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All People are Foreigners—Almost Everywhere!

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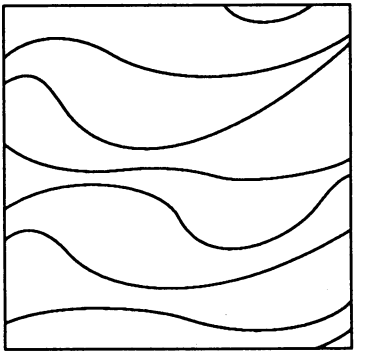
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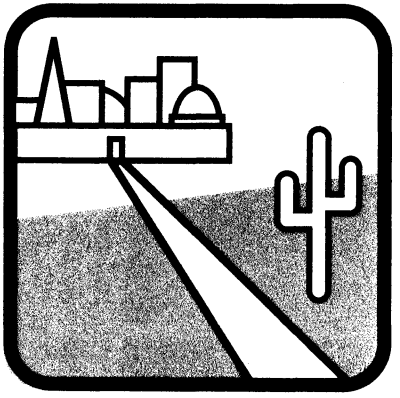


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Series A
The Resurrection of Our Lord—The Day of Pentecost

Contributors: Robert Smith, Susan Nachtigal, Jean Lebbert

All People are Foreigners—Almost Everywhere!



Like Sarah and Abraham, we are all foreigners here, whether that "here" is in Chicago, Dubuque, Berkeley, or a little town of less than 1,000 people, called Chatham, where I grew up. The headline of this editorial is also a bumper sticker on my car, calling me and those behind me to welcome the other, to think modestly of ourselves, to seek the peace of the city (or town) to which we have been exiled, and reminding us that Abraham and Sarah, who never owned anything but their burial cave, were the richest people imaginable because they were the recipients of God's promise. Maybe you don't have to be a baby to be a baby doctor, but you have to be God's child if you want to minister to all God's children. Only if you know the desert can you understand the promised land.

Richard H. Luecke writes about the history of Lutheran ministry that has sought the peace of the city. He calls the roll of urban giants in all segments of American Lutheranism—Paulssen, Kloetzli, Sittler, Sabourin, Schulze, Carter, the Nelsons, Heinemeier, Dickinson, Griffin, Ellwanger—and observes that the biblical vision of a fulfilled society referred not to a return to a garden, but depicted rather a city that is to come. Lutheran churches in the United States fretted about whether or

how they should work with Saul Alinsky, and they tried various more or less successful strategies in Kansas City, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Those who spoke of approximating the city of God in the earthly city were seen by others as compromising both the gospel and the secular. It is a wonderful and frustrating story that asks us disturbing questions: How can a church focused on the living gospel of God ever become dull? Why are the societal actions of faithful people not more inventive or more enduring?

Jay C. Rochelle discusses what's new about the Revised Common Lectionary, that has been endorsed by the ELCA Church Council and utilized in all Augsburg Fortress publications, as well as in the Preaching Helps section of *Currents*. He notes the differences from the LBW in the three lessons and the Psalm for the day and explains the new terms in the lectionary, such as "Proper 5." In almost every way he sees the changes as gain: greater use of Old Testament readings; new, lively readings from Acts; the inclusion of favorite passages from the Gospels, that formerly were relegated to saints' days; a more consistent use of continual readings. Pastors might well use this article of "facts" about the revised lectionary to plan a preaching strategy for their next three years in exile.

Andrew M. Weyermann continues his series on preaching by describing how a preacher gets ready to preach. Techniques of preaching can be taught; trust in God comes only through the Spirit. Preachers are made by being made alive—and by dying—in their personal encounter with the living, active Word of God at work in their lives. The wilderness experience of dying and being made alive must occur each time a preacher prepares to preach. The preacher must get out of the way to become the medium of the persuasive speech of the Spirit. When the preacher identifies with the hearers' plight, she talks to and with the hearers in the same arena of life—not *at* them from on high. But after all the *tentatio*, the preacher enters the pulpit with this bold prayer: "Lord, help me to sing with abandon the song you have given me for your people." The article ends with three short meditations that illustrate what he has been trying to say.

The greatest thing about the faith is its self-contradiction: "The Lord changed his mind about the disaster he planned to bring on his people" (Exod 32:14). Or again: "You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19).

God saves us by the foolishness of preaching... and of bumper stickers.

Ralph W. Klein
Foreigner
Member of God's Household

P.S. With this issue we introduce three new book review editors: Edgar Krentz and Kathleen Billman of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Craig Nessan of Wartburg Theological Seminary. Ed will solicit and edit reviews on the New Testament and early Christianity while Kadi will do the same for the ministry fields. Craig will solicit and edit reviews for areas such as church history, theology, and ethics. I will continue to supervise OT reviews. With these three new editors we hope to expand and deepen our coverage of current theological literature. These book review editors also invite readers who would like to review books themselves to contact them by mail or phone. Their phone numbers are supplied in our masthead.

P.P.S. Last October we published the excellent mission essay by Professor Paul G. Hiebert, "Are We Our Others' Keepers?" We neglected to mention that this essay was originally the annual mission lecture at LSTC sponsored by the Eleanor and Arnold Scherer Endowment Fund. We deeply regret this omission.

Lutheran Urban Ministry 1945-1990

Richard Luecke
Chicago, Illinois

World War II proved a watershed for Lutherans in North America. They had fought as Americans, some against foes in former Lutheran homelands, and returned to unprecedented industrial and demographic developments in their cities. It was during the 1940s and 1950s that Lutherans came out of the *Bierstube* into American life, as Franklin Clark Fry put it, and it was then that this president of the United Lutheran Church in America came to be called "Mr. Protestant."

More perhaps than other mainline Christian groups, Lutherans had sought to maintain inherited identities in an American society that was being pulled and pushed from the land to the cities and was wiring its offices to world cities. By the early 1960s more than a dozen Lutheran streams merged into three larger bodies of approximately two million adult communicants each.[1] Our story will be about these three groups and will take us to the point of a further merger in the late 1980s.

In addition to the Bible and ecumenical creeds shared with Christendom, Lutherans reaffirm "confessions" that were formed during the 16th century Reformation in Europe, of which the Augsburg Confession is best known. "Confession" is an operative term for Lutherans, referring first to such identifying historical expressions and then also to a current "confessing" needing to be done in the face of new idols and (some would add) new opportunities. This sets the scene for responses by Lutherans to emerging urban realities that seem similar and yet are contentious, in which all parties are disposed to say, "Here I stand!"

In *Mission in the Making* F. Dean Lueking described three formative sources of mission within a single Lutheran body in America—"American evangelicalism," "evangelical confessionalism," and "scholastic confessionalism"—and showed how these "criss-crossed again and again to weave a pattern of unexpected contrasts and unique blending."[2] Such differing thematic streams have also characterized Lutheran urban mission during the past half century, though these currents cannot simply be assigned to the various Lutheran bodies respectively. We will find unexpected swim-

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[1] Lutheran Church in America (LCA), American Lutheran Church (ALC), Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

[2] *Mission in the Making: The Missionary Enterprise Among Missouri Synod Lutherans 1846-1963* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964).

ming against the stream within Lutheran bodies and some unique institutional criss-crossing.

1. "The Word of God that changes and revives the whole earth": the engraced city

That Lutherans brought a piety to America which included social action was a theme of settlers who established the first seminary at Gettysburg.[3] Near the close of World War II this claim was revitalized by the arrival in Gettysburg of Bertha Paulssen from the Confessing Church in Germany, who became the first sociology teacher (and first woman teacher) in a Lutheran seminary and a mentor most productive of early urban ministry heroes.[4]

It was Walter Kloetzli, a war-experienced student at Gettysburg and one of Bertha Paulssen's "wicked creatures" (as she called them), who from 1955 to 1965 issued the urban challenge to Lutheran bodies from his post as Secretary for Urban Church Planning of the National Lutheran Council (NLC).[5] Adapting a research strategy previously used by H. Paul Douglas of the Federal Council of Churches—that of bringing social scholars of the church together with research workers from nearby universities and urban study centers—Kloetzli initiated planning procedures of six to nine months duration with church leaders in at least 150 of the 200 U.S. metropolitan statistical areas.

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[3] This Lutheran stream claimed a source in the colonial Muhlenbergs and in a Lutheran "pietism" ("spirituality" today) which had moved outward from the University of Halle in Germany, where spiritual and practical tendencies in Lutheranism had been highlighted in Bible study cells (*collegiae pietatis*) and social projects. Its leaders in America spoke affirmingly of the Great Awakenings and of a pan-Protestant evangelical outreach that combined mission with social reforms. Some of them, alone among Lutherans, stood up to be counted against slavery. Gettysburg historian A. R. Wentz judges that the church changed with new waves of German immigrants during the 1840s. Others say social differences merely brought into the open an existing doctrinal polarization among these eastern Lutherans, who split after the Civil War over questions of loyalty to the Augsburg Confession. This was not the only time that Lutherans would wage doctrinal controversy on the occasion of societal strife.

J. Russell Hale of Gettysburg Seminary treated this tradition in a dissertation at Columbia University entitled "The Making and Testing of an Organizational Saga..." (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1970). Paul P. Kuenning also offers a constructive judgment in *The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism: The Rejection of an Activist Heritage* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988). Negative responses, which predominated, were addressed by Frederick K. Wentz in the Gettysburg Seminary *Bulletin* for Fall, 1989.

[4] Paulssen-guided theses from 1945-65, including many by persons who will enter into our story, are listed in *Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin: Essays in Honor of Bertha Paulssen*, November, 1965.

[5] For NLC urban work Kloetzli recruited Harold Foster and Eiichi Matsushita, both Paulssen students, who later moved to similar work on the Board for American Missions of the newly merged Lutheran Church in America. Another of his recruits, Donald Larson (then of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), conducted distinguished urban work from this post for the duration of this inter-Lutheran agency. Collaborators with Kloetzli from an urban office of the National Council of Churches included Merrill Ruoss, a former Lutheran now representing the United Church of Christ, as well as William Villaume and John Wagner, former students of Paulssen.

"The church should be concerned with urbanization," Kloetzli preached, lectured, and wrote in *The Church and the Urban Challenge*, because "God's Word is meant for all nations and all creation." American Protestants had been fleeing "the seething turmoil of the modern city" and seeking refuge in a previous "rural frame of reference." "Rural" implied primary group relationships characterized by affection but neglected the emergent "urban" reality which demanded attention to relationships mediated through much broader institutions and programs. Some pastors were, in fact, trying to survive in changing communities by *not* mentioning these things.[6]

Against what seemed reactionary claims of congregational autonomy Kloetzli mobilized studies combining the work of sociologists, who documented familial and inward-turning characteristics of congregations, with that of church theologians who interpreted doctrinal sources.[7] While it was true that the Augsburg Confession had criticized certain hierarchical structures and had refused, in loyalty to the gospel of God, to absolutize structures of any kind, its very intent had been to keep the church bent on its mission—which might now become thwarted if congregations drew back into themselves.

Kloetzli called successfully for more sociology studies in seminaries, for revised national mission policies including enlarged budgets for inner-city work, and for consultations on the urban church combining boards and commissions. It was this urban staffer who in the early 1960s, together with Donald Benedict and Gibson Winter, conceived the idea of a national ecumenical Urban Training Center for Christian Mission (UTC).

From his studies in the cities Kloetzli showed how housing development had become a manifest arena of social displacement—hence a primary focus for church engagement should be "urban renewal" and new public housing programs. The information gathered with constituencies in Baltimore, Chicago, Milwaukee and elsewhere could equip the churches for advocacies that help set public goals and hold government officials to high standards. Churches were to serve as partners in development projects by performing neglected analysis or auxiliary services, including relocation of displaced residents.

Kloetzli was not ready for what happened next—for community organizers in Chicago and elsewhere who described urban renewal programs as "Negro removal" and used them as issues to mobilize city neighborhoods. Informed by sociologists who thought in terms of social equilibrium rather than conflicted change, and by a theology disposed to find divine purpose in societal and technological developments, Kloetzli stayed with the consensual definition of community organization he had shared with Arthur Hillman in *Community Organization and Planning* (1950), repeating Hillman's repudiation of trade union

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[6] See Walter Kloetzli, *The Church and the Urban Challenge* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961). Also *Urban Church Planning*, written with Arthur Hillman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958).

[7] Kloetzli provided data for an NLC publication by Lutheran social scholar Gerhard Lenski and church theologians entitled *Congregationalism as a Problem in the Exercise of Christian Social Responsibility within American Protestantism.* He also coordinated field work for an NCC "Effective City Church" study in which Charles Y. Glock described limiting stereotypes imposed on pastors and congregations. Parts of this are available in Kloetzli, *The City Church—Death or Renewal: A Study of Eight Urban Lutheran Churches* with an Afterword by Glock (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961).

tactics by neighborhoods. It was no part of urban mission, at least on Kloetzli's first view of the matter, to "rub raw the sores of discontent." He objected "not to the goals but the methods" of Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and then also to the goals in so far as they seemed to endorse "quotas" in trying to stabilize communities. Failing to get a disavowal of Alinsky and discontinuation of an Alinsky presence at UTC, Kloetzli left its board.[8]

The scope of grace

When, in 1962, Walter Kloetzli convened a Lutheran consultation on the city at the old Sherry Hotel in Hyde Park, Chicago, some church dignitaries complained about dilapidated accommodations. The opening speaker chided them for a lack of empathy with city dwellers and warned against a corresponding lack of imagination. That speaker was Joseph Sittler, a teacher at the University of Chicago Divinity School who had received his denominational training at Wittenberg College and Hamma Divinity School in Ohio, where faculty and constituencies had perpetuated the Lutheran piety moving westward from Gettysburg. It was to a legendary teacher at Hamma, John Olaf Evjen, an early expositor of Ernst Troeltsch and of the historical-societal (especially urban) settings of Christian belief and practice, that Sittler had dedicated an early book on the Word of God in Martin Luther, a book which treated the "Word" as active in the creation of historical forms and institutions.[9]

Sittler began at the Sherry by observing how the earliest Christian communities had been planted in great cities of the empire. Cities were "the fountains, the conservators and the propagators of culture, political forms, and laws" and therefore a primary context for the exercise of faith. Since Abraham the biblical heroes of faith had looked forward to a city of God "that has foundations." The biblical vision of a fulfilled society was not of any return to a garden but of a city that is to come.

Sittler then pointed to emerging possibilities in the public realm that extend beyond the role of keeping order. The gospel implied "an analytic and anticipatory function" that is alert to these. He warned against homogenizing and ruthless developments in the city that obstruct realization of creative possibilities, but added that struggles with these are sustained by "grace." The Reformation-period focus on Christ and divine grace in individual lives through

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[8] Other church leaders agreed with this judgment of Alinsky, as did the editors of *The Christian Century* in Chicago. Ironically, as a regional administrator of U.S. Housing and Urban Development programs, Kloetzli would conduct a major study of "citizen participation" and would preside over the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project in St. Louis. He later became Director of Program Development for HUD in Washington, D.C.

[9] Joseph Sittler, *The Doctrine of the Word: The Structure of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1948). Hannah Arendt, in reclaiming authority for city communities in her book *On Revolution*, cited a similar Luther from *The Bondage of the Will*: "The most perpetual fortune of God's Word is that for its sake the world is put into uproar. For the sermon of God comes to change and revive the whole earth to the extent that it really gets through to it."

I am grateful to Philip Hefner for demonstrating the Gettysburg-Ohio lineage. Hefner has also espoused the view that basic human fulfillments are to be found outside the church and that ministry watches for these on the basis of the gospel. See his 1967 speech and tract for the LCA Board of Social Ministry, "Theological Perspectives on Social Ministry," published also in *Context* (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago), Winter, 1968.

the forgiveness of sins had not been wrong—it had addressed a historical threat raised within the church to the sovereignty and initiative of the grace of God—"but restriction of the understanding and power, the meaning and scope of grace to that dimension of life does not reach to the everyday stuff of which our misery as social, economic, and political creatures is compounded." Without a broader understanding, contemporaries were likely to find themselves "ever deeper locked within that radical individualism from which it is the work of grace to release [them]." Sittler's question for Lutheran urban theology and ministry: "How do the powers of grace... bear upon [humans] in their earthly nature and placement, in their neighborly context, in their tool-making and machine-making and economic-elaborating function?"[10]

This creation-grace understanding remains a muted and disputed theme among Lutherans. It strikes church theologians as overly subjective with respect to faith, overly optimistic with respect to worldly prospects, in any case as diversionary from the church's defining task of saving souls. It is viewed as insufficiently attentive to the characteristic Lutheran distinction between "two kingdoms"—between the reign of God over people of faith through grace in the Gospel and God's reign over everything else through the Law.[11]

Karl Hertz, an Ohio Lutheran seminary teacher who is remembered for pioneering work in contextual education, observed near the end of his life in 1992 that Gettysburg-Ohio themes were still active in many urban clergy in an "underground" way.[12] At UTC in Chicago, Joseph Sittler was one theologian who could be invited back again and again—which raises a question whether other Lutherans present were not, as Sittler said of himself, "at the edges of things" and primarily "for export."[13]

2. Law and Gospel: two reigns of God in the city

World War II put confessionally-minded Lutherans back to work on their traditional distinctions between Law and Gospel and the "two Kingdoms." They could no longer speak of a simple separation between "throne

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[10] Joseph Sittler, "Urban Fact and the Human Situation" in *Challenge and Response in the City*, ed. Walter Kloetzli (Rock Island, IL: Augustana, 1962).

[11] This helps explain why Lutherans were less enthusiastic than others over Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* when it appeared in 1964. Some, however, refused to make a separation between the grace of God and human engagement with new possibilities that become available in the course of history. See a symposium entitled "Secular City: Image for Lutherans?" in *The Lutheran Quarterly* XVIII:1 (February, 1966), edited by Frederick K. Wentz of Gettysburg.

[12] During work with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Hertz produced a critical-historical and critical-geographical treatment of two kingdoms understandings. See *Two Kingdoms and One World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), especially Part V, "The American Reformulation of Lutheran Political Responsibility in the Twentieth Century."

[13] Remarks to campus pastors in *Center for the Study of Campus Ministry Year Book* (Valparaiso University, 1975), 33. Required reading for Sittler was an essay by Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" (*Harvard Theological Review* 56 [July, 1963], 199-215), which asked whether Lutherans have not read their own inwardness, gained from Luther and Augustine, back on Paul and the New Testament. The urban scholar Richard Sennett suggests, more broadly, that an introspective consciousness from Augustine has confined the spirit of city architecture and city streets, in *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1990).

and altar" since earthly rulers had shown themselves massively and murderously subject to evil powers and trends. The task, as posed by William Lazareth, a new theologian at the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia, was "to put the church back under the Gospel of God and the state back under the Law of God."

Concern for the society could not remain a matter of indifference to believers, least of all in America where citizens bear a Constitutional responsibility for public life.[14] The "two Kingdoms" distinction was now elaborated to include attention to social-economic institutions other than government (remembering sermons and tracts of Luther on family, schooling, and business). These were the "left hand" work of God, or "masks" of God, through which God was doing the work of preservation and justice—*though not of justification.* Their function was to be distinguished from salvation which is the work of the gospel alone, and the language used in taking them up was to be that of "civil reason" and "civil righteousness."[15]

The church and community organization

The process by which these characteristic understandings came to expression in urban ministry can be traced by sketching Lutheran responses to emerging local mass-based community organizations in the cities. We

[14] A touchstone of post-war Lutheran social consciousness in America is a three-volume work entitled *Christian Social Responsibility*, ed. Harold Letts (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), which was commissioned in 1946 by the United Lutheran Church in America and served to convene a large number of contributors and discussants along the way to its publication a decade later. Some participants came from classrooms with Reinhold Niebuhr, Wilhelm Pauck, and Paul Tillich, who had themselves moved from pre-war Lutheran backgrounds to take up post-war social, political and cultural questions. A similar development in official church publications and actions is reviewed by Lloyd Svendsbye, *The History of a Developing Social Responsibility among Lutherans in America from 1930 to 1960, with reference to The American Lutheran Church, the Augustana Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the United Lutheran Church in America* (New York: Union Theological Seminary dissertation, 1966).

