Cookies, gifts, a sparkling house, and love piled behind the floodgate of motherhood just waiting to spill over. But I have to wait until he gets here. I have to wait until the time is right. And I have had to prepare.

In the days of the prophet Samuel, it was right and proper to have a structure of fine cedar adorned with gold upon gold. The people sacrificed their jewels and their gold to build a temple to house the ark of the covenant. That gold was their social security, their vacation, and sometimes their next meal. The planning and the preparation and the waiting for the temple was a sacrifice too. In the ark of the covenant God had gone before them and come behind them, protected them and fed them. Now it was time for those people to build the temple, a fit resting place for the ark.

In these days it is right and proper to build our buildings strong, warm and secure, but also open and welcoming. In a few days we celebrate Christmas. Shall it be a celebration in the circle of our family and friends in *memory* of the birth of Jesus, or shall it be a sacrificial celebration of care, ministry, and warm gifts of love that will flood over those homeless, freezing, lost lambs?" BE

". . . to the Pulpit."

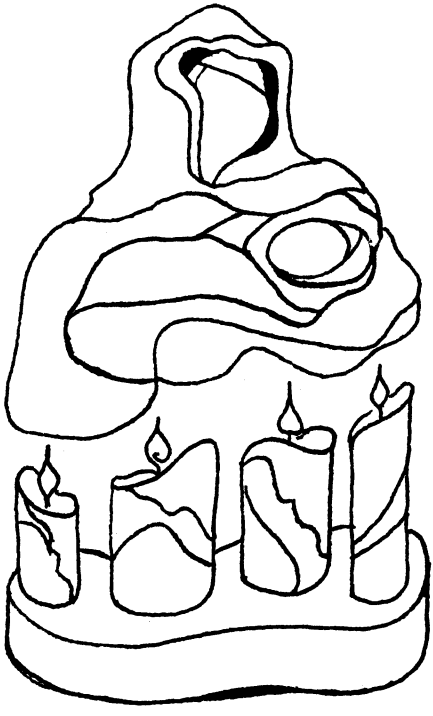
Having built himself a house, David now has a yen to build a house for the Lord. Nathan argues against the idea, as Samuel once argued against kingship itself.

King and house are first of all symbols, not merely practical matters for creaturely survival. Think how Nathan alters his reference to "house" as in "house of David." Role and dwelling in society have the symbolizing capacity to expand a person, make him seem bigger than life. A certain numinous quality is effected. Messiah and temple are the outcome.

His house, that is, David's sinful house, or is it God's house, will remain forever according to the word of the Lord through Nathan. What was in David's mind? He had brought the ark to his capital city somewhat selfishly. At first he was afraid. Why? Why do we build houses that are much too big for our *real* needs (and consume so many trees)? As a way to envision justice, recall Amos telling Israel that the Lord would "smite the summer house with the winter house." Jesus, the carpenter's son and true builder of God's house, said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it again." This heir of David also said, "...birds have nests...but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Always at last, winsome David did not forget that he was once a shepherd boy sleeping in the fields. Michal (Saul's proud daughter) was ashamed of David because he abased himself before the people. It is difficult for me to picture David as someone who thought himself to be "pretty good," one of the "better people" as we use those terms with so much irony, and yet with so much truth. The "presence of the Lord," a numinous term used by Jeremiah referring to God leaving the temple in Jerusalem, is returned to us at a time and at a place to which we can point. Advent is about that presence — Jesus — "a once and future king." KO

CHRISTMAS: Promises Kept



The Christ-Mass allegedly began approximately 300 years after Jesus' resurrection. It is said that Christian priests were desperate, looking for a last ditch way to turn their parishioners' hearts from the resurgent interest in pagan cults and re-focus their lives on the faith and values of Christianity. It was thought (and, as it turned out, successfully) that a celebration of our Lord's birth was just the needed focal point.

This pastor-proclaimer has not found it to be particularly helpful castigating C & E parishioners (or even faithful pew warmers) for their indulgence and tacit approval of the commercialization of these holy days. They have come to expect our outbursts and unholy tantrums. They have grown immune to the criticisms. But they will still be there. Celebrate the Christ-Mass with all who grace the pew.

When beginning your planning for this Mass, start with the "remnant" (Second Sunday after Christmas: Jer 31:7-14) in mind. There is and always will be a small group of faithful who have gotten the whole picture! Celebrate with them and allow the others to begin their Christmas worship by eavesdropping. Show them your joy. Permit them to see that promises are kept. Help them experience that sorrow can be turned to joy and salvation (First Sunday after Christmas: Isa 61:10–62:3).

Central to the Mass is the Christ. In a coded text we learn that he is the God-sent (ἀποστέλλω) One. Those in the know realize that there is something dynamic happening here. To be "apostled" is to receive complete and unequivocal authority from God to do something (First Sunday after Christmas: Gal 4:4-7)! What's more, this divine-sent One is the One who releases God's people from the Old Way of doing things by choosing and purifying them, making them participants in a New Way (Christmas Eve: Titus 2:11-14).

Redemption is ours! There is a strong baptismal theme appearing in Eph 1:3-14 (Second Sunday after Christmas). (See also 1 Pet 1:3-12, Christmas, Titus 3: 4-7, Christmas Dawn, and Heb 1:1-12, Christmas Day.) The heart of the baptismal-mass is the certainty that a person is no longer under the thumb of abusers and oppressors; "He gave us...a fresh beginning!" (Titus 3:5 CEV.) Let those who are eavesdropping hear this message clearly. You may also want them to hear you admit that redemption is not easy to comprehend. It is a mystery (Second Sunday after Christmas). But the newborn baby is at the center of the mystery, bringing clarity with hope to a still segregated world.

The Gospels underscore the power of the Christ-Mass. Luke 2 reveals the simple

power of promises kept! Luke celebrates Jesus with the titles Σωτηρ (Savior), Χριστος (Anointed), Κυριος (Lord). For Luke, Σωτηρ is the keyword, salvation the predominant theme.

John 1:1-18 (Christmas Day and Second Sunday after Christmas) unravels Jesus' genealogy from the divine side of the family tree. What an opportunity to see *kairos* in action as a logical, sequential and consequential unfolding of God's Plan of Salvation starting from Day 1! Our Creator isn't finished with us yet! The climax of Creator's personal involvement (verse 14) arrived when Logos became flesh as a temporary and mortal only-begotten Son of our Forever God. Talk about promise keeping: our God is the original Promise Keeper.

Christmas Eve
December 24, 1996

Psalm 96
Isaiah 62:2-7
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2: 1-20

"From the Pew . . ."

As I listen to the familiar words from Luke every Christmas Eve, I must admit that I am not concentrating on the holy mysteries of God-incarnate in a tiny, human baby. I hear the story as a mom. I identify with Mary. I cannot hear these verses without noting all the things that are not mentioned: how scared, lonely, and in pain Mary must have been; that childbirth is not the clean, dry, sanitary crèche scene we paint for ourselves and place on our mantles. From my mother perspective, I look back on the births of my own children and think that I'd like to sit down over a cup of tea and chat with Mary about several things that Luke just doesn't cover in enough detail for me!

When my first child was born, I was amazed and more than a little overwhelmed by the flood of love and protectiveness I felt for this tiny person. I realized that every mother since the dawn of time must have felt this same way about her newborn. I was almost sick to think that anything bad might ever befall my precious baby and I could hardly bear to think that, as Mary held her own darling, perfect baby (we all think ours are perfect—but hers really was!) she had any idea of the immense, crushing responsibility for all humankind he would shoulder. Did she have any inkling of the painful and brutal death in store for her little boy? Did Mary have any idea what the future held for her baby?

Do any of us parents have a clue what dangers and trials our offspring will face? And, if we did, would it change for one second that unique and terrifying combination of love, fear, and responsibility we feel for our helpless babes? Probably not. If I'd known the tears I was going to shed over the time he got pinned at a PeeWee wrestling tournament... the time he got his arm broken... the time she got her heart broken... the time she was the only kid on her softball team who didn't get invited to the sleepover... I'd probably have cried a few more tears than I did, there in the delivery room, but I wouldn't have changed one single other thing about being a mom. I don't think Mary would, either, but I'd still like to ask her about it.

In Luke 2 we aren't told the fascinating details that interest me. All we know is that, like every other mother on the face of the earth throughout history, Mary went into labor and delivered a baby. We know there was a highly unusual birth announcement to shepherds, some interesting baby gifts (gold and frankincense and myrrh are kingly gifts, but personally, I think Mary would have preferred a year's diaper service), and the

accommodations weren't exactly a private room in the best hospital. We do know that she treasured the events of Jesus' birth in her heart and pondered over them. (When *did* you find time to ponder, Mary? Washing dishes? Folding clothes? Sitting at the Little League baseball field?) What Luke doesn't tell us is that Mary was probably a lot like the rest of us moms: she just wanted to get some sleep, cuddle and kiss that beautiful baby, and thank God for his safe delivery. And, like all mothers, if she was scared or nervous or worried about his future, she put those feelings aside and got on with the business of raising a child in a less-than-perfect world. So, as I sit in the pew this Christmas Eve, listening to that beautiful story read from Luke, I think, *"So, Mary. One lump or two?"* SH

". . . to the Pulpit."

It was the week before Christmas, 1993. I had been wrestling with the pressure of the upcoming Christmas Eve sermon. It was late in the week. Real late. No exciting new approach to Emperor Augustus, the shepherds, or Mary's ponderings. It was only my fifth Christmas Eve as a pastor. I was developing "an attitude."

Christmas and Easter were becoming the bane of this preacher. So many had told me that this was their experience. Same texts, year after year. Churches swelled by two or three times the normal number of worshippers. And an agonizing time preparing to say something to the throng, some of whom were making their annual or semi-annual effort at the work of worship.

The text study earlier in the week provided little help. My Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist and Episcopal brothers and sisters actually contributed to my funk because they experienced my experience. A rarity: normally we staggered our funks enabling us to minister effectively to each other. Not this year.

So the battle with Luke 2 became desperate. How about this? I will animate the inanimate! The swaddling clothes or the manger will take on heart and mind and voice and senses. They (or one of them) could even have tactile abilities. Then I will let them tell their Christmas Eve stories: the manger, crude but effective and reliable, holding the Savior of the world in his newly infant moments; the swaddling clothes, with the privilege of being the first to carry the Messiah, eventually being even closer to the child than his mother, she who would feel her child through the clothes; the voice of the manager describing the surroundings, wondering at such a privilege, why God chose his/her stable to reveal God's glory; the voice of the swaddling clothes, describing the smell of the newborn, the sounds of his cooing, the love of his parents.

But the manger became a manger and the swaddling clothes became swaddling clothes. It wasn't "working." The battle continued. The "attitude" would not be so easily overcome.

I needed somehow to experience this text. It was dead for me, enshrined in a museum of old pageants with bath-robed shepherds and blue-shawled Marys and a plastic or rubber baby Jesus. There was no heavenly rift for me, no angel chorus, no sign, no triangling for me like the shepherds with Mary and Joseph and their God. I couldn't rejoice at how God had brought us together in this great event. I was still fighting this text that celebrates the bringing together of so many beings—heavenly and earthly.

The exegetical method wasn't working. It was time to come out of the text and speak and I hadn't even yet entered. Desperation turned to panic. So I decided it was time to pray. Like Doc in the old *Gunsmoke* western, I had done all I could do to save this

Christmas Eve and now I had better turn to God. When death is imminent (and my panic was a sure sign of impending death) even a Lutheran pastor will pray for help with a sermon.