[15] In an LCA consultation on ecology, Joseph Sittler sought unsuccessfully to include a reference to "an endlessly sounding counterpoint between the heavenly city that God's will causes us to envision and the city of our present habitation." The chairman, William Lazareth, objected that this blurred the distinction between the creative and redemptive activity of God, that only humans sin, and that the care of the city and the earth is the "rational responsibility of all men of good will, whatever their faith"—see Christa Klein and Christian von Dehsen, *Politics and Policy: The Genesis and Theology of Social Statements in the Lutheran Church in America* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), pp. 66, 124-26, 165-66. Also *Ecological Renewal*, ed. Paul Lutz and H. Paul Santmire (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), xv.

Some theologians became stricter about this separation of language as the years went by. To the 1966 issue of *The Lutheran Quarterly* (cited n. 10 above) Carl Braaten contributed "Reflections on the Lutheran Doctrine of the Law" in which he found guidance and inspiration for interracial practices in the demands of inclusion at the Lord's Supper and for approaches to war in the church's benediction of peace. Twenty-five years later he finds abstract consideration of "justice" sufficient in all such matters, lest the church "exhaust itself in telling the world what to do" and "neglect its own calling which no other can do"—"God in Public Life," *First Things*, December, 1990.

have already noted, in Walter Kloetzli and others, a reluctance to support Alinsky-style confrontational community groups during the years 1955 to 1965.[16] From 1965 to 1975, pressed by events, this judgment virtually flip-flopped. During a third decade, 1975 to 1985, Lutherans reasserted their traditional distinctions in a nuanced formulation of principles for urban ministry.

The largest of eight incorporated national boards of the LCA at its outset in 1962 was the Board for American Missions (BAM).[17] Its bishop, Robert Marshall, recalls how, in the city of Chicago, the new body inherited from one merging partner a strategic mile-by-mile sequence of parishes on the south side, and from another partner a network of cooperating urban pastors and parishes led by William Lesher on the north side. While the primary emphasis of this board was on establishing congregations in the growing suburbs, it also included a secretary for the urban church. The first of these, Orville Hartman, collaborated with more than twenty national denominations in establishing UTC in Chicago. His successor, Richard Bartley, trained with the first year's group, then routinely recruited urban clergy for this training and also brought 33 synodical presidents to Chicago for a special program. Arnold Tiemeyer, a staffer for BAM in the Chicago area, met Saul Alinsky at UTC and moved to promote relations with community organizations nationally.

Clergy trainees, along with others at the Chicago center, were placed in community organizations where they were first to listen, then to cooperate as participant-observers, and finally (in the case of successful long termers) to take part in developing community strategies and programs. Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) afforded a particularly lively model of community organization but by no means the only one. An alternative strategy was regularly set forth by Leopold Bernhard, then at First Lutheran in Columbus, Ohio, and Milton Kotler of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., who made regular visits to UTC to describe projects being conceived in conjunction with a "neighborhood foundation" and "neighbor-

> Concern for the society could not remain a matter of indifference to believers, least of all in America...

[16] Kloetzli's enthusiasm for societal developments did indeed attach to community organizations of other sorts. He and his followers have said that community organization can have a "saving" significance for people. "No people," i.e. people regarded by others as deviant or pathological, "become a people."

[17] LCA Bishop Robert Marshall would move to combine BAM with other boards in a new Division for Mission in North America (DMNA). This made for creative day-to-day cooperation. LCA social statements produced at this time by the Office of Church and Society under William Lazareth remain the most considered in the history of Lutheranism. All 19 statements are reviewed by Klein and von Dehsen, *Politics and Policy: The Genesis and Theology of Social Statements in the Lutheran Church in America.* Significantly, the authors observe that these statements did not raise issues not already booted in the public media, nor reformulate public questions, nor cite church precedents.

hood constitution" in East Columbus Community Organization (ECCO).[18]

Prompted by Bartley and Tiemeyer and citing "civil righteousness," LCA now gave direct support to community organizations as different as Belmont-Craigen in Chicago, which was a scene of housing marches with Martin Luther King, and COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service) which was being organized by Ernesto Cortés of IAF in San Antonio. In 1968-70, responding to uprisings in the cities, LCA made a churchwide appeal called ACT ("Act in Crisis Today"). Arnold Tiemeyer investigated possible uses of this $4 million fund and recommended direct grants to community organizations, including $125-150,000 annually to the Inter-denominational Fund for Community Organization (IFCO).

City planning visits were still being conducted by Harold Foster and Eiichi Matsushita, former colleagues of Walter Kloetzli now at BAM, but these visits were only three to four weeks in duration and were often "conducted through windshields," with resulting proposals for special ministries, mergers, clusters, and closings. In some cities groups previously assembled for research and planning by Kloetzli were now using that data to gain support for community organizations. In Milwaukee the information was taken up by an all-Lutheran group chaired by former mayor Frank Zeidler and then by an ecumenical organization directed by Pat Flood, whose housing marches drew participants from Chicago and elsewhere. Lutheran Urban Church Planning in Baltimore, under directors Jack White and Robert Hoyt, used the data to document deprivation and powerlessness in specific city areas and make a case for community mobilization. After the disorders of the late 1960s this Lutheran alliance worked with Roman Catholic and Presbyterian groups and Greater Baltimore Association to support formation of five community organizations. These groups moved from confrontational activities to development of 23 community-sponsored housing programs different from "urban renewal." They became forerunners of the BUILD organization in Baltimore which now addresses broader city issues including widely-watched work in school reform.

Meanwhile congregational practices were growing up in some of the nation's most disinvested and devastated city areas that would lead to modified relations with community organizations and to a more nuanced official understanding of parish-based urban ministries in Lutheranism.

West Side, Chicago.—Amid the flames and tanks of 1965, David Nelson and his sister, Mary, offspring of missionaries, arrived at Bethel Church (LCA) with its German cor-

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[18] UTC is remembered as a boot camp for producing street readiness in urban clergy and for relating them both to the Civil Rights movement and to community organizations. Its participants compared housing programs, initiatives for economic development, and system reforms (education, work, health, media) from many settings. Richard Hauser of London described the internal dynamics of groups moving from apathy and violence through catharsis and leadership development to formation of socially creative institutions. Ivan Illich of Cuernavaca, Mor., Mexico, showed how intervening service institutions can produce debilitating effects, with implications for community planning and strategy. The UTC curriculum is described by Richard Luecke in *Perchings* (Chicago and Philadelphia: UTC and Fortress, 1972). Similar training grew up in 24 other cities. The story of the urban training "movement" is told by George Younger, *From New Creation to Urban Crisis: A History of Action Training Ministries 1962-1975* (Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1987).

nerstone and 35 white families, in an area which had changed from 35,000 whites to 60,000 blacks in five years.

Though secularizing theories abounded during the 1960s, *these new shepherds and their changing flock made it a point that worship would stay central at Bethel.* The Sunday Service and weekly prayer meetings were to be "the glue, gas and guts" of what the people did, including some newly adopted activities called "neighbors take care of neighbors." Later, 150 choir members would rock the old building. They would also join their sound to that of Latinos in Mexico City (Bethel has helped build squatter houses there), of Native Americans at Turtle Mountain, and whites in Minneapolis—a "four-point parish"—and go to sing with other black Lutherans in Africa.

When banks withheld dollars and 300 homes were lost in a single year within a square mile of the church, Bethel staff and volunteers purchased and rehabilitated one HUD-foreclosed three-flat by means of a pony-up purse and sweat labor. The next step proved crucial: the legal formation of Bethel New Life, Inc., albeit with a volunteer staff and $9,600 in the account. *Reinvestment would be a major strategy and local people would be legally and corporately in charge of their own rebuilding.*

This corporate body continued to work with church offices, colleges, and congregations (never limited to "partner" congregations), but was also able to wring land and building concessions from the city, to package funds using limited partnerships as well as no interest and low interest loans from many sources (Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter came with a summer crew of Habitat for Humanity), and win neighborhood loan agreements from a major Chicago bank seeking to open a branch in the area. By 1990 the corporation had built or restored 500 housing units with 700 in the works, including a 114-unit building using $5.8 million in layered financing. Twenty-plus neighbor congregations, including independent Baptists, were cooperating in an "Isaiah" plan for new housing. Bethel also acquired a failing hospital and adapted it for comprehensive programs with the elderly, day care, and cultural arts. It created cooperative enterprises in sewing, home care, and recycling, and an experimental Self-Sufficiency Program that converts welfare funds into grants for work with families including procurement of employment and housing.[19]

Here was a further learning: *Community revitalization is not achieved through a housing project here, a new school principal there, a jobs program somewhere else. It begins to look like a circle of things.*

By 1990 Bethel New Life, Inc., was working with a budget of more than $6 million and employing almost 500 workers. The congregation had grown to 700 members and was self-supporting. Its families, with very few college educated members and an average income of $14,000, were contributing an average gift of $28.20 per week and were conscientiously refusing to think of themselves as "poor".

Brooklyn and South Bronx.—When John Heinemeier came to St. John's congregation of the LCMS in Brooklyn as an associate pastor, helping to free Richard John Neuhaus for broader engagements, he found three primary emphases which would stay with him.

1. Use of the traditional liturgies—this included a daily Mass. Though four services were held on Sunday in three languages, all participants were to see them-

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[19] See Patrick Barry, *Rebuilding the Walls* (Chicago: Bethel New Life, 1989).

selves as one congregation gathered around Word and Sacrament as though their very life depended on it—as it did.

2. Social action in which church affiliation and role were always clearly signalled. No press of daily rounds justified turning aside from programs of the Lutheran Human Relations Association, The Civil Rights Movement, local school struggles (including those of Ocean Hill-Brownsville), or Clergy and Laity Concerned about the War in Viet Nam.

3. Local ecumenics with the Williamsburg Clergy Association. This association sponsored 700 rental units under federal programs.

In 1976 Heinemeier moved to Risen Christ church in Brooklyn (also LCMS). At St. John's, he later said, he had performed "social ministry" but had not achieved "social change." Here he met IAF organizers, took the training and came to assist with training. Here was added an additional learning: *Some professional or skilled assistance is highly desirable, even necessary, in organizing the broader community.*[20]

Heinemeier became a convener of East Brooklyn Clergy. The "Nehemiah Project" initiated by this group began with sustained organizing of neighborhood people for the announced purpose of achieving not only shelter but power and stakes that would change their future. By 1990, 2,300 units had been produced with the working poor, 40 percent of whom came from public housing. First organizing dollars were provided by the Atlantic District of LCMS. A development loan came from the Roman Catholic bishop in Brooklyn. The city was shamed into a tardy grant of $10,000 per unit, repayable if a house was sold.

Communications were opened with city boards and officials. Stories live on. Mayor Koch, having missed the groundbreaking ceremony but catching the late news with a voice-over from the prophet Nehemiah about rebuilding the city, belatedly declared, "I am Nehemiah!" For a city hearing, neighborhood people occupied all the leather chairs around a horseshoe-shaped table, leaving the lonely spot down front for a late-arriving commissioner—who was their public servant.

In 1982 Heinemeier transferred to the LCA Metropolitan Synod of New York and moved to St. John's (LCA) in South Bronx, statistically the most impoverished congressional district in the country just four miles from east Manhattan. Here he occupied a parsonage that had been vacant for thirteen years. In addition to strengthening Eucharistic worship, while including contextual expressions, he helped reshape an all-Lutheran coalition into South Bronx Ministry, which became the catalyst in establishing "South Bronx Churches" (40 congregations, nine denominations). Heine-

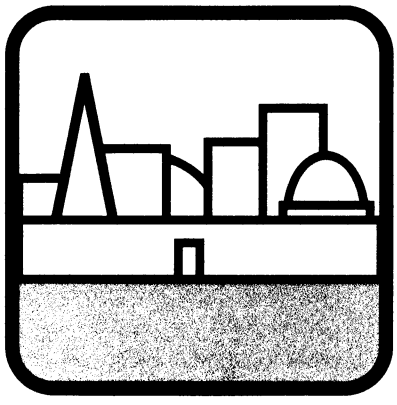
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[20] Heinemeier defended this style of organizing against critics of Alinsky in the church: "Powerlessness, when it is imposed, is not what Jesus wants for his people. *Voluntary* powerlessness, perhaps—in fact, that is one of the deepest forms of Gospel living.... [But] for 99.9 percent of the people it is imposed powerlessness, not voluntary." See "John Heinemeier: Hope Blooming in the Urban Desert" in *The Other Side*, May, 1988. This pastor is featured in the 50th anniversary booklet of the Industrial Areas Foundation.

To affirm "voluntary poverty" Heinemeier joined Jesus Caritas, an association based on the life of the French Roman Catholic priest Charles de Foucauld, a forebear and classic of modern urban ministry. Putting de Foucauld and Alinsky together made for a dual understanding that cultivating internal congregational life and facilitating a powerful neighborhood organization can go hand in hand. Membership, attendance, offerings doubled.

meier reasserted the importance of *disciplined support groups of ministers among the poor and of ecumenism at the community level.*[21]

The South Bronx Churches employed IAF in organizing the community, which moved to acquire rental and low-income housing. Grants included $100,000 annually from ALC. At its 1980 convention LCA voted $500,000 for the South Bronx Churches and for development in their area. It also moved in that convention to make church policy out of learnings by coalitions in settings like this.



In the mid-1960s Lutheran congregations remaining in inner Philadelphia (26 of a former 46) formed a cooperative "Philadelphia Central City Parish" for the purpose of adopting common disciplines and procedures and marshalling scarce resources. The LCA Board for American Missions refused at first to support this extraordinary development, but the local synod under Bishop Samuel Kidd gave financial assistance of about $50,000 per year. Under the leadership of the first parish director, Robert Neumeyer, black membership of this "parish" grew from 500 to 3,500 (from 7 percent to 80 percent of total membership). In 1978, when John Cochrane became parish director—he'd been a Bertha Paulssen student and is said to have baptized parish youth in the area swimming pool (in some versions, with a fire hose)—membership was still growing, even though population in the area was now declining, and ethnic distribution closely reflected that of the area.

In the course of this development, the BAM committee on urban mission under chairman Franklin Fry of York, Pennsylvania, who now "had his riot," became supportive. The national church contributed subsidies and grants to this central city parish amounting to more than $200,000 per year for a decade. (Total grants from all sources over 25 years would amount to $15 million.) Responding to this development and other local parish experiences, the 1980 LCA convention in Seattle called for an urban ministry unit to work directly with its office of church extension—in the future, church development would not take place in a world apart from city congregations. Director of the new unit was Harvey Peters, who had already organized a process to round up learnings and "put urban ministry at the center of the church's mission plans."[22]

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[21] For a ground level story of Sunday morning in the life of a South Bronx Lutheran congregation where Hispanic-Americans have now received African-Americans, as told by an exemplary and gifted pastor, see Heidi Neumark, "Transfiguration Lutheran Church" in *The Experience of Hope: Mission and Ministry in Changing Urban Communities*, ed. Wayne Stumme (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 62-77.

[22] A working paper, presented at parish, synod and national levels and reviewed in a two-day consultation with urban church practitioners from various cities, resulted in an early document entitled "LCA Ministry in the City: Directions and Guidelines" (1977). City

Definitions and principles

To introduce this undertaking Peters set forth a list of previously tried but only minimally successful strategies for keeping congregations afloat in city areas: "withdrawal and preservation" (relocate or merge), "coexistence" (welcome community people to existing programs, open facilities to outside programs), "adaptation" (support extra-congregational activities or community organization), "cooperation" (cosponsor ecumenical agencies or street ministries), "specialized and experimental ministries" (form separate ministries for people of color or whose language is other then English, offer alternative forms of congregational life). All such measures had been going on in congregations, Peters said, *while* their membership was dispersing and declining. He offered a new word for the policy that was now to be adopted: i.e, "rerooting" congregations in ways that would achieve new members and new behavior on the scene.[23]

What "rerooting" would mean came to expression in a cooperatively formed manifesto entitled "The Parish as Place: Principles of Parish Ministry."[24] The preamble asked bishops to affirm these principles and expect them to be applied, asked seminaries to require them of field students and interns, and asked parishes to put them into day-to-day use. Synods, commissions and agencies were to assign people and funds with an eye to putting these principles to work in particular settings.

Congregations would now be re-rooted in a "parish." "Parish" in this scheme took back its historical meaning as a geographical place and included all who inhabited a neighborhood area (as *oikoumene* originally referred not to churches but to the whole inhabited earth). "Parochial" (*para* plus *oikos*, dwelling next door, neighboring) then described congregations as sojourning, being "in but not of" their parish or neighborhood. Taken together, these terms would keep congregations from forgetting either their special identity or their surrounding community. Then came the "principles."

1. Parish ministry demonstrates the fullness of God's mission. "God's mission" is twofold requiring a twofold practice: that of "the means of grace given exclusively to the church—the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist," and that of participation in God's other work in the life of the neighborhood.

2. Parish ministry is geographical and integral to its setting. The pastor lives there. So increasingly do the members. As the church occupies ground and is public, so the pastor would be visible and known by name beyond his flock. Members would know their neighbors and become directly involved in community organizations.

3. Parish ministry is inclusive. Congregations would intentionally reflect the racial-social-economic composition of the people in the parish. The traditional Christian liturgy would be used *and* there would

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was identical with "urban," and urban was defined in demographic and pathological terms: population, density, "and/or extreme poverty or rapidly declining social conditions." Urban cohorts were identified. Urban systems were described. The dynamics of disinvestment were shown in terms of the church's own plants: congregations had made "unilateral decisions to locate in the suburbs." That was where the church's largest outlays had been made and relations with city congregations were strained.

[23] See Harvey Peters, "The Lutheran Church and Urban Ministry in North America: An Overview" in *The Experience of Hope*, ch. 2.

[24] Reproduced as an Appendix in *The Experience of Hope*.

be respect for "the symbols, music, and culture of the people in the neighborhood."

4. Parish ministry is interdependent. Arrangements would be made for mutual support and accountability among ministers of the Lutheran churches in the area, including common study, prayer and consolation, and they would consciously represent the entire denomination.

5. Parish ministry is catholic. Pastor and people would seek ways to show unity and share responsibility "with all other congregations of the one holy catholic apostolic church that are located in the same parish."

6. Parish ministry is intentional. Regular one-on-one calls would be made to households. Exactly because they were *not* looking for an extra-congregational "clientele," invitations would always be made to all participants in whatever activity to take up full participation in the congregation and the means of grace.

These "principles" were also adopted by the Division for Service and Mission of ALC in 1982. In the new Lutheran church, formed in 1988, the Division of Outreach adopted this paper as a statement of policy, and the number of "urban coalitions" grew from nine to 45. Directors still came together from the cities and several rural areas, including Appalachia. The "principles" continued to be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested within the order.[25]

During the decade of the 1980s, however, the Philadelphia Central City Parish suffered losses. Four congregations closed, and few were offering assurances that the rest would survive into the next century. According to one sober assessment, the accomplishment of this coalition and its spinoff, Northwest Philadelphia Lutheran Parish, had been to "give Lutherans an extra decade, at most two, in the city." Proximate causes of this decline, and that of some other city coalitions, may be sought by looking to realities both in the churches and the neighborhoods.

> "Parish" took back its historical meaning... and included all who inhabited a neighborhood area.

In 1990 the Philadelphia parish included 5,332 African-Americans, but turnover had been rapid and these were by no means the same people who had adopted coalition activities in the previous decades. All congregations had not been equally active in the parish and all were not equal recipients of funds. Total funds communicated from the larger church diminished in the early 1980s and were further reduced after the merger in 1988. In the Milwaukee coalition new stringencies led to shared funding applications and allocations. In the Bronx it led to a suggestion by John Heinemeier that there's something to be learned from the economics of independent black city congregations—"if Lutherans are not to be priced out of the inner city."

Changes were also taking place in the neighborhoods. In most inner cities there

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[25] They were set forth in operational terms by Thomas G. Sinnott, *Mission and Ministry: A Training Manual* (Northfield, MN: Editorial Avance Luterano, 1989). A summary of meetings of coalition directors 1980-89 was included by Sinnott in a tenth year report of the Hudson County Lutheran parish (83 Wayne Street, Jersey City, NJ 07302).

was now a proliferation of racial and religious groups. In his coalition-oriented manual, *Mission and Ministry*, Thomas Sinnott included among "obstacles" to urban ministry the new sensibilities required on the part of pastors and people with respect to black and white styles, Puerto Rican family practices, West Indian ceremonies and much more. In some cities congregations were now marching week by week to stand and pray at crack houses. In only a few coalition areas was there a professionally-served community organization of the kind that was deemed indispensable by John Heinemeier in the Bronx and that was being espoused by Paul Santmire even in the "smaller big city" of Hartford.[26]

A question arises whether concentration on principles of ministry did not inadvertently shift attention away from technical strategies and time lines required to battle the trends in disinvested, downward-spiralling neighborhoods of the city. While the "principles" called attention to the comparatively small investments made by the denomination in inner city congregations, they made no reference to broader strategies for reinvestment and community economic development nor to any ways by which the churches might help to foster that.