Two prayers. The first for me. For my cleansing, my renewal, for God's tabernacling in me. One ritualistic prayer in seven parts. Much longer than the second prayer. The second prayer, for me and for others, was short and direct: "Father. What would you have me say to your people this Christmas Eve?"

It was answered soon. Steady, not audible, but inwardly heard. Unmistakable. *"Tell them that I love them."*

"Anything else?"

"No. That is enough."

Christmas Eve came and the gospel was read in the midst of the people of God at First Lutheran Church in Ketchikan, Alaska. Then we sang verses 3 and 4 of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and the previously-dreaded time had arrived.

The story you have just read was told in a much shorter version. Then, a pause after "Tell them that I love them." Here and there, scattered throughout the overheated sanctuary, made overly warm by many bodies and a hundred candles, one could hear and see the results of gentle weeping. God had triangled again—with preacher and parish—with parishioner and parishioner. The power of God in community. For, you see, the preacher wasn't the only desperate one in the sanctuary that evening. Heaven opened with its message of peace to a people who needed to hear it again. And desperation drowned in a sea of hope.

God's angels. God's Mary and Joseph. God's Son. God's shepherds. God's church. God's connecting of this people. God's patience with "attitudes." God's Christmas Eve. God's Hope. God's Peace.

"Tell them that I love them." JHD

Christmas Day
December 25, 1996

Psalm 98
Isaiah 62:6-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2: 8-20

"From the Pew . . ."

"Do not be afraid," the angel said. Are you kidding? I was afraid when I saw the northern lights for the first time. Lightning is frightening. Earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, all are terrifying. The shepherds were terrified because they had never seen angels before. They were sure it meant certain death. "Don't be afraid!?" Indeed!

Imagine Mary's fear when she is told she will conceive and bear a child. The Son of God, no less! The awesome responsibility of being pregnant with this holy baby, bearing a child and remaining a virgin? What of her future with Joseph? How would the Holy Spirit overshadow her and make her pregnant? Will it hurt?

But scripture does not describe Mary as having the same kinds of fears that I would have had in her place. Her only concern is what kind of greeting this might be that comes from an angel of the Lord (Lk 1:29). Her only question, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (Lk 1:34)

God told Abraham to leave his home in Haran and go to Canaan. Was he afraid? I don't know. Probably. But Abraham went and did what God had told him to do.

The angels said, "Do not be afraid." What does that mean? Does it mean we deny our feelings of doubt and fear? I don't think so. It means we trust God's faithful promises to be with us always. The shepherds, Mary, and Abraham have shown us what it means to have faith in the face of fear.

Jesus knew fear. He saw it in the eyes of his disciples. He felt it in his heart in the garden of Gethsemane. He knows our fears.

On this Christmas Day, we remember that God was born among us as a baby named Jesus; Emmanuel, God Is With Us. This is the solution to our fears: Emmanuel. CJ

"... to the Pulpit."

The questions of Advent become the imperatives of the incarnation! The hymns of Advent become the bells of Christmas!

When the first part of our liturgy is completed and the second begins, do we "go in peace" and does our "serving the Lord" include room for our amazement?

When we've left altar, office or home behind, are the people trailing in our wake amazed at what we've said or done for them? Could we use an Easter-equivalent Christmas greeting?

P: Emmanuel. C: God is with us! Will we "lead our people forth in joy with *shouts!* of thanksgiving?"

Can we get our folks to *shout! as* they respond to the meal?

Where will you and your people go this week to make this news known? Where will your people be? Where are the people who so desperately need to hear this news?

Thank God for this child who comes and takes our world, changing it and changing us to sing to it. Christ is born! JHD

First Sunday after Christmas
December 29, 1996

Psalm 148
Isaiah 61:10–62:3
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

"From the Pew..."

As a feminist Christian, I find it hard to read the Jewish Law in Luke 2:22 and not go on a tirade about the implication that only "males that open the womb are to be called holy to the Lord" (RSV). I find it infuriating that, although Simeon and Anna both pronounce the divinity of the baby Jesus as he is brought to Jerusalem for dedication, only Simeon's words are recorded. Furthermore, Anna's list of accomplishments are mostly based on her relationships to men: the male ancestors of her tribe, how long she was married, how long she was widowed.

Instead of allowing myself to go completely berserk on the subject, I breathe deeply and take a moment to consider the male-dominated Jewish world in which Jesus lived during his time on earth. Whether I agree with the laws and the teachings of that paternalistic society or not (and I adamantly *do not*, beginning and ending with the deeply ingrained Judeo-Christian traditional thought of God as a male deity), I need to look at what Jesus, by his words and actions, taught to and about women within that society.

From the time his earthly birth was announced *to a woman*, his mother, Mary, to the time his triumph over earthly death was announced *to a woman*, Mary Magdalene, women were included and valued in his ministry. More so, even, than the full historical record has been allowed to show. I *do* feel anger toward the role the church has

traditionally allotted to women.

But, in reading this passage, I also see that Anna, by her very inclusion in his story during the first eight days of his earthly life, was an example of Jesus' New Jerusalem; where a prophetess' words are valued and heeded and recorded just as are a prophet's; where daughters, too, are holy to the Lord; where everyone, regardless of whether or not they have a penis to circumcise, is considered a child of God! SH

"... to the Pulpit."

In the midst of following the Law, the Spirit connects the holy family with a holy people. In the midst of following the Law, the holy family intersects with the devotional lives of Simeon and Anna.

Intersections of Law and Spirit, the expected and the surprise. The Law of Moses intersects with the lives of people of faith and guides their movements. In the midst of these guided movements, there is a complexity of intersections and connections, all of which strengthened the faith of those who moved in obedience to the Lord by the presence of God's Spirit.