3. "The Freedom of the Christian": Free Spirits in the City[27]

"Scholastic confessionalism" is Dean Lueking's term for a third Lutheran mission style, one which gives large attention to "pure doctrine" and which may therefore extend to people ill-taught at other altars. A church body focused in this way leaves large space for unofficial initiatives on the part of individuals and groups who see a need or hear a call and respond to it. It then becomes a question what will happen when these voluntary missioners get together—who are closest to people caught in the wheels of change, and closest to other missioners who work with differently stated rationales.[28]

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[26] Santmire defended church cooperation with community organizations during a time of chagrin and controversy over the confrontational tactics of a clergy-led group in Pittsburgh, the Denominational Ministry Strategy, which was protesting corporation practices as a cause of local unemployment; see Santmire, "Getting Where the Action Is," *Lutheran Partners*, July 1985. (Cf. Paul Johnson, "Clairton, U.S.A." in *The Christian Century*, July 17-24, 1985; also *The Book on Pittsburgh: The Other Side of the Story* by DMS, July 1985.)

When Santmire arrived at Grace church, Hartford, in 1980, the congregation had survived a loss of 400 communicants and was busy reconstituting a mixed constituency of blacks, hispanics and young professionals. "Handles" were found for local problems through formation of the Asylum Hill Organizing Project, a multi-issue neighborhood association employing five organizers and forming a subsidiary corporation for contractual dealings. Seed dollars from LCA leveraged a start-up grant. Organizer training was supplied by an agency for community organization supported by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese. The "circle of things" began to emerge: jobs, economic development, education, and safety.

[27] In a tract of 1520 entitled "The Freedom of a Christian," Martin Luther set forth two propositions: "The Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none, and is a perfectly dutiful servant of all subject to all." Voluntary associations of Lutherans, not least those arising in LCMS, exemplified both sides of this.

[28] The story of independently sponsored and supported social ministries in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is told by F. Dean Lueking in *Mission in the Making* (see n. 2) and *A Century of Caring 1868-1968* (St.

Missouri Synod work with African-Americans began in southern segregated cities like New Orleans, Charlotte, and Greensboro, and in rural communities like Selma, Alabama, where the first missionaries were a seaport preacher and an enterprising circuit rider. A segregated school and seminary were established in Selma and Greensboro which, by an irony and providence of history, later supplied pastoral leadership and helped fill congregations in northern cities.[29] In the north an entrepreneurial black preacher, Marmaduke Carter, charmed Midwest congregations with German sermons and hustled his own support to form the first LCMS congregation headed by a black clergyman, St. Philip's in Chicago. All other black congregations were headed by white clergy and all were called "St. Philip's."[30] Not until the 1950s when every week for an entire decade a thousand people were getting off trains from the south in cities like Chicago would more black clergy come to shepherd LCMS flocks in the north.[31]

The story of interracial change and urban mission in this church body cannot be told apart from the career of Andrew Schulze, a soft-spoken, lifelong reformer.[32] As a white shepherd of St. Philip's church and school in St. Louis and later as a missionary in Chicago with a grades 1-5 school in Ida B. Wells public housing, Schulze and his seminarian-teacher Harry Huxhold fought unsuccessful and sometimes bitter battles to gain admission for their pupils in regular synodical schools. As early as 1936 St. Philip's in Chicago and St. Philip's in St. Louis (both members of a separate Synodical Conference dominated by LCMS) had sought formal admission to the Missouri Synod on the national convention floor. In 1946, when the Federal Council of Churches was calling for "a non-segregated church in a non-segregated society," this resolution finally passed. In 1965 an African-American delegate could say to the LCMS convention at Detroit, "Brothers, we are here!" That convention also proved explosive.

The Lutheran Human Relations Association of America (LHRAA) had begun in a voluntary way two decades before with Andrew Schulze in St. Louis. From 1953 annual meetings were held at Valparaiso University in Indiana, where President O.P. Kretzmann appointed Schulze to a part-

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Louis: LCMS Board of Social Ministry, 1968). Not until the 1950s was a churchwide board of social welfare established to support such workers. Lueking comments: "They had fought their way into the denominational framework. Once in, they were not sure this was a good idea."

During the 1940s an open social welfare conference gathered yearly at Valparaiso University. Also at this time, leaders of an "evangelical" or "evangelical Catholic" bent came together who were called, for lack of any official designation, "The Forty-Four," the number of signatures on their manifesto entitled "Speaking the Truth in Love." Such unofficial groups provided a harbor for persons engaged in social ministries who were struggling to stay on the roster.

[29] Grace Church in Hartford, for example, received a stream of African-American Lutherans from LCMS missions and schools in Alabama. See n. 27 above.

[30] Say "St. Philip's" and everybody knew. Karl Lutze, a director of Lutheran Human Relations Association in America, explains: "The first St. Philip was successful with a black eunuch—and white churches were most comfortable in accepting non-whites when they were deprived of their full humanity."

[31] Moses Dickinson in Chicago, Clemens Sabourin in New York City, William Scheibel in Washington, D.C., Paul Lehman in Los Angeles, begin the list of African-American pastors who then conducted an interracial and urban mission to the church itself.

[32] See Andrew Schulze, *The Race Against Time: The History of Race Relations in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from the*

time chair in the theology department, supported him when he was arrested with demonstrators in Albany, Georgia, and powerfully and poetically defended him in a state which had been a home to the Ku Klux Klan. Chapters grew in 56 cities, served by seventeen coordinators. For six consecutive years during the 1960s, with leadership from Karl Lutze, LHRAA conducted city training for professional church workers, including graduates of seminaries and teachers colleges, using Chicago as a laboratory. During the 1970s it sponsored week-long workshops in changing neighborhoods to which 70-plus local congregations would send participants including their pastors and officers.

To every LCMS convention from 1956 to 1977 came resolutions prepared by the annual meetings of LHRAA. To the 1965 Detroit assembly came ten resolutions calling for churchwide actions bearing on urban ministry:

—For open congregations and an end to "negro missions."

—For staying in changing communities.

—For fair housing and employment practices and removal of all restrictive clauses or tacit understandings in congregations and their communities.

—That all synodical schools and publications teach truths about race that accord with sound theology and science and that interracial education be supplied for pastors, teachers, and leaders.

—That districts anticipate and plan a community-based future with their inner-city parishes, and that all parochial schools be open to neighborhood children and be strengthened in areas of racial unrest.

—That seminary students be assigned for their experiential year to inner city parishes.

—That cooperation with the poor, nonwhites and native Americans be made mission priorities and a focus of expenditures.

—That support be given to organizing efforts in minority communities.

—That members who have engaged in demonstrations for furthering racial justice be commended and encouraged.

—That church schools and church publications adopt this stand, and that these resolutions be implemented by those in authority at every level.

That year LHRAA shared a booth with proponents of six "Mission Affirmations" drawn from a paper commissioned by the mission board and prepared by Martin Kretzmann of the India field and seminary. Conventioneers lined up in very nearly the same way on both sets of resolutions.[33]

To write off such resolutions, once passed, as the perfunctory side of convention proceedings is to underestimate Lutheran respect for "what is written." A new synod president, Oliver Harms, convened special conferences on race, as required, in 1965 and 1967. He was made a one-term president by a reconstituted convention in 1969. When, in the course of controversy with the succeeding president, the Concor-

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Perspective of the Author's Involvement, 1920-1970 (Valparaiso, IN: Lutheran Human Relations Association in America, 1972). See also Jeff G. Johnson, *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971).

[33] The ten overtures on racism were published together with the six mission affirmations as "Human Relations: Resolutions of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" (1965). This is now a collector's item.

An LCA theological spokesman detected in these LCMS voices an enthusiasm, reminiscent of the early Gettysburg Lutherans, which "tied the mission of Christ too directly to social goals and reflected a reformed or neo-Calvinistic impulse foreign to the Law-Gospel distinction."

dia Seminary faculty marched out to become a "seminary in exile" (Seminex), the difference was waged as one over scriptural interpretation. Reuben Schmidt, then of the LCMS mission board, is one of many who say, "It wasn't just texts, it was also mission."

Neither individuals nor congregations in this synod escaped the tide of urban social history. When William Griffin came from segregated training at Selma and Greensboro to the Lutheran Church of Christ the King (not St. Philip's) founded by Andrew Schulze in Chicago, he was able to "cut his eye teeth" (as he put it) with other clergy at UTC, where they met black leaders and "found out that what they were doing was OK." A young staff worker at the local community organization which he chaired was Jesse Jackson, then a fellow at UTC. A new solidarity had been achieved by African-Americans in LCMS, according to Griffin, when, on the 75th anniversary of St. Philip's in Chicago, founded by Marmaduke Carter, it seemed every African-American Lutheran from Milwaukee to Gary wanted to be present.[34]

Congregations, too, tell stories of interracial development which retain a Missouri flavor.

First Immanuel Lutheran Church, Chicago.—At its centennial in 1960, this congregation on the near west side, which had grown from 300 to 3,000 in the late 19th century and was now back to 300, faced a racially changed neighborhood that was being further altered by an expanding University of Illinois medical center. During the ministry of Ralph Moellering this became the first Chicago LCMS congregation to accept African-Americans and other minorities into a formerly white fold.

During the Chicago Civil Rights movement, with Donald Becker as pastor, this congregation opened its doors to a Martin Luther King rally on the basis of a painful, racially-divided margin of one vote. It also voted funds to the Blackstone Rangers and Disciples, well known street organizations, in response to an appeal from John Fry of First Presbyterian Church in the Woodlawn community.

During the 1970s, with six other inner-city parishes of the various Lutheran bodies, it called on 25 outer ring and suburban congregations to join in forming Lutheran Congregations for Career Development, a program that assists city youth to good vocations. Immanuel offered its kitchen to a youth owned cooperative bakery of this program. Young trainees in production, marketing and bookkeeping also carried bread to the Eucharist in suburban congregations, then stayed to tell their story and conduct a sale. In the 1970s and 1980s, even with a clear black majority, Immanuel church did not vote with other congregations to leave LCMS because, the pastor explains, "Blacks did not want to hurt whites with whom they had lived through these years. Experience makes a difference."

Lutheranism's voluntary Protestants

The Scandinavian and German Lutherans who merged and remerged to form the American Lutheran Church (ALC) in 1960 remained, in the view of many, an alliance

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[34] During the LCMS controversy Griffin left a teaching post at Concordia Teachers College, where he felt vulnerable, to take a congregation in southside Chicago. Later, however, he served with the LCMS Commission on Theology which produced a new statement on racism and with an official committee on black ministry elected by African-American congregations.

rather than a union of churches. These were Wobegone Lutherans whose "mission" combined Protestant individualism with evangelical preaching and singing found on the Midwestern American scene.[35] It was independent Norwegian laity who founded Lutheran Rescue Mission on West Monroe Street, Chicago, in a building said to have been owned by the Mafia. This later became Lutheran Family Mission and moved to the north side where, in 1980, it came to be led by Alvin Bergh who received some support from a regional church office. It was individuals who initiated Plymouth Youth Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, where juniors of Luther Theological Seminary (including Alvin Bergh) gained street-level experience. To celebrate the 1960 merger, a new national office helped establish Holy Family Mission on the grounds of Chicago Public Housing at Cabrini Green, which remains a favorite project of congregations. But it was congregations all by themselves that established a youth ministry and shelter at Lakeview Lutheran Church near Wrigley Field.

During the mid-1960s the ALC Department of American Missions was fostering new suburban starts with most of its $2.5 million budget, about $50,000 going to a desk for Metropolitan Mission that supported inner city programs. In 1968 city-oriented ALC clergy and laity formed an unofficial Conference on Inner City Ministries (CICM) to "name urban realities," achieve church identification with the poor, recruit black clergy, get people of color on denominational boards, and "de-colonialize" modes of ministry with new populations. In 1970 the church convention at Omaha responded to the U.S. Riot Commission Report ("Kerner Report") by authorizing an unprecedented urban crisis fund, to be dispersed by a Coordinating Committee on the National Crisis including grass roots leaders. This became Development Assistance Program (DAP) which conveyed about $600,000 each year for fifteen years to poor people's organizations, including those of Native Americans, Appalachians, Blacks and Hispanics in the cities.[36]

Former leaders, under whom urban missioners had chafed, were now off the scene. A new Division for Service and Mission in America added a program for "urban and ethnic ministries," which came to be conducted by Warren Sorteberg. "That's when CICM should have gone out of business," said Sorteberg. But it didn't. While the new Division was looking over to LCA for "principles of urban ministry," CICM was looking around for other free spirits with whom to discern or invent unofficial quark-like signs of the city that is to come.

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[35] This influence was present in all Lutheran bodies in America. But in LCMS, for example, it was qualified by a stricter attention to classical languages, adherence to the chorales, and almost total diffidence with respect to temperance elements in American evangelicalism.

[36] A noteworthy shift also took place in official statements of this body between 1968 and 1970. Its 1968 statement, "Our Approach to Social Involvement," included all the familiar qualifications: the Augsburg Confession "sharply distinguishes the powers and functions of church and state and insists that each be free to fulfil its own divine mandate without let or hindrance from the other." In 1969 the ALC Council made the most sympathetic and nuanced reply of any Lutheran body to the Black Manifesto. In 1970 a commission put through a statement entitled "Sent into the World" which trumpeted a grace-and-creation theme that virtually bypassed the formerly stressed Lutheran distinctions. See Charles P. Lutz, *Public Voice: Social Policy Development in the American Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: ALC Office of Church and Society, 1987).

In 1969 James Siefkes moved from a stewardship office in California to the ALC Division of Social Concerns in Minneapolis.[37] From a desk for "Mission Discovery," Siefkes conducted programs called "Matrix"—two to five days with congregations listening to voices of people caught or engaged in social change. Car loads came from Detroit and Milwaukee for days in Minneapolis, from Phoenix for days in Denver. White congregation members in Houston spent time with city blacks. Church constituencies in other cities opened communications with AFDC mothers, youth gangs and persons in the criminal justice system.

Siefkes also became a supporter in the 1970s and 1980s of activist individuals who conducted "probes" on problematic topics. Susan Ruehle assembled "Urban and Ethnic Resources for Churches," thereby facilitating communication among the congregations that produced them. "Peace and Non-violence" filled one of the transitions in the ministry of John Schramm, who moved from UTC to form a socially engaged house church in Washington, D.C., and later served as assistant for social ministries to the bishop of Minnesota. "Faith and Fantasy" became a traveling troop of clowns with Floyd Schaeffer. Problems of media were treated in Mexico City. A "dialogue on investment," conducted in light of the international debt crisis, produced a 175-page report by clergy and laity in Brazil. Joseph Barndt, returned after nine months at UTC to an urban ministry in Oakland where he wrote the first of two books on "white racism," then moved to Hell's Kitchen in New York and St. Peter's in the Bronx where he created a newsletter called "New Wine Exchange" and staged events which "gave people a place to go." As many as 40 "probers" would be operating at the same time. Siefkes had worried that venturesome city activists would become lost to the church. Instead, they found their way to one another and produced combined effects on the new Lutheran Church.

Inter-Lutheran cooperation took place in the cities even before the merger and intensified during the movement outward from LCMS.

Inter-Lutheran cooperation took place in the cities even before the merger and intensified during the movement outward from LCMS.[38] In Milwaukee, pastor Joe Ellwanger and Cross Lutheran Church (LCMS), formerly a white congregation of 2,500 members, now an African-American

[37] Siefkes was recruited by Paul Boe, a national staffer whom he met at a district convention in Anaheim, who later funded the American Indian Movement, joined its "Trail of Broken Treaties" march to Washington, D.C., and was called to witness in the trial after Wounded Knee. Boe was let go when the new Division for Social Missions in America was formed. Siefkes never forgot such losses.

[38] First step was formation in 1973 of a voluntary organization, Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (ELIM). Second step was formation in 1976 of an intermediate church body, American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), whose bishop was Will Herzfeld, a city-engaged African-American pastor in Oakland. Though fewer than 200 congregations joined the move, many participants described these years as "liberating."

plus Laotian congregation of 600, were working creatively with the Milwaukee Lutheran Coalition and its action organization MICAH in programs of economic development, housing, education, and responses to drugs and crime. In Detroit, congregations of all three pre-ELCA bodies—St. Mark (AELC), Grace (ALC), and St. Luke (LCA)—formed a three-point parish and sold their lots to the Detroit school board to acquire the site of Eastern High School. Here, with the cooperation of city Baptists and the mayor and in spite of wary contractors, they built the first new church building in Detroit in many years. Renamed Genesis Lutheran Church, this group helped form a neighborhood development corporation, joined in advocacies with welfare mothers, and fostered programs with street youth. It afforded a training ground for seminarians and for community-experienced candidates preparing for ministry through a program called ARTOS (Alternate Route to Ordained Service).

Individual congregations were now playing significant roles in the life of their cities and inviting others to join them. Martin Luther Place in Washington, D.C., recruited a national service corps for its own and other cities.[39] Among hundreds of church formed multi-service agencies, two may be noted for bringing Lutherans of all three bodies together before the merger, for joining city and suburban congregations, and for combining service with advocacy.

Metropolitan Lutheran Ministry, Kansas City, Missouri.— Three separate organizations formed by congregations of the various Lutheran bodies during the 1960s came together in 1971 with prompting by Walter Kloetzli, now a regional administrator for HUD in Kansas City. Members of all three groups met to follow up a city study produced by Victor Streufert, an LCMS sociologist. The new MLM, with leadership by Luther Johnson, came to comprise 45 congregations organizing volunteer services, communicating with other metropolitan agencies, and serving as a community-based ministry among the poor of the city.

In 1980 William Pape, a founder of CICM, came to this agency from Avondale Lutheran Church in Denver.[40] MLM continued to offer "Team Aid" for dealing with problems of family life, centers for emergency help, assistance to homeless people (including host homes, housing counseling, and employment services), and work with the elderly. In 1985 its constituents formed "Lutherans for Justice and Peace," a city-suburban group that performs research and education in public issues, conducts hearings, offers training for citizen participation, and equips people for discussion and action with advocacy groups.

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[39] Sixty-one volunteers in 1990-91. When John Steinbruck began here in 1969 after a term at UTC, the block on which his church stood housed three brothels and a palm reader. Today it is the site of "N Street Village," where the city's first church-based shelter was established in 1973, to which have been added 35,000 square feet of transitional housing, group homes, clinic, family center, and town houses for resident volunteers. Programs are supported by 10,000 private donors. Advocacies here, just five blocks from the White House, often take the form of demonstrations: e.g., a review of federal budget cuts performed over a cemetery for the homeless at the foot of the Luther statue.

[40] This former ALC parish is noted for its city-deeded property in a renewal area, its ethnically mixed constituency and use of their various motifs, its "Tuesday schools" and vacation schools conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese and Hmung, for active participation by persons bearing "physically disabled" and "mentally retarded" labels (also in the choir), and participation in an Alinsky-style organization.

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry Association, Cleveland.—Following the 1960s upheaval in Huff, Cleveland pastors called on LHRAA to assist with interpretation and response. Karl Lutze recruited Richard Sering, pastor of a black congregation, to spend a summer with Cleveland Lutherans. Sering helped develop the plan for a metropolitan Lutheran organization and later returned to put it to work. An early task was formation of a "truth squad" to churches after a shoot-out in Glenville.

Today LMMA, governed by a board including five members of LCMS, five of ELCA, and five persons at large, works with a $3.3 million annual budget of which a third comes from public contracts. A community re-entry program, which began after Attica, resettles ex-offenders by building on their capacities and that of the communities in which they live. This was the first program to place work-release inmates in paying posts (hospitals, hunger centers, senior homes, youth centers), and it is helping to shape criminal justice practice in Ohio.[41]

George Hrbek, who came to Cleveland by way of "the Mansion," an LCMS ministry in the Kenwood-Oakland community of Chicago, designed a County Ombudsman Program and was appointed by county commissioners to mediate complaints for all services in a five county area. He organized a coalition of the homeless and, citing recorded complaints, proposed structural changes in policies and programs. These advocacies have resulted in legislation for nursing home reforms and in housing for persons with disabilities.