The essence of Christianity is the connection of God's people through the beautiful news of the presence and power of our deliverer Jesus. The One who works the dynamic intersections and connections is the Holy Spirit. This is life in the Spirit. This is not a coldly calculated movement through life, but a life of order that also experiences and relishes the expected unexpected. As Simeon holds the child and utters what we call the *Nunc Dimittis*, the child's parents scratch their heads in wonder.

The church, living in the Spirit, is a veritable blizzard of intersections and connections, shared by the people of God (or the potential people of God). For Simeon and Anna, this day is like any other day and it is different from any other. Prayers are answered, spiritual discernments verified and celebrated. For them, out of their piety and law-directed lives, comes intense spiritual experience. For the child's parents, perhaps there is a need to be helped to "catch up" with what's going on. And all is centered in the Deliverer, and all is powered by the Spirit. There is prophecy in this story. The Holy Spirit has been and is at work in the lives of the priest, the prophetess, and the holy family.

Is there room for prophecy in our churches today? Is the carefully-crafted sermon the only source? Is there room in our churches for the expected unexpected, acknowledging the Deliverer, and rejoicing in the intersecting and connecting of believers by the Holy Spirit? Is there a place for swapping stories about what God has been doing?

Can we move under guidance of doctrine and constitution and local church practice and piety and still have room for prophetic utterance in the community of faith? Can we giggle and laugh and cry and sing with praise when we find ourselves in the midst of the Holy Spirit's work of connecting us around the Deliverer sent from God? Or are those days past and do we buy into an unspoken dispensational retreat to the safety of placing Simeon and Anna and the holy family in a scene inside a plastic bubble we buy at the Bible dime store? Take it out, shake it once a year, and watch the characters do their magic once more (the Alaska version would have snow falling, probably rain in Ketchikan!), then smile and put it back on the shelf?

Luke gives his readers the story of the presentation of Jesus the Deliverer to his God. The Law said that was what you did. That was how Mary and Joseph lived their lives. Did they *have* to kill a couple of birds to get the job done? Who knows, for sure? But they moved toward the Lord and pre-

sented the child and then they wondered at how this old priest and prophetess reacted to their coming. A wondering at the depth of the presence of God, past, present, and future. Certainly this baby wasn't a Deliverer, yet. What sort of intersections/connections would they experience as they continued on in their lives, faithful to the daily direction of the Law and the power of God's Spirit?

What sort of intersections/connections will we experience as we continue in our lives, faithful to the daily direction of the Law and the power of God's Spirit? SB

Second Sunday after Christmas
January 5, 1997

Psalm 147:12-20
Jeremiah 31:7-14
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:(1-9) 10-18

"From the Pew . . ."

(What follows is condensed from conversations with several fishing families from Petersburg Lutheran who accepted the invitation to reflect on the Gospel.)

Honestly, Pastor, we get rather tired of all the Christmas talk about this time of the year. We thoroughly enjoyed the celebration of Christmas. The candlelight service is one of our favorite services of the entire year. Maybe it is just that we are tired of everything. The joy of Christmas is dampened by a lot of things. Yeah. For one thing, our husbands are home from fishing.

Wait a minute! How many times do you women do nothing but nag and tell your friends you wish we were some place else?! Then, when we go out for a beer or two, you scream and holler and wish we had stayed at home!?

I guess we don't call this time of year "The February Witch Hunt" for nothing!

It's just that the darkness gets to you and there doesn't seem to be anything that you can do about it. How do you beat the darkness, anyway?

Have you ever heard of something called Light Therapy? It's absolutely fantastic! You sit down in a room all by yourself with this special lamp. Put soft music on. Read a book. The darkness goes away and you become your old self again. Of course, this doesn't happen overnight. You need more than one session of Light Therapy to really chase away the darkness and depression.

Are we talking about what Pastor Marohl wanted us to talk about? I think so. But what gets me about that lesson from John is how Jesus' own people wouldn't accept him for who and what he is. They were walking in darkness, of course. We've already told them what the dark nights and days do to us here in Alaska. Yeah, when you're in the dark you begin to imagine all kinds of things. You see what you want to see. And you don't see what is right in front of you!

I guess God is a lot like Light Therapy. When it was new only the rich and the famous could afford it, but now anyone can have it right in their own homes. Jesus opened up the promise of God to include everyone. That makes me feel somehow special and safe.

". . . to the Pulpit."

With this Sunday we finish the Christmas Season. For some reason it feels strangely wonderful to be through with these days. Is that heresy? Maybe I feel like the weather outside: gloom and doom and filled with despair because I live in virtual darkness 24 hours a day. I long for the sun to shine. I would even be satisfied with the