Both suburban and city congregations are engaged in these projects (439 volunteers in 1990). They see themselves as pursuing a justice ministry including advocacy and social action.

The spirits converge

During events of the 1980s many of these urban "spirits" came on stage or brought their organizational skills to work backstage. James Mayer spent post-India and post-Missouri days conducting an unofficial exchange called "Partners in Mission," which enabled people active in social ministries to make themselves known to prospective supporters without going over any synodical desks. He now also became convener of an unofficial working group on "justice agendas." Just as there was a formal constitutional Committee for the New Lutheran Church (CNLC, chaired by William Lazareth), there would also be an informal committee for Justice in the New Lutheran Church (JNLC). To JNLC came people from many urban posts and voluntary associations, including those previously linked through the New Wine Exchange.

Members of the Cleveland staff were chosen to manage a campaign that would provide monitors and advocates during the constituting process. Urban workers, led by Mary Nelson of Bethel in Chicago and Kim Zalent of Cleveland who had previously led a successful campaign for South Africa disinvestment in the churches, became never failing shepherds in the precincts of the Committee for the New Lutheran Church offering clerical assistance, information, and

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[41] This "community reentry" program, which advanced beyond publicly-booted attitudes, is described in *Inner City Crime Control* (Washington, D.C.: The Police Foundation, 1990), 35-40. It has received foundation, community service, bar association, and mayoral awards and has been featured on local TV and in a documentary of the ABC television network. A Mosaic Film produced for ELCA is available from Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, Association, 1468 W. 25th Street, Cleveland, OH 44113.

counsel to members of minorities seeking constitutional representation for people of color, laity, and women in all assemblies and committees. Having achieved this in the draft constitution, the campaign shifted to the scene of three conventions conducted simultaneously by the merging bodies, where it opened booths, created events, and mounted posters: "Here's the church and here's the steeple—open the door and see ALL the people!"

With new church provisions in place, it might seem a time for JNLC to "go out of business." Some new bishops made this suggestion. But old and new participants formed an independent "City Lutherans in Action" to perpetuate mutual support, form advocacies, provide for exchange through an occasional newsletter called "Just Cities," and convene conferences in strategic city places.

A merger for ministry

The story of urban ministry in North America since World War II is rich in vitalities and ironies, and Lutherans have enjoyed their share of both. Those who spoke of approximating the City of God in the earthly city were seen by others as compromising both the gospel and the secular. Those who were most intent on rightly distinguishing church and society found their national budgets, their urban ministries, and perhaps their enthusiasm for urban work diminishing even as urban realities advanced during the 1980s. Those groups who were least ecumenical in intent and least focused on issues of the wider society produced freely obedient spirits who found their own way to urban engagements and to one another and influenced beyond their numbers the formation of a new Lutheran church organization.

Thematic differences, if they do not harden into oppositions, can prove enriching. People who assert the interpretive principle of Law and Gospel (which no Lutheran wishes to deny) might find in that very distinction—i.e., between adherence to the Gospel of Christ by all members of the church and prudential judgments in social matters on which they may conscientiously differ—grounds for welcoming free spirits and voluntary initiatives in addressing city issues. Those who wish to defend the grace of God from compromise or limited understandings might be led to ask questions concerning the scope of that grace: Can beings who are by nature social be saved alone? Can there be a divine "adoption" of human sons and daughters without adopting their characteristic artifact and milieu—the city?

When biblical writers and editors asked this question, they found the covenants of the Old Testament, the gospel of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the hope inspired by the Spirit awesomely magnified by visions of a future city in God. The question of the city remains a problem for faith even prior to "city problems"—one which needs to be taken up not merely for the sake of social strategies but for the sake of faith itself, by everyone not just the social action committee.

Urban ministries during the past decades in no way invalidated traditional Lutheran distinctions, but the use of these became more complicated and more practical. The Law-Gospel distinction could now less than ever be seen to divide neatly to the two sides of society and church. In the debate over arrangements for a new Lutheran church some protagonists cited a doctrinal comment by Luther that no "ought" is necessary for people who live by the gospel. Constitutional provisions for multiracial and gender representation could then be described as "legalistic," as imposing a law

Not the least "mask" of God in city areas is community organization.

where no law is needed. But this uncritical assumption was subject to question on the basis of evidence supplied during the past century in both Europe and America—and perhaps also on the basis of another Luther dictum about being "at once sinners and saints." In matters of race many congregations and church bodies were notoriously slow in seeing what they "ought" to do.[42]

The distinction between church and civil society has now become elaborated by the palpable presence of many new parties, languages, and customs on both sides. A question for Lutherans is whether they will be available to immigrants of color in the future as they were to Europeans of the past—or will find their role diminished in new young communities to that of an officiant at last rites for the old. This becomes a matter of importance for the entire church, both for the sake of its continued vitality and for the sake of its lively witness to the gospel that creates a community of "every nation and kindred and people and tongue."

It was a confessional emphasis after World War II that God has interests on both sides of the church-world distinction and that worldly "masks of God" are to be found in more places than government. This might lead believers to give their support today not only to continuing struggles for interracial justice but also to forms of reinvestment and economic development that enable dispossessed or newcomer families and communities to gain stakes. This was a theme of Torah, but it can also be argued on grounds of prudential civic reason.

Not the least "mask" of God in city areas is community organization. This has helped local communities to gain response in the form of city services and to make use of public programs. Such organizations might now take up community building in ways that make full use of internal capacities and local resources—thereby discovering a multiplier that is known to congregations when they are most true to themselves.[43] Some previous manuals of ministry have described the city in pathological terms and have presented urban systems as facts of life. In the future, perhaps, they will also describe the city as communication

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[42] "Forced love" was the complaint raised by a pastor from Deerfield, Illinois, birthplace of the phrase "Not in my backyard." Black Lutherans have asked white Lutherans to consider not only that they were comparatively slow in matters of racial justice but also that their characteristic individualism may be derived from the culture rather than the gospel. See essays in Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo, eds., *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988).

[43] John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight describe community strategies based not on "needs" but on local capacities and resources in *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Evanston, IL: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1993.) The authors list specific precedents and contact persons. For a biblical view of "abundance" to be found in community see *inter alia* M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), especially the last chapter, "God and Needs."

among citizens and treat its systems as common goods or "common wealth" to communicate about. A street theater song chanted beneath city towers during urban ministry days said it right.

> This is not the forest primeval.
> This is the forest that Jack built.

Returning to a note with which we began: Members of a church for which "confession" is both a noun and a verb, which is both "reformed and reforming," will expect to respond in the present as they have in the past to societal developments that constitute a threat to participation in the gospel. Some spaces of the city's amassed poor have been described by those who know them at first hand as an "airtight cage," a cage which expands literally into disproportionate and massive incarceration. Gustavo Gutiérrez has asserted the unacceptability on gospel grounds of societal arrangements that turn people, practically speaking, into "non-persons" or "non-agents."[44] There are stands to take.

When nearly a thousand registrants convened under the banner "Called to Faithfulness" in an open conference at St. Olaf College in 1990, the urban ministry people who had stirred the churches during previous decades were for the most part not present. The "call" had been issued by Lutheran clergy and theologians describing themselves as "evangelical Catholics" with the stated purpose of caring for gospel words and the church's mandate in the face of what seemed to them a compromising and even perverse concentration on social movements and programs. There was now no single lament over a "suburban captivity of the churches"—in its place were expressions of satisfaction over release from "captivity to human social agendas."

This time the urban missioners had the church constitution on their side, at least with respect to provisions for cultural minorities and women. But the future of urban ministry in Lutheranism will depend on whether and how the now differing streams intersect. A creative "criss-cross and unique blending" (Dean Lueking's phrase) might put to rest long-standing questions: Why are the societal actions of faithful people not more inventive or more enduring? How can a church formed by the living Gospel of God be thereby rendered dull?

It remains to be seen whether present Lutheran parties will come to a *de facto* parting of the ways, thereby reducing urban ministry to a "specialty" and neglecting the full biblical story and promise with respect to the city. Or will they combine their confession and action for a new parting of the waters?

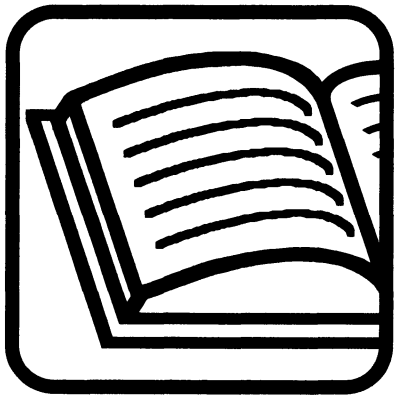
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[44] In a 1989 address to ELCA planners Ivan Illich pointed to a modern substantizing and managing of "life" which now threaten to replace the regard for "person" in which both gospel life and civilization have been anchored. He referred not only to certain new medical procedures at the beginning and end of life, but to large scale techniques for managing life and work in between.

This essay was written as the Lutheran contribution to ***Churches, Cities and Human Communities: Urban Ministry in the United States 1945-1985****, ed. Clifford Green. The book is a project of Hartford Seminary and will be published by Eerdmans in March.*

Notes on the Revised Common Lectionary

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The Revised Common Lectionary, hereafter RCL (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), is now used in many churches in North America and, beginning with the current church year, is followed in all Augsburg Fortress publications and in the Preaching Helps section of *Currents*. The following notes will assist the reader to understand and use the changes introduced by this lectionary.

On the Psalms

The RCL uses 81 Psalms, the LBW uses 90, during the regular course of the church year, excluding those Psalms appointed for lesser festivals.

Of the 81 Psalms in the RCL, 5 are in use which are not in LBW: 4, 17, 84,114, and 123. Of the 90 Psalms in LBW, 15 are in use which are not in RCL: 6, 10, 24, 28, 42, 61, 105, 110, 115, 117, 128, 135, 142, 143, and 149.

Many of the Psalms used in both lectionaries are used more than once. The following Psalms have multiple uses in both lectionaries: 1, 15, 16, 22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 51, 67, 71, 72, 80, 85, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 96, 98, 103, 107, 111, 112, 119:1-16, 126, 138, 145, 146, 147, and 148. The following Psalms have multiple uses in RCL but not in LBW: 8, 19, 37, 66, 70, 93, 97, 121, 130, and 131. The following Psalms have multiple uses in LBW but not in RCL: 63, 104:25-43, 105:4-11, 113, 117, and 149.

The following days from the LBW calendar use different Psalm texts in RCL:

Year A	*Year B*	*Year C*
Christmas 1		
Baptism of Our Lord	Baptism of Our Lord	Baptism of Our Lord
	Epiphany II	Epiphany III
Epiphany IV	Epiphany IV	Epiphany V
	Epiphany VI	
Epiphany VII		Epiphany VII
Epiphany VIII		Epiphany VIII
Lent I	Lent I	
Lent II	Lent II	Lent II
Lent III		Lent III
Lent IV	Lent IV from Isa 61:10–62:3	
Lent V	Lent V	Lent V
Easter Evening (A, B, C)		
Easter II	Easter II	Easter II
Easter III	Easter III	
Easter V		Easter V
Ascension (A, B, C)		
Easter VII	Easter VII	Easter VII
Holy Trinity	Holy Trinity	
		Pentecost II
	Pentecost III	
Pentecost VII	Pentecost VII	
Pentecost XI		
		Pentecost XVI
	Pentecost XIX	
	Pentecost XX	Pentecost XX
		Pentecost XXIII
Pentecost XXIV	Pentecost XXIV	Pentecost XXIV
Pentecost XXV	Pentecost XXV	Pentecost XXV
Pentecost XXVI		
		Christ the King

The First Lesson

Advent

The first lesson remains the same throughout the Advent season.

Christmas

The first lesson on Christmas II is changed to Jeremiah

Epiphany

Alternate first lessons are appointed for the Baptism of Our Lord instead of the uniform reading of Isa 42:1-7 (retained in Year A); B=Gen 1:1-5, C=Isa 43:1-7.

In the rest of the Epiphany season, the following lessons have been changed:

Epiphany III, Year C: from Isa 61:1-6 to Neh 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Epiphany V, Year B: from Job 7:1-7 to Isa 40:21-31

Epiphany VIII, Year C: from Jer 7:1-15 to Isa 55:10-13

Transfiguration, Year C: from Deut 34:1-12 to Exod 34:29-35

Lent
Lent I, Year B: from Gen 22:1-18 to Gen 9:8-17
Lent II, Year B: from Gen 28:10-17 to Gen 17:1-7, 15-16
Lent II, Year C: from Jer 26:8-15 to Gen 15:1-2, 17-18
Lent III, Year A: from Isa 42:14-21 to Exod 17:1-7
Lent IV, Year A: from Hos 5:15–6:2 to 1 Sam 16:1-13
Lent IV, Year C: from Isa 12:1-6 to Josh 5:9-12
Palm/Passion Sunday: Isa 50:4-9a is used for all three years
Holy Week
Maundy Thursday: texts from Year A are now used in all three years
The Resurrection of Our Lord
Year A: optional use of Jer 31:1-6
Year C: options of Acts 10:34-43 or Isa 65:17-28
Easter
Easter II, Year B: from Acts 3:13-15, 17-26 to Acts 4:32-35
Easter III, Year B: from Acts 4:8-12 to Acts 3:12-19
Easter IV, Year A: from Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60 to Acts 2:42-47
Easter IV, Year B: from Acts 4:23-33 to Acts 4:5-12
Easter IV, Year C: from Acts 13:15-16b, 26-33 to Acts 9:36-43
Easter V, Year A: from Acts 17:1-15 to Acts 7:55-60
Easter V, Year C: from Acts 13:44-52 to Acts 11:1-18
Easter VI, Year B: from Acts 11:19-30 to Acts 10:44-48
Easter VI, Year C: from Acts 14:8-18 to Acts 16:9-15
Easter VII, Year C: from Acts 16:6-20 to Acts 16:16-34
Pentecost
Year A: from Joel 2:28-29 to Num 11:24-30
The Holy Trinity
Year B: from Deut 6:4-9 to Isa 6:1-8
Pentecost Season
Pentecost V, Year C: from Zech 12:7-10 to Isa 65:1-9
Pentecost X, Year B: from Exod 24:3-11 to 2 Kgs 4:42-44
Pentecost XIV, Year A: from Exod 6:2-8 to Isa 51:1-6
Pentecost XVI, Year C: from Prov 9:8-12 to Deut 30:15-20
Pentecost XVIII, Year A: from Isa 55:6-9 to Jonah 3:10–4:11
Pentecost XXI, Year C: from Ruth 1:1-19a to 2 Kgs 5:1-3, 7-15
Pentecost XXIII, Year C: from Deut 10:12-22 to Jer 14:7-10, 19-22
Pentecost XXV, Year A: from Hos 11:1-4, 8-9 to Amos 5:18-24
Pentecost XXV, Year C: from 1 Chron 29:10-13 to Job 19:23-27
Pentecost XXVI, Year A: from Mal 2:1-2, 4-10 to Zeph 1:7, 12-16

The Second Lesson

Advent—no changes
Christmas
Christmas I (A, B, C)—The second lesson shifts forward (i.e., B becomes C)

The Baptism of Our Lord
Year B: Acts 19:1-7
Year C: Acts 8:14-17
Epiphany Season
Epiphany V, Year C: from 1 Cor 14:12b-20 to 1 Cor 15:1-11
Epiphany VI, Year A: from 1 Cor 2:6-13 to 3:1-9
Transfiguration: transpose second lessons between Years B and C
Lent
Lent I, Year B: from Rom 8:31-39 to 1 Pet 3:18-22
Lent II, Year B: from Rom 5:1-11 to Rom 4:13-25
Lent III, Year A: from Eph 5:8-14 to Rom 5:1-11
Lent IV, Year A: from Rom 8:1-10 to Eph 5:8-14
Lent IV, Year C: from 1 Cor 1:18-31 to 2 Cor 5:16-21
Lent V, Year A: from Rom 8:11-19 to 8:6-11
Holy Week
Wednesday: from Rom 5:6-11 to Heb 12:1-3
The Resurrection of Our Lord
Year C: from 1 Cor 15:1-11 to 19-26
Easter Season
Easter II, Year B: 1 John 5:1-6 to 1:1–2:2
Easter III, Year B: 1 John 1:1–2:2 to 3:1-7
Easter IV, Year B: 1 John 3:1-2 to 3:16-24
Easter V, Year B: 1 John 3:18-24 to 4:7-21
Easter VI, Year B: 1 John 4:1-11 to 5:1-6
Easter VIII, Year B: 1 John 4:13-21 to 5:9-13
Pentecost
Alternates are offered for each Year besides the Acts 2:1-11 lesson:
A = 1 Cor 12:3b-13; B = Rom 8:22-27; C = Rom 8:14-17
Pentecost Season—the changes serve to enable *lectio continua*
Pentecost V, Year A: from Rom 5:12-15 to 6:1b-11
Pentecost VI, Year A: from Rom 6:1b-11 to 6:12-23
Pentecost VIII, Year A: from Rom 8:18-25 to 8:1-11
Pentecost IX, Year A: from Rom 8:26-27 to 8:12-25
Pentecost X, Year A: from Rom 8:28-30 to 8:26-39
Pentecost XI, Year A: from Rom 8:35-39 to 9:1-5
Pentecost XII, Year A: from Rom 9:1-5 to 10:5-15
Pentecost XIII, Year A: from Rom 11:13-15, 29-32 to 11:1-2a, 29-32
Pentecost XIV, Year A: from Rom 11:33-36 to 12:1-8
Pentecost XV, Year A: from Rom 12:1-8 to 12:9-21
Pentecost XVI, Year A: from Rom 13:1-10 to 13:8-14
Pentecost XVII, Year A: from Rom 14:5-9 to 14:1-12
The rest of Year A sets the readings from 1 Thessalonians in order
Year B sets the readings in James and Hebrews in order
Christ the King
Year A: from 1 Cor 15:20-28 to Rev 1:4b-8

The Holy Gospel

Advent—no changes
Christmas—no changes
Epiphany—no changes
Lent
Lent II, Year A: from Jn 4:5-26 to 3:1-17
Lent III, Year A: from Jn 9:1-41 to 4:5-42
Lent IV, Year A: from Mt 20:17-28 to Jn 9:1-41
Lent V, Year C: from Lk 20:9-19 to Jn 12:1-8
Holy Week
Wednesday: from Mt 26:14-25 to Jn 13:21-32
Easter and **Easter Season**—no changes
Pentecost and **Pentecost Season**
Pentecost V, Year C: from Lk 9:18-24 to 8:26-39
Pentecost XIV, Year C: from Lk 13:22-30 to 13:10-17
Pentecost XXVI, Year A: from Mt 23:1-12 to 25:14-30

Changes in terminology

The new twist in the terminology of the church year in RCL is that the Sundays after Pentecost are assigned numbers. Each one is called a Proper, beginning with Proper 3. Each Proper falls within a calendar week, hence Proper 5 (Sunday between June 5 and 11 inclusive). The trick is that you use Proper 5 only if the days from June 5-11 fall *after* Trinity Sunday.

When you compare the RCL to LBW listings, you find that Proper 4 = Pentecost II. This explains why our calendar has been off at least one week, sometimes two, when we relate our propers to the Methodist and the Episcopal churches.

Proper 3 (May 24 to 28) is a new appointment for us. The readings are:

Year A	*Year B*	*Year C*
Ps 131	Ps 103:1-13, 22	Ps 92:1-4, 12-15
Isa 49:8-16a	Hos 2:14-20	Isa 55:10-13
1 Cor 4:1-5	2 Cor 3:1-6	1 Cor 15:51-58
Mt 6:24-34	Mk 2:13-22	Lk 6:39-49

Let's make sure this is clear. *The crucial date for calculation is that of Trinity Sunday.* Since we celebrated Trinity Sunday on June 4, 1995, we would have used neither Proper 3 nor Proper 4; the Pentecost Season would begin with Proper 5 on June 11.