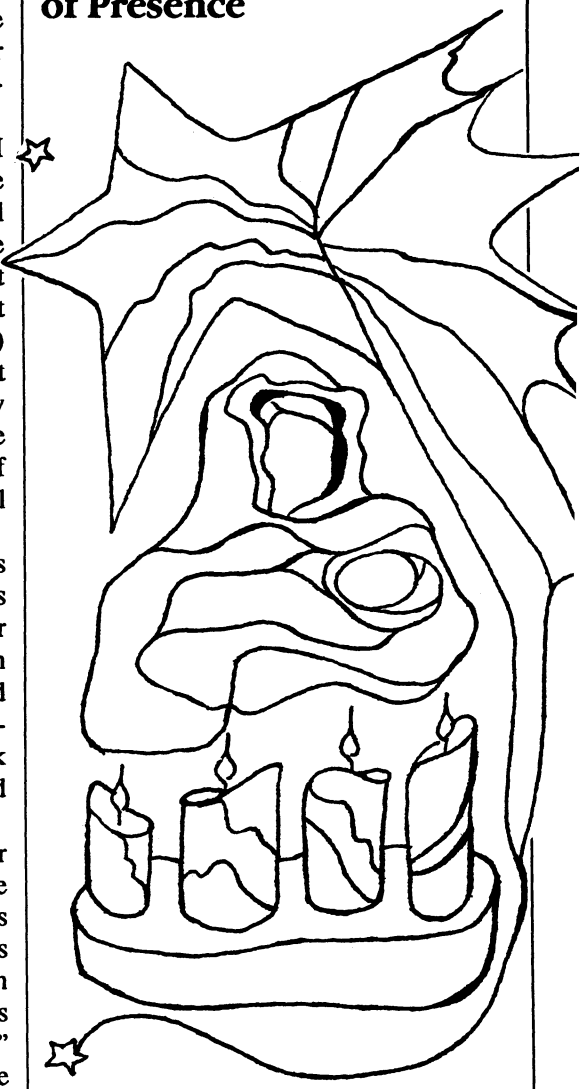
moon... or a few stars. But the sky is clouded over. I long for blue skies and cringe at the thought that I have to wait a couple more months to see and enjoy them. I long for warmth and am well aware that I'll be wearing winter jackets in June.

God, knowing what my people and I need, what each one has needed from the beginning of time, has granted me a spiritual reprieve on this holy day by offering me the gift of Light. With the holiness of the Light comes the special grace-gift of life. (Isn't it amazing that Light always stimulates Life?) The gift of life has always been there, it's just that sometimes we cannot see it. Epiphany happens for you and me in and through the Word; and we stand on the threshold of Epiphany. It is a life-giving light for all people. It is grace in motion.

Here in Alaska we join you, our brothers and sisters in the lower 48, in grace motion as we worship. "We see his glory" as we gather and are warmed by our togetherness. Here in Petersburg the wind blows and howls around the edges of our metal-roofed church building. The timbers creak and groan. We look up. We smile. We know we are safe and snug in our togetherness.

And then, as we gather around that other multiple grace-gift of bread and wine, we smile at the mystery of our oneness. It's difficult to fathom: we are all here and God's people in the bargain. We begin to see each other—not as we really are—but as God sees us. In these moments of "grace upon grace" the Light begins to shine and we begin to live again. CM

EPIPHANY: The Mystery of Presence



The Sunday of the Epiphany. Here in my little corner of southeast Alaska, the power of Epiphany reveals itself as a launching pad for mission. Isaiah 60:1-6 serves as the wake-up call: *Outsiders enrich the people of God! Through faith they too are the children of God.* This message is affirmed in Mt 2:1-12. Those closest to the message and the messenger are, however, often indifferent

and hostile. If the hostility is not overt, then the "Herod syndrome" comes into play: Fake interest and devotion to King Messiah until the messengers leave. Leave it to one who has a past (Eph 3:1-12) to be the dispenser of the Creator's grace (3:9).

First Sunday after the Epiphany. Into a world with few absolutes comes the penetrating word of Gen 1:1-5. The Prime Mover and Shaker of the Cosmos is the God-Word who creates from the formless, watery, dark nothingness all that is good. Ignorance is not bliss among those who are spiritually immature (Acts 19:1-7). Nor do well-meaning but ill-equipped evangelists bring a blessing that endures to God's people. The gifts of the Spirit course and surge through humanity, but it takes a transferal of that power from those who have it to those who need it for the enrichment to happen.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany. God never gives up! Even when religious leaders have become blind, corrupt, and ineffectual, they can still serve as mentors to the prophet-in-waiting (1 Sam 3:1-20). What is it that makes such people touch the lives of the innocent in a positive way when they can't even control their own kids?

One of the independent phrases of childhood is "Me do it!" In 1 Cor 6:12-20, the word to explore is ἐξουσία: the power with me that gives me the freedom to do what I want! There is a red flag waving in this portion of Scripture. When an individual wants to do things his/her way (ἐξουσία) and claims divine authority for his/her actions and backs that claim up with Scripture, one needs to look carefully at the parameters of Christian liberty.

The Son of Man stands center stage in the Gospel (Jn 1:43-51). You will see him hitting Salvation Road and inviting you, preacher, to join him. You might want to explore where divine authority really comes from and what it leads a person to do when he or she really gets it. All signs in John's Gospel point to King of Israel.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany. There are overtones of the Second Sunday after the Epiphany in today's lineup of readings, with the prophet/judge Jonah unrepentant but still speaking God's Word because there is nothing else for the prophet/judge to do! Conversion happens. Sometimes in spite of us. The repentance-forgiveness cycle is God's mercy activated in his people's lives.

Who knows what lies around the corner? Surprise! It's Parousia Time! In the middle of Epiphany? Guideposts from the second lesson (1 Cor 7:29-31) suggest that celibate, communal detachment from the world should be the norm for the Christian to follow. That would make interesting preaching! Mark only adds punch to the mystery of the Parousia. He reveals that the appointed time is *now*! The fourth dimensional guidepost for all is also unveiled: Repent! Believe! Go fishing!

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. Are your parishioners linked up with God? A prophet provides such an opportunity (Deut 18:15-20) by opening doors and windows and issuing an invitation to come and live in obedience to God's saving Word.

In 1 Corinthians the Apostle lays it on the line. "Do you know what you, as a Christian, are talking about? Are you proud of it?" With such stinging rays of inspiration, Paul admonishes us to quit being spiritual snobs. We are to temper our "know-it-allness" with ἀγαπη toward sister and brother. We are, after all, rooted in the Christ. His love is unconditional. Pass it on.