In 1996, our first year with RCL, Pentecost is on May 26 and Trinity Sunday is June 2. Hence we will begin the Pentecost Season with Proper 5, since Sunday, June 9, falls between June 5 and 11. This means that all the Sundays will be one week ahead, if you continue to enumerate Sundays after Pentecost. You can continue to use our enumeration, but you have to remember that all the prayers of the day are appointed for what would be,

so to speak, the next Sunday. So you will have to list the week after Pentecost as Pentecost III. Augsburg Fortress has published a handbook of correlated *Readings and Prayers* to assist you ($1.95).

A comparison of readings from LBW and RCL

How the First Lesson is changed

We gain eight lessons from Genesis
We gain four lessons from Exodus and lose one (6:2-8—Pentecost XIV A)
We lose one lesson from Deuteronomy (32:36-39—Passion Sunday C)
We gain three lessons from Joshua
We gain one lesson from Judges
We gain one lesson from Ruth
We gain five lessons from 1 Samuel
We gain six lessons from 2 Samuel
We gain three lessons from 1 Kings
We gain one lesson from 2 Kings
We lose one lesson from 1 Chronicles
We gain one lesson from Nehemiah
We gain one lesson from Esther
We gain four lessons from Job
We gain one lesson from Proverbs
We gain one lesson from Ecclesiastes
We gain one lesson from Song of Songs
We gain two lessons from Isaiah (and drop a lot of repetitions)
We gain three lessons from Jeremiah (and drop a lot of repetitions)
We gain one lesson from Lamentations
We gain one lesson from Daniel
We gain one lesson from Hosea
We lose one lesson from Amos
We gain one lesson from Micah
We gain one lesson from Zephaniah
We gain one lesson from Haggai
We lose one lesson from Zechariah and Malachi

How the Second Lesson (including Acts) is changed

Acts

Three verses are added at 4:5-12 (LBW 8-12), which gives us the setting

8:14-17 is added for the Baptism of Our Lord, C

9:36-43 is added for Easter 4, C, so that we read about Dorcas

10:44-48 is added at Easter 6, B, so that we read about baptizing those who had already received the Holy Spirit

11:1-18 is added at Easter 5, C, so that we read about Peter's Vision

11:19-30 is omitted, the story of Christians first so-called at Antioch

13:15-16a, 26-33 is omitted, the sermon of Paul at Pisidian Antioch

13:44-52 is omitted, more preaching to the Gentiles

14:8-18 is omitted, the healings and preaching at Lystra

16:16-34 is added at Easter 7, C, so that we read about the Philippian jailor

17:1-15 is omitted, preaching at Thessalonica

19:1-7 is added at the Baptism of Our Lord, B

Romans

Five verses are added at 4:13-25 (LBW 18-25), so we read that the promise comes not through the Law but through faith, and that the promise rests on grace.

6:12-23 is added as the Proper for June 26-July 2, A: Do not be slaves to sin, let not sin reign in your bodies, the wages of sin is death.

Six verses are added at 8:12-25 (LBW 18-25), on not living "according to the flesh" but receiving the Spirit to say "Abba! Father!"

10:5-15 is appointed as Proper for August 7-13, A, so that we read about neither ascending nor descending to find Christ; "The Word is near you, on your lips and in your heart."

11:33-36 is omitted, "O the depth of the riches...."

Seven verses are added at 15:1-12 (LBW 5-9), which sets the prayer for harmony within the context of the strong working with the weak brothers and sisters.

1 Corinthians

Seven (+4) verses are added to 1 Cor 2:1-12 (13-16) (LBW 2:1-5), so that we read not to proclaim the mystery in lofty words or wisdom; we are reminded that these things are revealed through the Spirit which is not of this world.

1 Cor 14:12b-20 is omitted on speaking in tongues and not speaking in tongues.

2 Corinthians

2 Cor 6:1-13 is added as the Proper for July 3-9, B, so that we read about not putting obstacles in anyone's way and we hear the call to open hearts to ministry.

Five verses are added at 12:2-10 (LBW 7-10), which restores the reading about the vision of the Third Heaven.

Galatians

Two verses are added at 1:1-12 (LBW 1-10), so that we read that the gospel was not of human origin; it came by revelation.

Ephesians

Three verses are added at 2:1-10 (LBW 4-10), so that we read about being dead to trespasses and sins.

4:17-24 is omitted (Pentecost 11, B), about being lost like the Gentiles.

Philippians

1:21-30 is added as the Proper for September 18-24, A, so that we read "to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Colossians—minor changes

1 Thessalonians

2:1-8 is added as the Proper for October 23-29, A, telling the gospel with God as witness and with gentleness toward the hearers.

2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus—minor changes

Philemon—the whole text is appointed to be read

Hebrews

3:1-6 is omitted (Pentecost 21, B in LBW)

13:20-21 is omitted, at Pentecost 27, B

James

3:1-12 is added as the Proper for September 11-17, B, so that we read about the misuse of the tongue.

5:13-20 is added as the Proper for September 25-October 1, so that we read about praying for the sick and anointing them for healing.

1 and 2 Peter—minor changes

1 John

4:1-6 has been omitted which loses us the note about testing the spirits.

5:9-13 has been added as the Proper for Easter 7, B, so that we read about the testimony of God being greater than that of people.

2 and 3 John have no readings in either system.

Revelation—minor changes

How the Holy Gospel readings are changed

As a general rule, all the material listed in parentheses as optional additions to LBW Gospel readings are included in RCL.

Saint Matthew

The optional verses are included at 13:1-9, 18-23, so that we read the allegorical interpretation of the parable of the sower.

The optional verses are included at 13:24-30, 34-43, so that we read the allegorical interpretation of the parables of the weeds in the field.

Five verses are added when we read 21:23-32 (LBW 28-32), so that we read the conflict of Jesus with the scribes on the question of authority and the baptism of John.

Three verses are added when we read 21:33-46 (LBW 33-43), so that we read the interpretation of the stone the builders rejected, said against the Pharisees.

The optional verses are included at 22:1-14, so that we read the addition to the parable, about the man with no wedding garment.

The optional verses are included at 22:34-36, so that we read the passage where Jesus tells the pharisees about Messiah as David's son being David's Lord.

24:1-14 is omitted, but it is appointed for Pentecost XXVII (and the Luke version at 21:5-19 is included in Year C).

Saint Mark

Five verses are added at 2:13-22 (LBW 18-22), so that we read the call of Levi and the question about eating with tax collectors and sinners.

Six verses are added at 2:23–3:6 (LBW 23-28), so that we read the healing of the man with the withered hand.

6:14-29 is added to the pericope system as Proper for July 10-16, Year B, so that we read the story of Herod and Salome and the beheading of John the Baptist.

6:53-56 is added to 6:30-34, so that we read of multiple healings, including healings gained by touching Jesus' garments.

Seven verses are added at 7:24-37 (LBW 31-37), so that we read the healing of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter.

Three verses are added at 8:27-38 (LBW 27-35), so that we read the saying about the Son of Man being ashamed of those of an adulterous generation.

The optional verses are included at 10:17-31, so that we read the saying about forsaking family for the kingdom of God.

Saint Luke

The optional verses are included at 1:39-55 (LBW 39-45), so that we read the Magnificat on Advent 4 of Year C.

1:68-79 (the Benedictus) is read on Advent 2 of Year C.

Eight verses are added for All Saints, C—Lk 6:20-31, so that we read the passages from the woes to the "golden rule."

Three verses are added at 7:36–8:3 (LBW 36-50), so that we read the healing of Mary Magdalene and others.

8:26-39 is added as the Proper for June 19-25, C, so that we read the Lukan version of the Gerasene demoniac.

9:18-24 is deleted in RCL, which omits the confession of Peter (but both the Matthean and Markan version are retained in years A & B).

Three verses are added at 12:49-56 (LBW 49-53), so that we read the "parable" about the stormclouds.

13:10-17 is added as the Proper for August 21-27, C, so that we read the story about opposition to Jesus' teaching and healing on the Sabbath.

19:11-27 is omitted but appointed for Pentecost XXVII (and the Matthean version at 25:14-30 is included for Year A).

20:9-19 is omitted (Lent 5, C, in LBW), but the Matthean version at 21:33-46 is included in Year A.

Saint John

The optional verses are included at 4:5-42, so that we read about the fields ripe for harvest and the belief of the Samaritans.

5:1-9 is added at Easter 6, C, so that we read the healing at Solomon's Porch.

Six verses are added at 6:1-21 (LBW 1-15), so that we read the story of Jesus walking on the sea.

12:12-16 is added at Lent 1, A, so that we read the triumphal entry in John.

14:8-17 is added at Pentecost, C, the Father working through the Son, the Spirit sent by the Father through the intercession of the Son.

Four verses are added at 15:26-27; 16:4b-15 (LBW 4b-11), so that we read the passage about the guidance of the disciples by the Spirit into all the truth (Pentecost in Year B, C in LBW).

Five verses are added at 21:1-9 (LBW 1-14), so that we read the threefold "do you love me?" and the gift of the Spirit at Easter 3, C.

Summary Statement

Because the RCL omits a number of repetitions of regular readings throughout the year, the system provides for greater use of First Testament readings.

Because the RCL has reworked the use of Acts, we now read such favorite stories as the healing of Dorcas, Peter's Vision, and the coming to faith of the Philippian jailor.

Because the RCL has expanded the selection of second lessons for the regular year, we hear such well-known passages from Romans as "the wages of sin is death" and "the Word is near you, on your lips and in your heart." Other new passages in the second lessons expand our awareness of the gospel as revelation and mystery, to be proclaimed simply, so that we may learn that (as a new passage from Philippians declares) "to live is Christ and to die is gain." From James we hear the well-known passages about the misuse of the tongue and about prayer and laying on of hands for healing—neither of which is in LBW. The inclusion of the latter text in the pericope system gives a rationale for the use of the service for healing in our churches.

Because the RCL uses fuller readings for most of the Gospel texts throughout the year, the system provides an expanded selection of preaching texts, if one uses the Gospel as primary text for weekly preaching. Many favorite passages have been included in this new lectionary which appeared only on (usually not celebrated) saints' days, if at all. Examples of such passages would have to include the "golden rule," the Johannine story of Jesus walking on the water, the healing at Solomon's Porch, and the healing of the man with a withered hand.

Not much is lost by the ELCA's adoption of this revised system, but on the other hand we gain much.

The interrelationships between textual materials across the lectionary readings for each week have been improved.

The consistency within the use of *lectiones continuae* has been improved.

Passages which people of an older generation knew by heart will become known again because they are part of the public proclamation of Scripture through this lectionary.

Preacher Preparation

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Some years ago a group of pastors and seminary professors designed a preaching workshop for the clergy in the Lutheran Church in America. They started with the theme "Preaching for Commitment." The goal—to hone preachers' skills so their sermons would evoke greater commitment to the faith and the mission of the church. During the group's give-and-take, an unexpected consensus emerged: Before the preacher can call *for* commitment, he or she must preach *from* commitment. Before the preacher can call for unconditional surrender to God's unconditional grace in Christ, the preacher must surrender—unconditionally. So the workshop was renamed "Preaching from Commitment."

Preaching is not an academic lecture. It is both God's address to the hearers and the personal witness of the preacher whom God already has addressed in the process of sermon preparation. Preaching is not a speech about the Christian religion. It is, rather, the confession of faith of a person in Christ urgently offering the power of God's life to those who will hear. It is not a form of literary essay delivered on a Sunday morning, but the passionate expression of the preacher's whole being and life which stands and falls on the truth of the gospel of God in Christ. The most important aspect of sermon preparation is the preparation of the person of the preacher. Before the preaching is the preacher.

That is because the Spirit of God is the persuader in preaching. To preach well, the preacher needs to prepare her person so that she gets out of the way, so that she can be the way of the Spirit.

Trust is the key in communication between preacher and hearers. The preacher's trust in God's grace and the hearer's trust in the preacher's integrity and compassion are at the heart of communicating the Word. People do not remember many sermons: They do remember how God's grace touched them through the person of faith and compassion.

"Mass Appeal" is a movie about a priest who serves an affluent suburban parish; he is a caring person, a competent parish-administrator, well-liked. Yet his sermons at Mass are trivial entertainments, without passion or prophetic urgency. They are designed simply for "mass appeal." Everyone is kept a comfortable, safe distance from anything that really matters.

As the movie unfolds, we learn why. Haunted by the rejection of his father, the priest is driven by the need to be liked by everyone. No course in preaching can transform his sermons. He must change, first, as a person, before his sermons will change.

Exegeting the test, forming an outline, telling a story—these you can teach, but you can't teach trust. Trust is not primarily a matter of the mind or even the will. It is of the heart and soul. Trust develops in the

preacher in response to her own encounter with the presence of God's unconditional grace in Christ. When she experiences the healing power of Christ's passion in her life, then the desire to complete the suffering in Christ for all people grows within her.

When I taught preaching, I would start a course by asking each student to make a personal witness to the class. I supplied a text-based topic, such as "How the truth makes me free" (John 8:32). Instructions were specific: I asked for a five-minute, extemporaneous, personal witness to be made without notes. No exposition of the text reference was needed. Rather, the student was to tell how the truth made him free—here and now. Also the student was to include a real-life episode that reveals how the truth made him free.

The results were often both edifying and revealing. Some of the best "sermons" in the entire course were given right then. But in a few cases the student did not speak of himself, but of his mother or friend. Often no specific event was narrated. The most consistent omission, however, was also the most significant: no clear and concrete personal witness about how Christ, the truth, freed the student or how that freedom is at work in her everyday life.

Remarkably, in some, Christ did not appear at all. In other cases the witness was to a word Jesus taught—not to the Word Christ is. Moses and Gandhi often taught the same word. In the context of the text (John 8:34-35), Jesus speaks of the truth that frees from the slavery of sin. Sometimes students made a general confession: "Jesus died for my sins so I am free," but without any personal stories that would have made the generalization concrete for the hearers. Personal narratives are hard to come by if the preacher is not conscious of how she experiences the slavery of sin and how that affects her behavior.



The assignment was an exercise in personal spiritual formation and witness. Every preacher preaching on "the truth shall make you free" first must be made free by that truth. The exercise results consistently demonstrated that this is easier said than done.

Luther once observed: "A person becomes a theologian by living, by dying and being damned—not by understanding, reading and speculating." Theology is for proclamation. Theologians of the church are preachers to preachers. Preachers are theologians for the laity. Preachers are made not simply by analyzing the contemporary scene, by engaging in the most recent quest for the historical Jesus, or by surfing the Internet for sermon illustrations. Preachers are made by being made alive—and by dying—in their personal encounter with the living, active Word of God at work in their lives.

How does the preacher prepare her person for preaching? Meditation to and from the gospel center is not only a way of applying the word to the hearer. It also is a way of executing the power of the Word in the preacher's own life. All the "Why?" questions of diagnosis and all the "How?"

As the Spirit led our Lord into the wilderness, so the preacher is led by the Spirit to face the trials in her own faith-life.

questions of gospel prognosis are turned on the person of the preacher. The struggle with the Word does not end until God's unconditional grace in Christ once again compels the unconditional surrender of the preacher.

There is no need here to repeat the entire journey to and from the gospel center, but I do want to deal with one aspect of it. Luther suggested three spiritual disciplines: prayer for God's presence, meditation on God's Word, and *tentatio* or trials. I want to explore *tentatio* which refers to wrestling with personal trials that test personal faith. As the Spirit led our Lord into the wilderness to be tempted, so the preacher is led by the Spirit to face the trials in the preacher's own faith-life. In the wilderness, the Word of God triumphs and forms and nurtures the faith of the preacher.

In this connection it is important to distinguish between two doubts—the doubt that expresses faith and the doubt that would destroy faith. In the encounter with the biblical text, the Spirit frees us in faith to doubt and offers us the Word that dispels the doubt that would lead to despair. The reason preaching never gets easier, no matter how many years a preacher does it, is that this wilderness experience of dying and being made alive must occur each time he prepares to preach.

I want to describe briefly (and, hopefully, appropriately) some ways this trial of faith might take place for me. Suppose I was asked to preach on the text: "Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, 'If you continue in my word you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31)

These words of our Lord are gospel music to my ears. "Andrew, Christ, the truth, makes you free." I could easily sing that song—the truth of God's unconditional love in Christ makes you free. But I cannot and dare not bypass the wilderness journey.

Why? The Word of God is a two-edged sword of grace and judgment. God is truth, and the destructive fires of the demonic feed on lies and illusions of grandeur. The Spirit leads us into the wilderness because there we are compelled to face the truth that is God. However the text gloriously affirms me, it also evaluates me.

In the text there is that troublesome *if*. "*If* you continue in my Word..." raises the question, Have I? Matters are made worse by giving me a clear way to test my faithfulness: "...the truth will make you free," but, Am I? Finally, the most difficult struggle for me is raised by the question: If the truth makes you free, why do you avoid the truth so much of the time? Why are you like those Jews in Jesus' day who "believed," but still clung to their religious, ethnic illusions rather than the truth who frees?

The Spirit leads me into the wilderness to face specific trials of faith, here and now. I recently retired from full-time pastoral ministry: What special demons are now at work in my life? If I face that test, I will really experience how true, how mighty, how comforting, how freeing the Word is to me: "Andrew, I, the truth in your life, will make you free."

After 40 years of preaching the gospel of freedom, am I all that free? Let's check that with a couple of text cases. For reasons I do not fully understand, I always have been excessively anxious about financial security. Retirement certainly doesn't help. I often preached on the text from the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat and what you will drink, or about your body what you shall wear" (Mt 5:23). But I am not a bird nor a lily, and the promise "God cares" has produced in me only a step or two toward freedom from anxiety about the future. Have I abided in that word of Jesus?

The word of John the Baptist in Luke vexes my spirit even more: "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none" (Lk 3:11). I have accepted calls all my life that paid less than the position I already held. But, am I free enough to live with only one coat? No, I am not.

As a young man I often preached about our victory over the power of death in Christ. After my angioplasty, however, I talk less and feel more of death. At times I am overwhelmed by a sense of sadness at the prospect of departure from a world of beauty and love.

Like most retirees, I wrestle with being on the sidelines and I cope with realizing how little one accomplishes in life. These articles on preaching are, in part, the expression of that struggle. Does the truth make me free? Yes, and no. The truth of God's grace in Christ has freed me to see much of the truth about myself. But I engage in strange avoidance of the truth, as well. My daughter recently observed, "Dad, you know you hardly ever talk about your childhood. I'd like to know more about you and Grandma and Grandpa." Is my silence the repression of the pain of lost love? Is my silence a sign of my self-sufficiency in Christ that frees me not to linger on the past but be open to the future? Yes!

Sometimes in this trial of faith I am at the edge of the same abyss where the Psalmist stood: "Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord" (Ps 130:1). This is what Luther meant by "dying and being damned." Is the truth that frees me to face the truth, in fact, my final illusion to avoid the truth? There is the potential for self-projection and self-justifying ideology when we, as sinners, talk of God. This trial, therefore, cannot be avoided. But it can be overwhelming. This is the point of total surrender to the truth of God's grace or the despair of God's absence.

At the abyss, I identify most with the centurion at the foot of the cross: "When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'....Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in *this* way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's son!'" (Mk 15:33-34, 39)

I stand with the disciples in the darkness of the cross that is the eclipse of God. Somehow the centurion sees best in this very darkness the power and presence of God's suffering love for the world. God saves us through suffering for us. Discipleship is completing the suffering of God for the world. Once again I have tasted how sweet, experienced how powerful, that truth of God in Christ is for me.

Out of the trial of faith, I pray for the Presence: Lord, make me an instrument of your grace. Then in obedience to the truth I do seek to serve God's people by proclaiming, "This truth makes you free."

The trial of faith is always painful, sometimes risky—but it is the way the person of the preacher is prepared for preaching. In Joseph Sittler's phrase, this is "the

anguish of preaching." The preacher must re-enact the anguish of Christ: daily die with Christ and be raised to newness of life.

What kind of person does God form in the wilderness for preaching?

A medium for the persuasive Presence. Preaching is a form of persuasive speech through which the Spirit of God is the persuader. The preacher must get out of the way to become the medium of the persuasive speech of the spirit. This happens when, in the trial of faith, the preacher herself becomes a sinner in truth and when God in Christ alone is proclaimed as the hero for faith. The hearers are not impressed by the preacher's heroic faith, but that the Hero who saves the preacher is their Hero also.

God's therapist of the hearers. "Salvation" is God's healing. Preaching has faith as its goal. This is God's identity therapy for the hearer, and the preacher serves him as God's therapist. A therapist undergoes therapy so her own ego needs are kept out of the way of the therapeutic process. The priest in "Mass Appeal" allows his fear of personal rejection to stand in the way of serving the hearers. When he unconditionally surrenders to God's acceptance in Christ, he will move toward preaching that serves the hearer's need instead of appealing to them in a way that serves his own need.

A living letter for a lively word. In the trial of faith, both the law and gospel are actively at work in the preacher's own life. By participating in the truth, the preacher really knows and can *do* the truth in preaching. The way that leads from what God's word in a text meant to what it means today is through the faith experience of the preacher in the wilderness. Through the text the Spirit produces a living letter that expresses a lively word.

Solidarity with the hearers. The gospel that frees the preacher to get her ego needs out of the way of serving the hearers also enables the preacher to identify with the hearers: "We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves." The sure antidote to self-righteous, moralistic preaching is to experience what that confession means in truth. When the preacher identifies with the hearers' plight, she talks *to* and *with* the hearers in the same arena of life—not *at* them from on high. When the preacher is touched by God's compassion, the preaching is empathic and compassionate.

The Spirit's goal model. The preacher who prays, meditates on the word, and undergoes the trials of faith is given the very gifts of the Spirit that are gifts the Spirit gives to the hearers in the sermon. The Spirit forms the preacher into a goal model indirectly and in a way that the preacher is often not conscious.

Consider the goal of "humility." Humility is a silent virtue. If you know you have it, you don't. If you will to have it, you can't. You cannot will to be humble, but acts of the will can express humility. Humility is not an act you do but a place where you take your stand.

Christian humility is not the self-deprecation of unfaith, not the false modesty of pride. Christian humility happens when a person is overwhelmed by the wonder of God's grace. The preacher later takes her stand on that grace and affirms, "I am what I am by the grace of God." Humility is expressed in a sermon in doxology—thanksgiving to the God of grace in Christ. Humility is expressed by the preacher getting out of God's way of healing the hearers. The preacher is formed by the Spirit to be both

medium and model for the goal of humility.

Suppose the goal for the hearer is "to forgive seventy times seven." The preacher's own experience of God's unlimited forgiveness in the wilderness trial is expressed through infinite patience and compassion for the hearers, who seventy times seven resist the preacher's attempt to proclaim that truth that is God. Once again, indirectly and unconsciously, the preacher is the Spirit's medium and model for the hearers.

Now, I want to apply this to sermon delivery. The quality of delivery is dictated not by the dramatics of the preacher, but by her authentic presence. Thomas Hardy, in a rare lighter moment, offers a glimpse of a performance for mass appeal that is empty of real presence.

"And now to God the Father," he ends.
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles:
Each listener chokes as he bows and bends.
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.
Then the preacher glides to the vestry-door.
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile.
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,
Who adores him as one without gloss or guile,
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile
And re-enact at the vestry-glass
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show
That had moved the congregation so.

—"In Church"

The people of God generally have antennae for perceiving how the preacher is present in a sermon. It has little to do with the personal stories he tells. They can be helpful, but they should be used with discretion. The people instinctively connect with the commitment, conviction, passion, and care of the preacher.

The people of God generally have antennae for perceiving how the preacher is present in a sermon.

Most preachers want to be authentic and connect with their hearers. Unfortunately, there are subtle ways in which the caring pastor whom the hearer meets in the office is absent in the pulpit. There are many reasons for this. The most common is simply that the preacher leaves the best part of his person out of the sermon delivery. The sermon manuscript gets between the real person of the preacher and the hearer.

There are many ways to deliver a sermon with passion, including reading from a manuscript. But it becomes very difficult to do so when the manuscript is too dense in terms of content, too abstract in terms of concepts, too beautifully written to be spoken naturally, and too finished to allow for a personal encounter with the hearers that requires alteration of what is on the paper. (I will return to the subject of sermon delivery in greater detail in a coming article on the form and design of preaching.)

The preacher enters the pulpit after intense meditation to and from the gospel center. She has personally died and been made alive by the encounter with Christ. The needs of the hearers cry out in her heart. The joy of being called to give the gift of God's grace to the hearers enlivens her spirit. Now, just before she begins to preach,

she offers a silent prayer, "Lord, help me to sing with abandon the song you have given me for your people." In this moment, preacher preparation ends and the preaching begins.

> The quality of delivery is dictated not by the dramatics of the preacher, but by her authentic presence.

The following devotions express directly and indirectly some ways the truth makes me free. They are offered here as illustrations of what I have been saying.*

Rejoicing in the truth.

The truth hurts. That is why we avoid the truth. We usually prefer living with illusions, playing games, wearing masks.

Pilate sets aside the truth when he asks cynically, "What is the truth?" The truth is clear: Jesus is innocent, and crucifying him as a traitor to Rome would be a lie. But that truth would hurt Pilate.

Yet St. Paul says, "Love rejoices in the truth." Rejoicing in the truth is possible when our Lord is the way, the truth and the life.

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

The ultimate truth is full of the grace of God in Christ. This is the truth of God's perfect love that casts out fear, that is stronger than death, that never ends.

We rejoice in the truth that we are saints in spite of the truth that we are sinners. We rejoice in the truth that we have eternal life in spite of having to die.

The truth frees us to walk in love, seeking the truth and doing the truth on our way. To rejoice in the truth means "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Manifesting glory.

In the Gospel of John, the hour in which God reveals his glory is the hour of Jesus' crucifixion. The suffering of Christ and the glory of God are revealed in the same moment.

Before his ordeal, Jesus prayed to God: "The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.... I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:22, 26). The glory Jesus reveals on the cross will be given to us to manifest in our love of God to one another.

Divine glory in Christ can be revealed in unlikely places between unlikely people. A member of my parish suffered a severe series of strokes. They left him with little memory of the past and even less capacity to gather thoughts in the present or to anticipate the future. I visit him regularly at the hospital, usually in a room with a half dozen other men in a similar condition.

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*The three meditations are reprinted with permission from Creative Communications for the Parish, St. Louis, Missouri.

When he first sees me, Phil always begins by saying, "Pastor, it is so good to see you. This is the most wonderful thing that could happen to me—you are visiting me, Pastor, you are the greatest. You know I love you."

I usually respond, "I'm glad to see you, Phil. Yes, I know that you love me, and I love you, too."

Phil will say, "I know you do, Pastor," and the cycle will begin again. We also talk of past days and family ties, but he quickly returns to the joy of the moment.

For a time I was uncomfortable with this pure adulation Phil expressed for me. Perhaps I was inhibited by a false modesty or, more likely, a gnawing feeling that I also was as vulnerable a human being as he.

Slowly, I awakened to the glory of God being manifest in these visits. Phil's affirmation was an expression of pure grace. Like the child our Lord calls us to become without inhibition or guile, he received love and expressed love. I accepted his gift, knowing I was as vulnerable a human being as he and that we both are saved by grace.

Unclench your fists
Hold out your hands
Take mine.
Let us hold each other.
This is his glory
Manifest.

—"Epiphany"
by Madeleine L'Engle

Respite from Despair.

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) was a brilliant poet whose life was filled with mental torment and despair. After several attempts, she finally ended her own life at the age of thirty-one.

"Black Rook In Rainy Weather" is a poem in which she describes her state of depression. A rook is a black bird, like a crow. The poet pictures the black bird rearranging its feathers in the rain. The sight offers to her:

...A brief respite from fear
of total neutrality. With luck,
Trekking stubborn through this season
Of fatigue, I shall
Patch together a content

Of sorts. Miracles occur,
If you care to call those spasmodic
Tricks of radiance miracles. The wait's begun again,
The long wait for the angel
For that rare, random descent.

I believe a kind of miracle occurred for me when I crossed Andrew Fritz's path on the way to class at seminary when we were both preparing for the ministry. Andrew was a charismatic; a man of great spirit and perhaps a bit of an eccentric. He greeted me with, "It is an honor and privilege to meet you today." I thought he was kidding and shot back, "Cut it out, Andy." He looked me dead in the eye and with great intensity said, "If God saw fit to give his Son to the death for you, can I say anything less than it is a privilege to meet you?"

A miracle occurred for me then, not the first time nor the last. Yet in that moment I knew myself as I am known by God. I was glad, and the value of every other human being went up for me that day.

I should like to think that if I had had the chance to meet Sylvia, I would have had the grace to say with convincing charm, "It is an honor and privilege to meet you today."

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Book Reviews

The Gospel of Peace. By Ulrich Mauser. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992. xii and 196 pages. Paper. $16.95.

Mauser explores the multifaceted understanding of peace in the Bible, a topic largely neglected in recent scholarship. He does so to assist Christians in their vital activity of peacemaking in today's world. Mauser views the knowledge and pursuit of peace in our times as a matter of survival because the world lives under the nuclear threat (his analysis in this initial chapter seems somewhat dated, however, due to the collapse of the Soviet system).

The author presents his exegetical work on the topic of peace in chapters 2-7, focusing on the major uses of the biblical words for peace — *shalom* and *eirene*—in the Hebrew Scriptures and especially in Matthew and Luke, Paul's letters, and Colossians and Ephesians. Mauser discovers that these words for peace carry a wide range of meanings. In Matthew, for example, "peacemaker" is one important way to characterize Jesus, which leads to commending peacemaking as a critical task of the Christian community since God's gift of peace never comes without resistance and hostility. In Luke, Jesus is pictured as the mediator between God and humans and the bringer of peace. This Gospel can even appreciate the *Pax Romana*, which was established and maintained by military might, as a cultural reality that aided the Christian mission. In Paul's letters, peace becomes associated with fertile concepts that relate to the final benefits of God's saving act in Jesus Christ for history and creation. And both Colossians and Ephesians, considered by Mauser to be letters authored by later leaders of the church within the Pauline sphere, enlarge the cosmic and global dimensions of the peace realized in Jesus Christ. In chapter 8, Mauser returns to our current situation and clarifies in a number of ways how the wide range of biblical understandings of peace can guide Christians today as peace-makers.

Mauser has avoided the distortions that can accompany a "word study" approach: the failure to appreciate the contextual meaning of a specific word, that is, its meaning in light of the socio-literary context.

Mauser repeatedly demonstrates his firm grasp of the research that illuminates the various New Testament writings as literary wholes in their first century circumstances. This results in his explaining the various texts employing "peace" by interrelating them with the larger designs of a specific New Testament writer. The final chapter, "Peace in the New Testament and Peace Today," is valuable because Mauser understands that a simple summary of New Testament teaching on peace is not sufficient. Instead, his comprehension of the current scene shapes his creative synthesis of the biblical teaching on the topic. Biblical scholars and ethicists, clergy and seminarians, and all who care about peace and justice will benefit from reading Mauser's solid reflection on peace as a key to understanding the New Testament.

James L. Bailey
Wartburg Theological Seminary

John, the Son of Zebedee. The Life of A Legend. By R. Alan Culpepper. Studies on Personalities of the New Testament. D. Moody Smith, General Editor. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994. xxii and 376 pages. Cloth. $49.95.

Culpepper presents a rich mine of information on John, the son of Zebedee. The subtitle is significant, for it indicates that the book is not primarily interested in establishing the exact historical data concerning John but rather in describing the development of the views regarding John through the centuries. The author's own view appears in a few critical remarks in the final chapter and in a "conclusion" at the end of each chapter.

Some adjectives that come to mind in reading this book are: meticulous, exact, detailed, cautious. Culpepper attempts to list and describe every remark concerning the life of John in the New Testament, in the Fathers, and in writings throughout the centuries, and probably succeeds extremely well. However, little is said about the views of the Protestant reformers. Culpepper cites legends concerning John which are not found in any other book so conveniently collected. Many have been forgotten (and perhaps deserve to be forgotten). But they are interesting data to consider. It illustrates how human tradition works in accumulating information and bits of stories and how it combines them to form an image of a personality which is many-sided and lively, whether historically accurate or not.

The first chapter is entitled "John, the son of Zebedee." Culpepper believes that it is historical that John was a fisherman. However, he also believes that already in the Gospel tradition legendary features were attached to this person. The "Beloved Disciple" is to be taken as both individual and representational and is probably not to be identified with John, the son of Zebedee. The figure serves as legitimating and authorizing the distinctive teaching of the Johannine community and carries out the work of the Paraclete.

The authorship of the Johannine writings is not directly the subject of the investigation but cannot be separated from the consideration of John. Culpepper believes that the evangelist, the elder, and the seer were three different persons and even different from the apostle John, although there is a close relationship among these writings so that they might derive from a school or a community.

The first half of the second century is remarkably silent concerning John and the Fourth Gospel. In the second half, however, the Gospel was used and attributed to John, along with the epistles and the Book of Revelation.

One may quibble about the arrangement of the chapters, but probably it is helpful to have the apocryphal stories separate from the development of the John legend in the church rather than in chronological arrangement. Here John becomes a hero. Another useful chapter is devoted to "John in Art and Literature" although one might have wished for more illustrations (only two are offered). The final two chapters are devoted to Johannine research from Luthardt to Carson.

Altogether, this is an interesting piece of work and may serve as a source book on John, the son of Zebedee. A rich bibliography and several indexes make the book even more helpful. Culpepper is to be congratulated on a very valuable contribution to Johannine scholarship.

The book is not completely free from misprints. One irritating feature is the arrangement of the notes at the end of each chapter. Footnotes should be at the bottom of the page or at least gathered at the end of the book. It is annoying to have to search for the notes, perhaps especially if one is not reading the whole book.

Wilhelm C. Linss
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

The Nearest in Affection: Towards a Christian Understanding of Islam. By Stuart Brown. Geneva: WCC, 1994. 124 pages.

This book is not another introduction to Islam, though it does have a chapter on essential beliefs. It is rather for those who have some knowledge of Islam and would like to reflect on what they know, or who have or do live with Muslims and would like increased knowledge of the rich history of their neighbors. In either case, the book offers seasoned information and insights based on Brown's own long pilgrimage of fruitful encounter with Muslims.

With skill and warmth, Brown weaves his way through a long and complex history of ideas and sensibilities that have shaped and nurtured the faith and practice of countless Muslims. He explores with the reader, using lucid and telling examples, the different branches of Islam, its theology and philosophy, mystical traditions and its understanding of law and politics. As he does so he is quite willing to examine issues that have long divided Christians and Muslims and still do, and to offer sage advice on how to look at them. Yet the tenure of his argument focuses on the Qur'anic text which forms the book's title: "the nearest in affection," in this case, those

who say, "We are Christians" (Q 5:82). It is a verse, he argues, that points not only to "a primordial impulse for Muslims... to live in harmony with Christians" but one that should inspire "Christians to reflect upon their own affection for Muslims" in light of the teachings of Christ and the church.

To set this conciliatory verse in its larger context, Brown examines a number of other texts that, taken together, guide Muslims in their relationships with Christians. These range from confrontation and conflict to pluralism and peace. All need to be taken seriously, according to Brown, and not some to the exclusion of others. In a final chapter called "An Agenda for Affection," Brown calls for frank and open discussion on issues of human freedom, family (interfaith marriage), care of the earth, justice, and inner peace. In facing these issues, he argues, only "genuine partnership" will "dispel the risk or appearance of manipulation of the situation by any particular group." It is a task for all, not only the elite. As we confront our common future, he says, all must pursue with enthusiasm "every opportunity to reduce prejudice and stimulate understanding." Brown's book goes a long way in that direction. I highly recommend it.

Harold Vogelaar
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity. By Colin E. Gunton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. xiv and 248 pages. Paper. $16.95.

Colin Gunton, Professor of Christian Doctrine at the University of London, has written a truly remarkable book that has grown out of the prestigious Bampton Lectures which he delivered at Oxford University in 1992. The book is significant in several regards.

First, it bears the fruits of about half a century of trinitarian theology after the unexpected reemergence of the doctrine of the trinity as a central subject-matter for serious theological reflection in Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. In his carefully crafted argument Gunton intends nothing less than a constructive response to the fragmented culture of modernity. He unfolds this response in the form of a trinitarian theology of creation and culture that allows again the integration of knowledge, morality, and aesthetics—the true, good, and beautiful—whose incommensurability constitutes the identity of modernity.

Second, Gunton's book does not offer quick fixes via attractive metaphors or via loud appeals to action. Rather, it is the result of a hard rethinking of key issues that have absorbed the leading philosophical thinkers of both antiquity and modernity: particularity and universality with their twin dangers of fragmentation and homogeneity. Gunton's book requires the patience of thoughtful readers who know that true insight will unavoidably bear its fruit in the realm of practice.

Third, Gunton displays a mature relationship to the culture of modernity. On the one hand he maintains a critical distance to the fashionable trends of current postmodern thought by identifying it as a particular moment of the problematic of modernity. And while he constantly demonstrates the fruitfulness of premodern insights he does not, on the other hand, idealize premodern modes of thought at the expense of modernity. Thereby, he is able to offer a rich and complex reading of modernity as a realm of paradoxes, as "an era which has sought freedom, and bred totalitarianism; which has taught us our insignificance in the vastness of the universe, and yet sought to play god with that same universe; which has sought to control the world, and yet let loose forces that may destroy the earth" (p. 13). Gunton also displays a refreshing intellectual independence by showing how fruitful certain metaphysical concepts are for theological reflection even after the often announced "end of metaphysics."

Fourth, the scope of Gunton's discourse ranges widely from Heraclitus and Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle, the Cappadocian Fathers and St. Augustine, medieval thinkers like St. Thomas, Duns Scotus and William Ockham, to modern thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke, Kant and Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche, and contemporaries like Charles Taylor, Hans Blumenberg, and Alasdair MacIntyre. In his own con-

structive account Colin Gunton is indebted—besides the Cappadocian fathers and the contemporary eastern-orthodox theologian John D. Zizioulas—to the thought of S. T. Coleridge, an important English intellectual of the early 19th century who was influenced by German idealism and romanticism. This richness of references and conversation partners reminds the reader both of the complexities of the issues under discussion and of the interrelatedness of serious theological and philosophical discourse from antiquity on—a tradition which Gunton continues in an impressive way.

The book falls into two corresponding parts. In its first part Gunton traces the theological determinants of salient aspects of modern culture. He identifies modernity's displacement of God and disengagement from the world with its ensuing and pervasive instrumentalism as the two crucial problems to be faced. One of the serious consequences is that modernity cannot make philosophical sense of the particular. Thus the "other" has to disappear either via an all-absorbing homogeneity or via a fragmenting individualism. Gunton regards these ideological and philosophical failures of modernity in a large measure as failures of Christian theology. He relates the pervasive fragmentation of modern life to a wrong western anthropology which takes human beings to be essentially unrelated and competing arbitrary wills. And he regards modern relativism and skepticism as the result of a failure of a primarily non-trinitarian doctrine of God as creator. Thus, Gunton not only identifies the roots of modernity's ills as going much deeper than, let's say, the late Middle Ages. He also displays in his critique of modernity a very welcome Christian self-reflexivity and self-critique, which makes his reading of modernity even more convincing.

In the center of the second, constructive part of the book stands the decisive notion of "open transcendentals" which is "in some way basic to the human thinking process, which empowers a continuing and in principle unfinished exploration of the universal marks of being" (p. 142). In a very careful and highly reflective way Gunton explores three "trinitarian transcendentals" via analogical deduction from a rich reconceived doctrine of the Trinity—deeply informed by the thought of the Cappadocian fathers—that illumine the nature of created reality: perichoresis as mutual constitutiveness (in alternative to modern abstract universality); substantiality as residing in concrete particulars and their mutually constitutive relations (in alternative to modern abstract individuality); and relationality as createdness, as coming from God and returning to God who is himself a being in relation. It is obvious that it is impossible to reproduce both the complexity of the argument and the fecundity of its implications for ethics, social theory, economy, and ecology in these very short summarizing remarks.

While the book represents a remarkable intellectual achievement, it also marks more the beginning of a journey than the arrival at the destination—and the author is the first to acknowledge this circumstance. In all their seeming metaphysical untimeliness and obvious conceptual abstractness Gunton's insights are crucial both for the enterprise of Christian theology and for the culture of our late modern western societies. While the enemies, the ideological dragons we all are up against, are named, they are not yet slain. Their conceptual naming is, undoubtedly, a first crucial step. But their slaying depends on a wide and dense network of concrete practices informed by perichoresis, substantiality, and relationality that are able to challenge, overcome or transform a consumer culture of increasing homogeneity. The ecclesiological themes alluded to in the last chapter of the book are in this regard pregnant with promise and potentiality. One can only wish that Gunton and others will continue this constructive line from a trinitarian theology of creation to a dense ecclesial account of Christian existence in the world that will help to overcome the overwhelming fragmentation, alienation, and isolation in late modern societies.