The Transfiguration of Our Lord. The truth of revelation is the metamorphosis of today. We enter the world of the apocalypse: high mountains, intensely white garments, and spiritual beings who are there and aren't. All is shrouded in secrecy. In the midst of it all is Jesus. It is you, Jesus, isn't it? Our joy

becomes complete and it ties our tongues in knots, causing us to say things that are nonsensical. What's more, we begin hearing voices from clouds telling us that we cannot lock up our joy in a tent. We have outgrown the conventional camping out experience. It is time to move on. We continue to stand there, speechless, as we too metamorphose. And then, with the vision dancing in our heads and hearts, we leave the mountain, changed forever. Our descent gives us time to make sense of it all, and we find ourselves taking for granted the fact that we shall never be the same. CM

The Baptism of Our Lord January 12, 1997

Psalm 29
Genesis 1:1-5
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

The headlines are painful to read: "CREWS FIND ONE BODY, LOOK FOR 3 OTHER BOATING VICTIMS."

When the Coast Guard called off the search, they listed as missing: a father, his three year-old son and an eight year-old girl. Father and son were members of one of our ELCA churches. Pastor Larry Rorem was heartbroken when I called him. The child had been recently baptized, and a whole congregation joined the grieving family in their pain. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters" (Ps 29:3).

Southeast Alaska is a beautiful place to live, surrounded by scenery of almost unmatched grandeur. The wonder and wealth of God's creation is never far away.

Southeast Alaska is a dangerous place to live, its beauty hiding an environment at once unforgiving and deadly. Disaster and death can come quickly for those unprepared, those who do not respect their surroundings, even for those who go out practiced and with proper equipment.

We celebrate "The Blessing of the Fleet," an ancient liturgy asking God's blessing on those who ply the waters for their living. We bless boats and gear. We pray for protection for all who work on the sea and for their families waiting at home. We acknowledge the very real danger that comes with this life.

Here, the moment that always brings me to tears is when we remember all those who have died in the past year. A member of Southeast Alaska Women in Fisheries rings a ship's bell as each mariner's name is read. The tolling concluded, the choir of St. Michael's Russian Orthodox Cathedral sings, people bring flowers to set into wreaths, the wreaths are taken into the bay and spread across the water. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters."

This liturgy is a humbling reminder of our place in this world, our reliance upon God's grace in all times of great joy and great sorrow. God creates hope from our remembrance and therein we know we have been touched and are held fast in the Savior's hand. Those old familiar words, "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me," ring out with new life and the voice of the Lord is heard upon the waters.

We are never far from life and death. In our small communities, what touches one family touches us all. At our next blessing, on behalf of our sisters and brothers in those Juneau families and at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, I will add their names to our list. And I will cry again for the pain and the beauty of it all. And I will pray: "May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!" JHD

Second Sunday after the Epiphany
January 19. 1997

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

I have added a new task at the end of sermon-writing: grammar checking. My word processor's program filters are not perfect, but they do point out one major crime in my sermonizing: the use of the passive voice.

Being done to rather than doing, that's the passive voice. I wonder what effect that has on a congregation, if they hear too much of that voice and not enough of the other voice: active, direct, straight. How much of my preaching tries to cut corners, soften edges, make the frequent hammer-blows of the gospel easier to take or hear? What effect does indirect, inactive, parabolic preaching have on the listeners? Is there any way to track this in a congregation's life? Can you get a clue reading the Mission Statement?

But I have discovered a simple corrective to the dilemma: psalms like today's Psalm 139. Sure, there are some occasional passive voice constructions. For the most part, however, this psalmist writes active, direct, vigorous poetry, straight from heart to heart.

"O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways." (Ps 139:1-3 NRSV)

In the psalms we hear honest prayers, potent curses, and blessings. The psalmists thrust their fists in the sky, calling God to task, challenging their Sovereign. They bow their heads in lament. They listen. And always, always, they sing!

It is a good thing to read the psalms in worship Sunday after Sunday. They help keep us from getting too inactive, too passive. The psalms help us remember, rehearse, practice, and experience the full emotional weight of real-life human beings in constant interaction with their God.

It is a good thing to read these words knowing that even "...If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you" (Ps 139: 8-12). *In* all places and in all times, our God is with us. We can continue to sing our Advent and Christmas refrains, "Emmanuel! God *is* with us!"

During this season of "Epiphany," which means "revealing," what do our attitudes reveal about us? Is our congregation's voice active or passive? How does the community hear us? *Does* the community hear us? What words do we speak to the concerns in our neighborhoods and families? Are we taking God into those places of deep hurt and great joy?

These are tough questions, not easily asked or answered. I cannot keep the passive voice completely out of my system, but I can learn to control it. Maybe we need to spend some more time in the psalms. We need to live in them and let them burn out our passivity and timidity. Is there a more active plea than this? "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23-24). JHD

Third Sunday after the Epiphany
January 26, 1997

Psalm 62:5-12
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

"From the Pew . . ."

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians probably in the year 54 while in Ephesus. In chapters 7 (today's text) and 8 (next Sunday's second lesson), Paul responds to several concerns that the Corinthian church had brought to his attention in a letter. These concerns include the proper Christian attitude toward sexual relationships, marriage, divorce, and about eating food sacrificed to idols. Throughout these passages, Paul asserts that faith should not "...rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:5).

Recent scholarship seems to indicate that Corinth's reputation for immorality and widespread sexual orgies may be unfounded. Its bad name was more likely a result of snobbish Athenian writers and a passage in Strabo's *Geography*. According to *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, "...the Athenian references were snobbish disparagements of the pre-146 BC city.... Corinth was probably no more or less virtuous than any other cosmopolitan port city of the Mediterranean in the first century AD." (HBD, 1985: 183)

A certain set of ideas, sometimes called gnosticism, influenced Corinthian Christian behavior. The Corinthian Christians seem to have attached great importance to the special religious knowledge or gnosis (1 Cor 1:5; 8:1,10) and wisdom (1 Cor 1:2–2:13; 3:18-19). They proudly displayed the more spectacular kinds of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14). They disparaged Christian hope for the resurrection from the dead and made extravagant claims for the believer's present life (1 Cor 4:8; 15:12-19).

Paul continually pointed the Corinthians away from the wisdom and knowledge of the world and toward the contrary wisdom of God, which climaxed in the cross. God's love shed abroad in Jesus Christ looks like foolishness but is God's own wisdom and power. RS

". . . to the Pulpit."

Paul is saying clearly that it is time to be ready for the end. It is time to put the things eternal before the things of this world. He is not belittling the importance of relationships between husbands and wives, nor is he denying the depth of pain people feel when they are in mourning. He does not deny happiness to those who have reason to be glad. Paul is simply preparing people for what he sees, "...for this world in its present form is passing away."

I'm not sure anyone today can say that we understand whether or not Paul thought the last days were imminent. But, from a philosophical and theological stance we can understand Paul's emphasis. Indeed, we are not to place too much emphasis on the present things.

We are to live as unto the Lord, to live for that day when he returns. We are to live with the promise of the future life of oneness with the Lord foremost in our hearts and minds. All else then takes its own position in our lives when we are living for Christ. Then we are not consumed by the things of this world, but are able to balance them in our lives in Christ.

Luther's words of advice that we should "behave like guests on earth" say it so very clearly. That is our daily task as Christian, to remember that all begins and ends with the Lord. AGJ

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 2, 1997

Psalm 111
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

"From the Pew . . ."

By the time Paul writes this letter, Greek Corinth—more accurately Greco-Roman Corinth—was an eclectic society. It is safe to say that every religion of the times, whether of Rome or of nations under Roman rule, was represented in Corinth and other major trade centers. People worshipped the gods of Rome, Greece, and Asia Minor. All of these religions, except Judaism and still-infant Christianity, of course, were polytheistic. Furthermore, Corinth, a sea port, had a reputation of immorality.

The Corinthian Christians of Paul's day assembled in various members' homes, most of which were not very large. The typical triclinium (dining room), for example, could probably accommodate no more than twelve people. Worshippers usually brought their own food to the gathering, which tended to separate the rich from the poor. The congregation would normally celebrate the Eucharist at the end of each meal. Because of crowded conditions, discriminatory practices, and other concerns, Paul suggested that the people should eat first at home, then assemble for worship 1 Cor 11: 20-22).

He struggled as we still do with issues of inclusion and exclusion, always seeking to build up the body of Christ. RS

". . . to the Pulpit."

This passage is one that has perplexed theologians as well as lay people through the ages. We have a difficult time relating to it in appropriate ways today because we really don't face the same set of circumstances. Yet, in another sense, it fits because it raises our social consciousness.

Paul addressed the issue of eating meat that has come from the altar of sacrifice. All the people, Christians as well as unbelievers, knew the source of the food on their tables: Those who considered themselves to be *enlightened* would sit in judgment on anyone who did something they determined to be inappropriate. It is interesting to note that Paul begins his comments by addressing the peoples' tendency to take themselves too seriously and to be too quick to judge others (vv. 1-3).

Paul is sympathetic to the new Christians. Sometimes we assume that the person new to the faith is the one who is weak. Paul doesn't say that. Often those who consider themselves to be strong are the ones who are really vulnerable.

Whatever the case, Paul encourages the believers to curb their God-given freedom as a way of serving the Lord Jesus by tending to the needs of others. Love, not liberty, is the highest gift and value. AGJ

The Transfiguration of Our Lord February 9, 1997

Psalm 50:1-6
2 Kings 2:1-12
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9

"From the Pew . . ."

In this portion of his letter to fledgling Christians of Corinth, Paul addresses the "purity" and "clarity" with which he proclaims the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. In the first two verses of the chapter immediately preceding this text, Paul asserts that he is putting the whole truth of God's salvation on open display and not engaging in deceit or cunning that would mask, distort, obscure or falsify the message he brings from God. He openly lays the veracity of his message on the conscience of the congregation so they can judge it for themselves in the presence of God.

In the preceding chapter, Paul refers to the encounter between God and Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34). After his person-to-person encounter with God, Moses veiled his face when he addressed the people of Israel, but when he was in the presence of God, he set aside the veil. For centuries, the veil in the Temple stood between God and the people of Israel gathered in worship. In the triumph of Christ's death and resurrection, that veil was torn apart. Paul tells his readers that just as the veil that once stood between God and his people has been removed, so nothing stands between the message he brings and the truth of God in Christ. While the message Paul brings is not masked, falsified, distorted or obscured because it is not his message, but God's, he asserts that the message can be veiled to some (the unbelievers) who hear God's message through Paul.

If the gospel is veiled, Paul contends it is because the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, not because he manipulated the message. As a result, many are kept from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. And who, or what, is the "god *of this world*" that veils the glory of the gospel?

The veil which obscures, dims and distorts the light of Christ's message can be many things. In reality, it emanates from us, and is us. It is our false self. The false self is that part of us which seeks to insulate us from feelings of insecurity and alienation. Its appetite is insatiable for possessions, power and pleasure which distort, dim, and obscure the message of God's salvation in Christ. From the false self springs overweening pride in our abilities and accomplishments. It provides a false sense of security and unfolds a veil of self-justification between the light of God's salvation in Jesus Christ and the hearts and mind of those who hear the gospel. Alienation from God and from one another is the result.

To let go of the veil imposed by the false self and to be open to the light of the gospel that has the power to transfigure our lives is a daily struggle. For many, it takes the discipline of structured meditation and letting God confront us through the contemplation of the word in order to lift the veil of the false self.