Reinhard Hütter
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

A Master of Surprise. Mark Interpreted. By Donald H. Juel. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994. viii and 152 pages. Paper. $13.00.

Juel, the author of a commentary on Mark, here gathers up his reflections on the interpretation of Mark, based on his prior studies. He sees the need for such reflections in the current discussion of rhetorical and other approaches to the Gospels and in the fragmented Markan scholarship today. He is not interested in the history behind the Gospel but in an engagement with the story—with the "world in front of the text." In other words, he wants to offer reflections on the rhetorical interpretation of the Gospel. Nevertheless, he does not advocate abandoning historical studies.

It seems to me that exactly here is the strength and the weakness of the rhetorical approach, not only as practiced by Juel but also by others. They intend to offer a rhetorical analysis, but usually it is absolutely necessary to know the history out of which the Gospel derives. The only difference between these approaches and the historical-critical method is the fact that they read the Gospel as it stands, deliberately disregarding form-critical insights. Speaking about the "implied author" and the "implied audience" necessitates studying the historical setting as much as possible. How else would it be possible to determine the implied audience and the interpretation of the Gospel even if the most important conclusions are to be drawn from the Gospel itself? Juel sees this problem and repeatedly points to the value of historical studies.

As I read the book, I felt constantly pulled in both directions, the rhetorical and the historical. In fact, the most interesting assertions are of a historical nature, when Juel in the concluding chapter describes the community of Mark's Gospel as standing within the people of Israel and not facing the threat of persecution. Of course, he wants to show how this knowledge grows out of the rhetorical analysis of the Gospel of Mark, but his description reveals constantly his historical studies. These assertions are based on the familiarity of the implied audience with the Scriptures (the OT) and on their standing in Israel's tradition.

The book does not offer a continuous commentary on Mark, but the individual chapters discuss several parts of the Gospel: Jesus' Baptism, Parables, Demons, the Markan Apocalypse. The "tearing open" of the heavens at Jesus' baptism and the "tearing" of the temple curtain form an inclusion and indicate "the intrusion of God into a world that has become alien territory" (p. 36). Jesus is inaugurated as the king at baptism and dies as "the King of the Jews." Mark reads the story of the sower as an allegory, as is shown by the interpretation that is added. "The parables play on the distinction between insider and outsider." In the narrative of the demoniac also, an outsider is restored to life within the community. The Markan Apocalypse envisions (according to Dahl and Juel) a church that has tasted success and found it satisfying, not a church threatened by persecution. In chapter 7, Juel aims at a brief Christology of Mark which he believes has its origin in the history of Jesus of Nazareth. Little is mentioned about the "story" of Mark in this chapter. The Gospel ends with 16:8, but this is not to be considered as leaving a tension unresolved, for it contains the promise of what Jesus "told you" (16:7); the door is open, there is hope.

Despite the misgivings indicated above, there is much to be learned from Juel's book. There are indexes of authors and ancient sources.

Wilhelm C. Linss

The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics. By Nigel Biggar. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. viii and 194 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

Interpretations of Karl Barth's theology in English, which are both sympathetic to his approach and first rate in their exposition, are rare. This is especially true for expositions of Barth's ethics. Since Robert E. Willis' substantive monograph *The Ethics of Karl Barth* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971) there simply has not been published any other comprehensive account of Barth's ethics in English. This circumstance alone makes Nigel Biggar's recent book an especially welcome publication. It fills a serious gap in the interpretive literature on one of the 20th century's

most eminent and influential Protestant theologians—in an area of his thought where prejudice, misinterpretation, and misinformation are especially rampant among English-speaking theologians.

Biggar, who is lecturer of Christian ethics at the university of Oxford and editor of a centenary-volume on Barth's theology, has succeeded in offering a comprehensive introduction to Barth's ethics. I emphasize "introduction," because the book's subtitle is slightly misleading in this regard. The book does not do what Willis' monograph did, namely give a comprehensive material account of Barth's ethics. Nevertheless, Biggar's book is not just an introduction, since it also offers fine discussions of central theological and conceptual issues. In addition, it touches upon all the material aspects of Barth's ethics. Thus, it serves well as a concentrated guide through Barth's ethics for an English-speaking audience. This is especially the case, since Biggar addresses the various criticisms Barth's ethics has received by leading American ethicists like Reinhold Niebuhr, James Gustafson, John Howard Yoder, and Stanley Hauerwas. In most cases, Biggar is able to provide convincing interpretations of Barth's thought that dispel the charges brought against him.

The book is organized in a straightforward way. In the first chapter, Biggar unfolds Barth's quite complex concept of "the command of God"—a concept which constantly invites misunderstandings. In the second chapter, he offers a comprehensive map of the trinitarian dimensions of ethics in Barth's theology by showing how his early Münster and Bonn lectures on ethics relate to his later *Church Dogmatics* and how his reflections on ethics are woven into the architecture of the *Church Dogmatics*. In the third chapter, he discusses Barth's complex use of the Bible as a source for theological reflection on ethics (not as a norm for ethics!), and in the fourth and fifth chapters he discusses the realities of church and world in their formative function for Barth's ethics. Here Biggar convincingly displays both the ecclesial matrix and the astonishing openness to the "world" and its various discourses as characteristic of Barth's ethics. In addition, the book offers four appendices which have more the character of quite specific excursus. All four of them are very characteristic of Barth's ethics. But they are too short and not explicative enough in order to be of real help for the beginner. And they do not really advance the discussion for those who already are familiar with Barth's ethics.

Nevertheless, Biggar has to be lauded for his comprehensive knowledge, his close, differentiated, sympathetic, and at points also critical reading of Barth. (If one takes his few dispersed remarks about Luther as an indication, the same can, unfortunately, not be said about Biggar's knowledge of the Reformer!) He draws the best out of Barth's account of ethics and—in some places—makes him better than he, conceptually, is as, for example, in the case where he demonstrates Barth's use of the concepts of character and moral disposition—in order to rebut Hauerwas' criticism of Barth at this very point. Biggar's interpretation of Barth is by no means wrong in this case. But by putting the amount of interpretive weight on it that is necessary to meet Hauerwas' criticism, he overstretches the point and obscures the obvious marginality of these concepts in the overall picture of Barth's ethics. This is one of the very few occasions where, in my opinion, his apologetic interest does a disservice to the accuracy of his interpretation. But this critical remark has to be clearly read in light of the fact that Biggar's book simply is the best reading of Barth's ethics currently available in English, one that is unmatched in its straightforwardness and concentration on the crucial issues. This book has to be highly recommended as a reliable, accurate, and sympathetic guide through a complex and vast corpus of literature. Whoever wants to really understand Barth's ethics is set on the right track by Biggar's presentation. In addition, it can serve as a very useful "shortcut" in order to engage Barth at the crucial issues of his ethical account. In other words, next to George Hunsinger's *How to Read Karl Barth*, Biggar's book should become a standard text in all classes on Karl Barth and should be found on the shelves of all who want to be reliably guided through one central aspect of the complex world of Barth's theology.

Reinhard Hütter

The Thought of Thomas Aquinas. By Brian Davies. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. 391 pages. Paper. $19.95.

Standard Protestant theological and historical training tends to deal very generously with the millennium between St. Augustine's death and the eve of the Reformation. In the case this millennium is not simply omitted, its presentation tends to serve as a justification for the Reformation's necessity: a very dark landscape beneath a rising sun. In consequence, most students of Protestant theology (and pastors) never receive a fair chance to overcome their prejudices about the "dark Middle Ages" in general and particularly about scholasticism's presumed theological abstractness and problematic use of philosophical argumentation in theological discourse—just to name the friendlier ones among the whole range of Protestant prejudices in regard to medieval theology!

Brian Davies' excellent exposition of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas—indisputably not only one of the overarching minds of Christian theology but also of Western philosophy—offers a unique and first rate opportunity for all who feel that some remedial work regarding an eclipsed millennium might be called for. There are several features that are unique about Davies' comprehensive introduction into the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

First, Davies unfolds the thought-process of Thomas Aquinas from "inside out" instead of describing his theology from the "outside," in light of the historical and intellectual setting of Aquinas's time. This way the reader can get a first hand experience of the unfolding of Aquinas' thought and of its convincing clarity and force. In addition, this approach provides, at the same time, an overview of Aquinas' most comprehensive work, his *Summa Theologiae*. It is to be welcomed that Davies' "inside-out" exposition completely avoids the catch-phrases and standard concepts one expects to read about: Aquinas, the theologian of "cosmic order" and the "chain of being," of "analogy of being," and of "natural law." Surely, all of these aspects can be encountered. But they are embedded in a rich argumentative context. And often they turn out to be of quite marginal importance—if they are not wrongly isolated from the overall scope of Aquinas' thought.

Secondly, the book is clearly written for modern readers. Davies provides interesting contemporary examples, makes references to contemporary philosophers and theologians, and constantly shows the relevance (and at points also the problems) of Aquinas' thought for a contemporary perspective.

Thirdly, in welcome difference to some other treatments of Aquinas—especially written by philosophers—Davies does not artificially and wrongly distinguish between Aquinas the "theologian" and Aquinas the "philosopher." Rather, he convincingly shows how the philosopher Aquinas—and that means the ingenious interpreter of Aristotle—is constantly and consistently in service of the theologian Aquinas, the faithful interpreter of canonical Scripture, the ecumenical councils, and the patristic fathers.

Fourth, it is remarkable how much attention the doctrine of God receives in this account of Aquinas' thought: about half of the almost 400 pages. Thereby, Davies succeeds in showing that everything else in Aquinas' theological thought is constantly connected with the doctrine of God and that one cannot understand any of the rest of his rich and manifold insights if one has not first gotten a firm grasp of Aquinas' doctrine of God.

Fifth, Davies displays the wonderful gift of not overcomplexifying an already complex thinker. Instead, he guides the reader consistently to Aquinas' core questions. Maybe the best one can say about this book is that it is written completely in the spirit of the one into whose thought it so lucidly introduces. The first chapter serves both as an introduction to Aquinas' life, his historical and intellectual context, and as a guide for contemporary readers into a thought-world and thought-process that at first sight might seem rather strange to us. Thus the book shows all the elements of a first-rate introduction into a complex and challenging subject matter. One could only have wished that the fine bibliography at the end were annotated in order to facilitate the orientation for the novice in Aquinas studies.

The book convincingly shows by its in-

tense display of Aquinas' depth of insight that modern theologians and philosophers—and especially Protestant theologians, pastors, and students of theology—neglect Aquinas at their own peril. In Aquinas we encounter a theologian thoroughly evangelical and catholic: evangelical in his consistent emphasis on God's overflowing love and graciousness in all of the Triune God's dealings from creation to salvation, catholic in his insistence on the orthodoxy of the ecumenical councils and the importance of the patristic fathers, and in his openness to argue rigorously for the truth and consistency of the faith with the best philosophical tools and insights available to him. It is not necessary to agree with Aquinas on each and every point—after one has understood what his point really is. But Davies' straightforward and comprehensive exposition of Aquinas' thought reminds us that disagreeing thoughtfully with Aquinas is still a very challenging and highly rewarding enterprise!

Reinhard Hütter

Briefly Noted

Ancient Jerusalem Revealed. Edited by Hillel Geva (Biblical Archaeology Society, $39.95). In the last 25 years Jerusalem has been extensively excavated by scholars like Mazar, Shiloh, and Avigad despite the fact that it is a very lived in and even crowded city. These excavations have discovered that the western hill was included in the city as early as the 8th century and that Nehemiah's wall was at the top of Ophel rather than at its base. In addition to a generally better understanding of the city, archaeologists have dug up "bullae" containing the names of Gemariah son of Shaphan and Azariah son of Hilqiah (both mentioned in the Bible), an ivory pomegranate with the inscription "sacred donation for the priests of the house of Yahweh," and the remnants of the 6th c. C.E. Cardo, the main north-south, colonnaded street. The 40 articles in this book were originally published in Hebrew in the journal *Qadmoniot*. Lavishly illustrated in black and white; 8 pages of full-color plates. RWK

Homosexuality in the Church. Both Sides of the Debate. Edited by Jeffrey S. Siker (Westminster/John Knox, $14.99). This book indeed presents point and counterpoint on the role of Scripture, tradition, reason, behavioral science, and experience in order to help Christians to come to terms with the issue of homosexuality. The essays on Scripture are written by Richard B. Hays and Victor Paul Furnish, two of the finest Pauline scholars today. The book concludes with various denominational statements, though the ELCA did not allow the "First Draft of a Social Statement" to be printed, referring instead to previous LCA and ALC statements. RWK

The Dead Sea Scrolls, Volume 1: Rule of the Community and Related Documents. Edited by James H. Charlesworth (Westminster/John Knox, $99). This series will present the nonbiblical writings from Qumran in their original languages and in English translation, with introductions dealing with matters of language, date, provenience, history, theology, and relationship to the Hebrew Bible and other ancient writings. The Rule of the Community, found in Cave 1, was composed about the middle of the second century B.C.E., at the beginning of the sect's life in the wilderness. This document was to be taught to and memorized by those who wanted to join the community and is dominated by a strict monotheism and a cosmic dualism. Humans are torn by a cosmic struggle between the Angel of Light and the Angel of Darkness. Those who wrote the scrolls awaited the coming of God's messiah and the final battle in which all wickedness would be destroyed for ever. Five other, related documents are also included in this very handsome volume. RWK

Kings Without Privilege. David and Moses in the Story of the Bible's Kings. By A. Graeme Auld (T & T Clark, $29.95). A. may be right that scholars have been insufficiently sensitive to the degree to which the Books of Samuel-Kings are a commentary on an earlier text, but it is far less likely that Samuel-Kings and Chronicles both used a common inherited text, and that Chronicles did not recast the earlier Deuteronomistic History. A. believes that there was an ideal portrait of David and Solomon in the Shared Text (reconstructed on the basis of agreements between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles), and that the "critical realism" of Samuel-Kings was added only when the monarchy no longer wielded power. In his view Chronicles did not omit the history of the Northern Kingdom contained in Kings. Rather, Kings added it to the Shared Text although the author knew "next to nothing" about many of the kings of the north. In my view, deWette (1806/1807) is still right. RWK

Through the Ages in Palestinian Archaeology. By Walter E. Rast (Trinity Press International, $15.95). After three chapters dealing with basic issues, R. traces the archaeological history of Palestine from the Stone Age through the Islamic period, including the Ottoman Empire (1517-1918). Needless to say, the primary focus is on the earlier ages and especially the biblical period. Archaeology today includes study of the environment, social organization, technology, agriculture, and trade. R.'s view of Israel's entry into the land is of a gradual immigration, with occasional military skirmishes. He discusses technicalities like the typical four-room house, red-slipped burnished pottery, and chronology in a totally accessible way. R.'s own archaeological skills have been honed at sites like Taanach, Shechem, Bab edh-Dhra, and Early Bronze age cities south and east of the Dead Sea. RWK

Ezekiel 1-19. Word Biblical Commentary 28. By Leslie C. Allen (Word, $28.99), and **Genesis 16-50. Word Biblical Commentary 2.** By Gordon Wenham (Word, $28.99). Allen's commentary on the first half of Ezekiel appeared four years after his commentary on chapters 20-48 (cf. *Currents* 18 [1991] 299) since he was completing a work begun by William H. Brownlee, whose commentary on chaps 1-19 was published posthumously (cf. *Currents* 14 [1987] 60-61). Word wisely decided to replace Brownlee's somewhat maverick treatment with the present volume, which seeks a middle ground between Zimmerli and Greenberg.

Wenham's relatively conservative commentary on Genesis is full of historical, philological, literary, and theological insights and is far more accessible than the massive, three-volume commentary on Genesis by Westermann. Wenham dates J to the period of the United Monarchy, but makes him the final redactor of the book. His surveys of recent research on Genesis (e.g. the religion of the patriarchs or the Egyptian background of the Joseph story) are always clear, thorough, and judicious though at times he equivocates between various competing alternatives. Still, if someone were to ask me for the best available current treatment of Genesis, I would without hesitation point to Wenham. RWK

A Companion to Samaritan Studies. Edited by Alan D. Crown, Reinhard Pummer, and Abraham Tal (J.C.B. Mohr, 158 DM). The 46 contributors to this volume describe various Samaritan individuals, literary works and practices, and modern scholars (deceased) who have studied the Samaritans. Samaritan theology contains five elements: belief in God; belief in Moses (including his pre-existence); belief in the Law (all doctrines are justified from the text of the Pentateuch); belief in Mt. Gerizim (the place chosen by God as the center of worship); belief in the day of Vengeance and Recompense (preceded by the resurrection of the dead and followed by Paradise for the righteous and fire for the unrighteous). "Taheb" (the returning one) is the Samaritan eschatological prophet. The Samaritans added a commandment to the Decalogue that secured the centrality of Mount Gerizim in the cult. One group of contemporary Samaritan lives in Nablus (Shechem), the other in Holon, a suburb of Tel Aviv. An invaluable reference tool. RWK

Converting the Past. Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite History. By Klaas A. D. Smelik (Brill, $54.50). The five technical essays in this book, originally written in Dutch, examine the use of the Hebrew Bible in historical research. After a methodological chapter in which he weighs the value of biblical and extra-biblical sources in reconstructing the reign of Menahem (2 Kgs 15:17-22), Israel's conflict with Sihon and Og, and the brief, two year reign of Saul, S. turns to the ark narrative (which echoes the pillage of the temple in the 6th century) and to Mesha's inscription (which recounts the ninth-century Moabite king's rebellion after the death of Ahab and his subsequent victory over Israel in several battles). Next he examines Hezekiah's role in Isaiah 36-, a text which he dates to the Persian period and which he proposes was drafted to bridge the gap between the two parts of Isaiah. He discounts the piety of Hezekiah in the Assyrian crisis and believes that the two speeches of the Rabshakeh are a fictional foil to the prophet Isaiah. Finally, after comparing the quite different accounts of Manasseh in 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 23 (read 33!), he concludes that neither author had any real historical interest in this seventh-century king. In the theological agenda of the Book of Kings, Manasseh is a "troubler of Israel" while in Chronicles he serves as a model of repentance. RWK

The Life of Moses. The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers. By John Van Seters (Westminster/John Knox, $32). VS continues his argument for an exilic Yahwist, who was a historian, influenced by Greek and Near Eastern models, concerned with reconstructing the origins of Israel (cf. his earlier Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis). J in his view was written as a unified introduction to the Deuteronomistic History and had a major influence on Second Isaiah. This author revised and expanded traditions about Moses he had found in Deuteronomy and set the stage for a more liberal, humanistic and universalistic stream of tradition in Judaism. Readers will recognize that VS, like E. Blum in Germany, has turned much of previous Pentateuchal scholarship on its head. RWK

Holman Book of Biblical Charts, Maps, and Reconstructions. Edited by Marsha A. Ellis Smith (Holman, $24.99). The charts deal with the Old Testament (family of Abraham, Jewish calendar, etc.), New Testament (disciples, harmony of the gospels, etc.), and general matters (denominational doctrines, religions of the world, etc.). There are 21 simple maps of the Bible and the contemporary world. Finally, there are 21 reconstructions, ranging from the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. Readers may be surprised to see the tabernacle (!) pitched on the threshing floor of Araunah at the time of David. There is no bibliography, and a non-critical stance is maintained throughout. RWK

A History of the Hebrew Language. By Sáenz-Badillos (Cambridge, $39.95). The author describes the 3,000-year history of Hebrew, understanding it as a Northwest Semitic language and arguing that the distinction between Canaanite and Aramaic within Northwest Semitic is not valid until the end of the second millennium. There is plenty of information about Northwest Semitic in pre-biblical times: Ugaritic, the Execration Texts, the Amarna Letters, Phoenician and other inscriptional evidence. He divides the history of the language into four periods: biblical Hebrew (noting the distinction between the pre-exilic and the post-exilic periods, and the peculiarities of the language in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Samaritan documents); rabbinic Hebrew; mediaeval Hebrew, and modern Hebrew. His study of the vocalization of biblical Hebrew takes account of Greek and Latin transcriptions and describes the differences between the Palestinian, Babylonian, and Tiberian traditions. Over one quarter of the words in the Hebrew Bible appear just once—no wonder lexicography is a problem. In the development of the modern language, Ben-Yehuda played a decisive role by his creation of new words. The book includes 68 pages of bibliography. RWK