At the conclusion of an intensive three day spiritual retreat for men that focused on contemplative prayer and meditation practices, participants were discussing what they learned and what they would take with them from the weekend into their daily lives. Robert, a fifty-something graduate biologist with significant research and management responsibilities, confided that the insights he gained and meditative practices he experi-

enced helped him "see the light." When questioned by the retreat leader about the meaning of his remark, Robert confided that during times of silent mediation, the thoughts and images that flooded into consciousness all centered around him.

"I couldn't get through all the stuff that is me—what I want to do, what I want for myself, what I feel compelled to do, or what I don't want to do—to even begin to be open to God's word. It was difficult, even scary, to realize that there's so much of me that gets between me and God as I pray and meditate. If I'm really going to be open to the light of the scriptures, I've got to let go of what's getting in the way of God's message—me!"

For Robert a veil began to lift and the light of God's message began to illuminate his heart and mind. JS

"... to the Pulpit"

The light had gone out over Surprise Harbor (not the actual name). Within minutes of tying the M/V Christian up at the Post Office float, skiffs began streaming in from all around the bay. They carried a young woman who had been raped by a man in the community. Another woman had been viciously beaten by her own son with the butt of a gunstock. The pastor/skipper and his wife began the long ordeal of listening to the pain of the community.

The pain was so real it was as though the community was a sheet of ice shattered by a blow. One wondered if it was going to disintegrate before your very eyes. One after another people poured out their rage, hour after hour, for nearly two days in the midst of Holy Week. People wondered if their community would survive.

Darkness of a second night descended over the bay, deep darkness, inky, black, heavy. Only the chirping of a land otter and the groaning of the vessel's rigging broke the silence. Could they ever live together again? It was a place like so many in Southeast Alaska. Everybody knew everyone else and their business too, on a daily basis. Opinions were formed based on half truths and pain. Sides were drawn. The good news was veiled. People were perishing. The god of this age had blinded many and confused countless more.

The pastor and his wife were the people of the hour, but they could not save the people of Surprise Harbor. Only the good news of the gospel could save. It would take a resurrection to conquer death and the devil. Over fifty people crowded onto the vessel on Easter Sunday. The powers of darkness were routed. The worst the world of this age could muster was not enough. Though people were temporarily blinded, "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God" prevailed.

Light streamed out of darkness into their hearts, and people were reborn. There was transfiguration. Hope struggled to life. The community lives, although not without hard work. But then, the people are used to hard work, and God is used to hanging in there with people. DP

Fresh New Standards

William E. Lesher
President, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Normally, there is little reason for pastors and other churchgoing Christians to think about the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). This is a behind the scenes organization. The ATS is an accrediting group made up of 270 theological schools in the United States and Canada. Its main functions are to get member schools to agree on standards that can be applied broadly to all theological schools and then to hold one another accountable through the preparation of extensive self-study reports followed by evaluation visits conducted at each member school every ten years.

But, every so often, ATS does something that everyone who has a concern for or a stake in theological education should know about. Such a happening occurred this past summer at the ATS meeting in Denver.

New standards were adopted for theological education!

This action was the result of a long participatory process of examining, questioning, visioning, and agreeing on what theological education for ministry is and should be for our time. The process began in 1992. Two years were spent gathering information about ministry from ministers, church members, church leaders, and members of the theological community. The learning from this extensive inquiry was compiled in a report and presented in both written and video formats with the title, "The Good Theological School." The report was widely discussed by faculties, boards, denominations, and at the ATS biennial meeting in 1994. Seminaries were described as they are, needs were identified, and a vision of excellence in theological education was projected.

The vision became the basis for "Redeveloped Accrediting Standards" which will govern the evaluation of seminary education in the future. The new standards are not like the ones they replaced. The old document listed the minimum requirements in all areas of seminary life which schools needed to fulfill in order to receive a favorable accreditation evaluation. The redeveloped standards describe an ideal school. Minimum requirements are tucked away in "shall" and "must" sentences, but the very nature of the new standards encourages seminaries to measure themselves against the ideal vision.

In addition to this rather challenging way to conduct peer evaluation, two major changes mark the redeveloped standards. One is the degree to which "personal and spiritual formation" have become pronounced qualities of a good theological school. Another is the prominent role given the "arts of ministry" and of pastoral leadership in the preparation program. Seminaries will be required to show how they are measuring the effectiveness of their graduates years out into ministry and how the experience of former students is actually helping to reshape the school's current offerings and procedures.

These are not entirely new expectations of theological seminaries, particularly in our Lutheran tradition. But the strong emphasis on personal and pastoral leadership qualities in the official standards of measurement and evaluation is both new and welcome. Former standards tended to focus on academic requirements, taking matters of personal and spiritual formation more or less for granted. Without diminishing the foundational role of biblical, historical, and theological studies, the redeveloped standards focus theological education more sharply than before on personal readiness and on the practice of ministry. To some extent, these new emphases are a result of the closer and more sustained contact that has taken place between pastors and seminary professors in recent years largely through programs of continuing and extension education.

LSTC is currently involved in a self study process and will receive an ATS evaluation visit in the spring of 1997. Wartburg Theological Seminary, a Covenant Cluster (and *Currents*) partner, is also in the process and will be visited next fall. Already the redeveloped standards are providing the occasion for us to describe, evaluate, and plan in these essential areas of pastoral preparation that are receiving new prominence in the accreditation process. As time goes on, and as the new standards serve as both "guide and measure" for the good theological school, the bond between seminary and parish is likely to be both deepened and strengthened. That indeed is a goal worth striving toward.

Change of address?

If you are moving, please send your corrected mailing label, or a photocopy, or any change-of-address form, to *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, or call (312) 256-0751, or FAX to (312) 256-0782 (specify *Currents*).

Whether you write or call, please include the six-digit code at the top left of your address label for our reference. Thank you!

Currents in Theology and Mission
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
1100 East 55th St.
Chicago, IL 60615

Non-profit org.
Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 26
Paxton, IL 60957