The Dead Sea Scrolls Catalogue. Compiled by Stephen A. Reed and others (Scholars, $64.95). This massive volume lists all the ancient manuscripts found at Qumran and related sites (279 pages), photographs of the scrolls (86 pages), and museum inventory numbers (69 pages). This database is also available in electronic form via Telnet. RWK

New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations. Edited by James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Orbis, $18.95). The sixteen essays in this volume are divided into five categories: definitions of mission in an era of global interdependence and mutual partnership; development of mission theology in the evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Protestant families; theological reflections on the ideas and ideals of missionaries; a study of missiology itself (by Scherer); and statements by two regional churches. RWK

The Song of Songs. By Othmar Keel (Fortress, $29.95). While K. pays close attention to the form and content of these songs, the most striking thing about this commentary is the 158 illustrations about various aspects of love he includes from the ancient Near East. These illustrate the dynamic nature of biblical metaphors. The Song describes love as an elemental power, comparable to death, and having little to do with morality and theology. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the equality of the sexes as real as in the Song. K. locates the final editing of the collection in Jerusalem in late pre-exilic times, but admits that many of the 42 individual songs must originally have been sung in northern areas. RWK

What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism? By A. K. M. Adam (Fortress, $10). "Postmodernism" refuses to accept any one premise as the privileged starting point for establishing claims to truth. It believes that any theory that pretends to account for everything is suppressing counter examples. It tries to show that most "natural" assumptions are ideological projections, and that mundane economic and political motives lie behind claims to universality. Thus it rejects the total reliance on science and reason that has characterized much of the modern intellectual tradition, including the historical critical method of biblical study. Postmodern biblical exegetes may not be interested in the author's intended meaning or even the text's original historical context, and they would deny that there is necessarily a great gap in meaning between then and now. The "past" is not something fixed and unified, but it is reconstructed by modern historians whose subjectivity plays a huge role in that reconstruction. "Deconstruction" is part of postmodernism and involves a painstakingly minute analysis that reveals ways in which the text always undoes the arguments it is ostensibly making. The subjectivity of the interpreter is taken into full account in postmodernism; it believes that exegesis has long been the domain of an elite group of authorized interpreters, such as preachers and seminary professors, many of whom not incidentally have been white males. Ideological-critical scholars point out that the biblical writings reflect and reproduce the "false consciousness" of oppressed groups. A laborer displays false consciousness in explaining low wages by saying, "That's all my abilities are worth." A.'s book is a clear and helpful guide through the philosophical background (Derrida, Foucault, etc.) and concrete results of an "ism" that is increasingly dominant in the late twentieth century. RWK

Scholars usually study Philo of Alexandria to understand Hellenistic Judaism's self-definition, to evaluate his exegetical method, or to investigate him as a source for Graeco-Roman philosophy. For example, Philo is a major source for our knowledge of the skeptical tropes of Aenesidemus. David T. Runia goes in the other direction, tracing the influence of **Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey** (Fortress, $35) down to 400 C.E. He discusses Philo Christianus (his phrase) in relation to Eastern Christianity (New Testament, Apostolic Fathers, Apologists, Alexandria [Gnostics, Clement, Origen and others], Eusebius, and the Cappadocians) and the West (Tertullian, Calcidius, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, etc.), this with copious references to ancient and modern literature. Philo first makes an impression on Alexandrian theologians, of course. But Ambrose brings him to the west.

The most influential works were *De vita Moysis, Quaestiones in Genesin et Exodum,* and *De opificio mundi.* The Christian fathers respect him as historian, theologian, exegete and philosopher. One of Runia's contributions to further research is a listing of references to Philo in the Fathers; patristic scholars will certainly consult this list often. The extensive bibliography and helpful indices enhance the book's value even more. This is a model of careful philological research with important historical and theological implications.

Edgar Krentz

Roman historians generally pay little attention to the New Testament. A. N. Sherwin-White's magisterial lectures on the legal, administrative, provincial, and municipal background of the Gospels and Acts (**Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament,** 1963) was a major contribution to biblical scholarship. The paperback reprint (Baker, $11.95) deserves wide reading. This book is not yet out of date.

Edgar Krentz

Irenaeus on the Salvation of the Unevangelized. By Terrance L. Tiessen (Scarecrow Press, $39.50). This work introduces the reader to the thought of Irenaeus, who was crucial in the development of Christian orthodoxy. T. explores whether or not Irenaeus believed that salvation was possible to those outside the church, specifically to those who do not encounter the gospel or those who do not believe the gospel. Karl Rahner's views on "anonymous Christians" form the background for this discussion. T.'s tentative answer to his query: "maybe."

Olaf Roynesdal, Baltic, South Dakota

The Fabricated Luther. The Rise and Fall of the Shirer Myth. By Uwe Siemon-Netto (Concordia, $12.99). This book examines the image of Luther that dominates most of secular thinking today, the Luther who is blamed for many of the woes of the 20th century. The thesis is simple (and correct): critics of Luther read secondary works about him but not works by him. In *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich,* William L. Shirer blamed Luther for everything with the Nazi stamp on it. S-N examines Luther's position on authority and civil disobedience and uses the example of Lutherans during World War II, who used Luther's position to resist the Nazis. The role of Luther's influence in the breakdown of East German Communism is also examined. Luther's thought in all cases is shown to be quite the opposite of what is commonly assumed.

Olaf Roynesdal

After the Apostles. Christianity in the Second Century. By Walter H. Wagner (Fortress, $15.95). W. provides a solid introduction to the second Christian century. Part I discusses the status of the Roman Empire, how Christians read the Old Testament, and ideologies competing with Christianity. Part II examines five important theological questions that preoccupied the church's attention: creation, anthropology, christology, ecclesiology, and believers' role in society. Part III presents the responses of Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement, Tertullian, and Irenaeus to those questions. Those who want to learn, or review, church history and theology while it was being shaped will find much help from this well-written book. *Olaf Roynesdal*

Martin Luther, Theologian of the Church. The Collected Essays of George Wolfgang Forell in Honor of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday. Edited by William R. Russell (Word and World Supplement Series, $14.95). This is a wonderful collection of essays by a master teacher of the church. Written over a span of fifty years, these articles cover themes such as "Luther and" (half the volume), the two kingdoms, justification, ethics, and the need for theology in the church. One can only assume that Forell is now at his wisest and will—indeed must—continue to bless the church today with his wisdom.

Olaf Roynesdal

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Preaching Helps

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

A Matter of Life and Death

John is the simplest of the Gospels; John is the most complex of the Gospels. I use the Gospel of John with beginning Greek students, because the vocabulary and grammar are relatively simple. John keeps repeating words, and beginning students like that. Sentences tend not to be long and complicated.

But the plot and message are another story. John seems to take up themes familiar to readers of the Synoptic Gospels. In fact John treats themes that are familiar enough in other religions, ancient and modern. It is not news to say that simple things of life are all signs and symbols of the higher life of the spirit. Bread, water, path or road, vine or tree, shepherd.

What is astonishing is that John connects all these themes not simply with Jesus as Sage or Jesus as Rabbi or Jesus as Prophet. John insists from start to finish that the crucified Jesus, Jesus with his cross, is True Bread, the Way of Life and Truth, the Beneficent Shepherd of the Flock of God, the Fountain of Living Water, the Vine or Tree with roots reaching down into God's heart, the Cosmic Light bathing the whole world with its judging and nurturing rays. John's resurrection narratives proclaim the crucified Jesus to be the living Jesus, Lord of Death and Life.

Susan Nachtigal, who wrote the Pastoral Reflections for this issue, once served on the pastoral staff of St. Johns Lutheran Church in Sacramento, California. She is now in her third year of teaching Christian Education and Christian Spirituality at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California, where she is also the Dean of the Chapel. She has written for these pages before, and her voice is always most welcome here.

Jean Lebbert, associate pastor of Emanuel Lutheran church in Lodi, California, has appeared in these pages before as author of Pastoral Reflections. This time I asked her to try her hand at something else: "What little gems do you have hidden away in your journal that you would be willing to share during this Easter Season?" She responded in delightful fashion. She quotes some faculty with whom she has studied and she shares some lines from her two favorite writers: Mark Twain and Martin Luther.

My plan for Year A has been to focus on the Old Testament in the First Readings. However, the elder Testament does not appear in the lectionary even once during the Easter Season. Profs actively engaged in teaching the Old Testament have contributed First Readings up till now. I have jumped in and written the First Readings for this issue. We will be returning to the Old Testament emphasis all through the Pentecost Season.

In her cover letter to me, Jean writes of a "faithful 85 year old woman who was called into the Church Triumphant this evening." Jean had visited the woman earlier in the day, reading to her and sharing with her the Lord's Supper, foretaste of the feast to come. And Jean writes, "The Easter Season, with its power and promise and doubt and exhortation, comes through for us year-round." How true. These words are penned in November, when leaves are falling off the trees. And shots cut down Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv last week because he was leading Israel assertively toward peace. And not only 85 year olds but 45 year olds and 5 year olds die day after day. We are always in the seasons of Fall and Spring, Lent and Easter, together. And in all the seasons of life and of church, preachers are called to walk with people, as the crucified and risen Christ walked with the Emmaus disciples, talking to them about God and breaking bread with them, so that their eyes are opened.

Peace!

Robert H. Smith
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The Resurrection of Our Lord April 7, 1996

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Acts 10:34-43
Colossians 3:1-4
John 20:1-18

First Reading

The resurrection of Jesus is good news not only for Jesus but for all the world. Humanity is exalted in his exaltation, lifted up with him, participating in the privileges he enjoys as one seated at the right hand of God, that place of incomparable favor.

The RCL does not permit omitting verses 10-18, as the LBW did. The whole passage (20:1-18) is carefully structured so that readers are almost forced to compare the experience of Peter and the Beloved Disciple at the tomb with that of Mary Magdalene. Of course, we could say that 20:1-18 is only a piece of ch. 20 and that ch. 20 is only one bit of the whole Gospel, so that everything must be compared with everything else in order to understand anything! But note the following parallels.

When the Beloved Disciple arrived at the tomb, he *stooped* and *looked* and *saw* linen cloths inside the tomb where Jesus' body had been (v. 5). Mary Magdalene *stooped* and *looked* and *saw* not linen cloths but two angels (vv. 11-12), one where his feet had been and one where his head had rested.

Talk of tomb and grave-cloths makes us think of Lazarus and his tomb and his grave-cloths (John 11). Lazarus required lots of help in leaving his tomb, and people had to reach out and unwrap him. Lazarus even saved his old cloths for inevitable future use. Not so with Jesus. He has left behind his grave-cloths forever, all neatly wrapped up. That detail is too often taken to indicate that John is asserting that no grave-robbing had been involved. But surely more than that is going on here. The Beloved Disciple gazed at the cloths and came to faith. What did he see in those linens? They have their parallel in the incident involving Mary Magdalene. What did she see? A pair of angels marking the spot, one at each end. They stand guard, like the two angels above the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies.

John draws our attention to the tomb, to the shelf where the body of Jesus had been laid, to the cloths in which his body had been wrapped, to angels miming the Holy of Holies. Thus John marks Jesus' tomb as place of life, the place where the living God intersects the lives of people, as the earthly throne room of the all-merciful and almighty God of the universe.

More than in our other Gospels, John's resurrection story points to the victory which happened *in* the death of Jesus, not just victory *after* the death. In John's Gospel, Easter is not the celebration of pain-free existence beyond the grave. It is the celebration of the hard and costly victory of love over hate, truth over the lie, God over Satan. Day by day, as we grow older and age, we are all of us heading toward the grave. How do we travel that mysterious path?

Easter faith means traveling in Christ and with Christ. In fact he is himself the Way of truth and life. RHS

Pastoral Reflections

The Gospel of John says it this way: "Mary Magdalene... saw that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb." The Gospel of Matthew says it this way: " And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of

the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat upon it." The other two Gospel writers also mention the stone, Mark most pointedly, "...who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb? And looking up they saw that the stone was rolled back—it was very large."

It seems clear that the women and those who have recounted their story think that the stone is an interesting detail not to be overlooked. The fact that the state of the stone is recorded in all four Gospels seems to indicate two things: that those who visited the tomb were preoccupied with the seriousness of this barrier, and that those who recorded the visit were impressed by the power that removed it.

Even as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord we are all too aware of the seriousness of the stone that sealed his grave. And, aren't we also painfully aware of the stones that seal our grave everyday? Sometimes they're just small stones, pebbles that ride and ride and ride on us, much like the pebble that rides against the sole of our shoe and rubs our flesh raw. Or sometimes the stones are medium-sized, just about the size that fits in our hand, the perfect size around which to wrap our fingers and give a good throw. And sometimes the stones are large stones. Boulders. Stones around which we cannot see because they're much too big, and which we cannot move because they're far too heavy.

Yes, the barrier is real, and the barrier is terribly serious. But because we know this truth about ourselves and the way our lives are, are we not all the more, thanks-be-to-God-impressed by the power that has removed it.

Impressed doesn't really say it all. How could we say it all? With the grave of Christ no longer sealed and the seal of our death now broken we are left only to proclaim victory. "You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." That says it all. Or how about, "This is the feast of victory for our God, for the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia! Alleluia!" That says it all. Or how about, "The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in God's grace. Amen." That says it all.

Oh, and by the way, wasn't that stone-ground bread we were eating? SN

Jean's Journal

"For Christ is nothing other than sheer life." —Martin Luther, "A Sermon on Preparing to Die."

Dictionary trivia: Sheer [ME *schere* **freed from guilt**, prob. alter. of *skere*, fr. ON *skaerr* **pure**; akin to OE *scinan* **to shine**]

"Life is not just something to do."
—Dr. Margie Brown

Second Sunday of Easter
April 14, 1996

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

First Reading

Thomas makes the most interesting demand. What will it take to move him from unbelief to belief? In fact, what is faith or belief according to John's Gospel? This Gospel never praises any form of belief which rests on miracles or signs. We all know how easy it is to be impressed by displays of power, whether intellectual power, physical power, financial power, artistic power or any other form of power. But John's Gospel is skeptical of any "faith" based on power. And Thomas, God bless him, does not ask to see a display of power.

What was it that Thomas wanted to know? If all he wanted was the assurance that Jesus was alive again, that he had really revived, Thomas might have asked to see some unique identifying feature. He might have said, "Let me hear his voice or see his profile. When he comes, let me see some characteristic gesture of his."

But nothing of the sort. Thomas asks to see wounds. Wounds in a living body. This is really odd, isn't it? Where did this request come from? Did Thomas think a resurrected body would still show signs of mortal wounding? Doesn't resurrection by definition mean the opposite of wounds and tears and defeat and death?

But Thomas asks to see wounds in Jesus' hands and side. This is all very Johannine in more ways than one. Only in John's Gospel does a soldier pierce Jesus' side. And more than the other evangelists, John has pondered the wounding and the dying.

What are the wounds of Jesus? Many things, of course. They are signs of the humanity Jesus shares with us. They are marks inflicted by enemies ignorant of God's purpose and Jesus' identity. They are reminders of the cruelty humans inflict on one another. Who goes through life without wounds, without suffering the pain of misunderstanding or callous indifference?

But John sees more. He looks at those wounds and sees the love with which God loves the world (John 3:16). He sees Jesus' own astonishing love, the love of the shepherd for the sheep (John 10), loving his own all the way to the end (John 13:1).

Thomas demanded something really strange: "I want to see those terrible wounds in his hands and his side." What Thomas wanted was an answer to a deep spiritual question: Is love strong enough? Strong enough for what? Strong enough to triumph over petty resistance? Of course. How about the big issues of life? Can love handle them? Can love conquer evil and wickedness, selfishness and hate? Is love strong enough to triumph over the grave?

Thomas felt that he could not ever again move his heart to trust in God, if that love which erupted in Jesus should prove to be only some unique and rare flower now dead and gone forever. Does that love have roots deep in the heart of God? Does that love have God's eternal backing? Thomas asks a good question, and he received the Easter answer. RHS

Pastoral Reflections

Given the state of affairs, one could almost begin to think of the story of Jesus' visit to the upper room as a Creatio Ex Nihilo II. The set is empty. The script is Word-ed. The cast is Triune.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The Gospel writer doesn't say exactly what the disciples were doing as they gathered together and hid in that upper room. Were they strategizing, thinking up a plan B, weeping, sleeping, eating? Somehow they must have taken care of life's mundane concerns in order to keep themselves going. But mostly, isn't it realistic to imagine that their world was reduced to a lifeless little room in which they were only up to nothing: nothing much to do, nothing much to say, nothing much to be.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of all.

The Gospel writer doesn't say exactly how Jesus appeared; just that he did. That the door was shut implies Jesus needed no means through which to come or go other than the same power that raised him from the dead. Upon entering the room, immediately, Jesus spoke the Word, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." The Word was reminiscent of Jesus' high priestly prayer assuring the disciples that they were yet one with God. Word has it that it was Jesus, in the flesh, who made them glad on the evening of that day, the first day of the week.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

The Gospel writer doesn't exactly say how Jesus did it, it just says that "he breathed on them." And as he did that, Jesus said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit...." The disciples certainly needed something because, clearly, the wind had been knocked out of them. Left to their own devices, they were in deep trouble. But with this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were given the very means by which Jesus, in his mission, was able to negate evil and sin. By the power of the Spirit, the chaos of faithlessness is overcome by the creative thrust of forgiveness.

The juxtaposition of these stories wasn't in the minds of the writers at the time they wrote. However, we might be served for a moment, to collapse time and history in order to see that if new creation can happen between the book of Genesis and the Gospel of John, it just might be able to happen between the life of Christ then, and the life of one who believes now. SN

Jean's Journal

"If you systematically doubt everything, you can't doubt doubt." —Dr. Ted Peters

"Indeed, faith feeds on doubt the way fire feeds on fuel." —Martin E. Marty, *Invitation to Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 25

Third Sunday of Easter
April 21, 1996

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23 (old 17-21)
Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Luke 24:13-35

First Reading

The Emmaus story is too easily read as a commentary on the Eucharist something like this: Just as Jesus came to grieving disciples, eyes burning with tears and shock, and ate with them at Emmaus, so Jesus comes to us in the Eucharist and makes our hearts glad, turning grief into joy.

Nothing much wrong with that as far as it goes. But Luke goes significantly farther. In his narrative he raises the question about what it takes to accomplish the redemption of the people of God (Lk 24:21). What has the power to set God's people free? These two disciples had begun to see in Jesus the liberator, the redeemer, the absolute rescuer.

Is redemption defeated by the death of Jesus, as these two disciples thought? Or can it be that the death of Jesus has in it the very power these disciples yearn for? Is the death of Jesus a definitive shaking of the foundations strong enough to topple kingdoms and raise up a new world?

The two Emmaus disciples were bad theologians. That is, they thought the way people usually think. Only power gets anything done in the world. At the cross, Jesus lost his power, so they begin to wend their way home depressed. They move down the long road from the heights of Jerusalem to the lower slopes where Emmaus sits snug in a darkening valley. They walk westward toward dusk and darkness and death.

Jesus catches up with them on their downward road and strikes up a conversation with them. First he bluntly rates their spirituality: "Ignorant and hard of heart." Then he summarizes the Bible for them: Moses and the prophets (=the sacred scriptures) declare that the Christ enters his glorious rule not by avoiding pain but precisely by suffering and dying (24:26-27). Then Jesus backed up his words with a symbolic act. He sat down at the head of their table and broke bread with them, as he had so many times in the past. Here is a "king" who provides nourishment to his subjects and, as he said at the Last Supper, delights in being a servant-presence (22:27).

Who has been raised up? What has been raised up? Jesus, the servant-ruler, has been raised. Love of enemy and not just conquest of enemy has been lifted up.

Jesus rose up from the tomb and returned to the company of his disciples, not with new weapons and new plans but with the old "weapon": bread broken and served to others. Life shared gladly even with those who are ignorant and hard of heart. Loving and nurturing life breaking through the tomb and through the grief and frustration of disciples. Same Jesus, same "weapon," same plan. Back from the grave. RHS

Pastoral Reflections

The road to Emmaus was probably nothing like the road to Berkeley. It may have been just a pathway, not even what we would call a real road. Here in northern California, real roads are wide and growing wider. Concrete center dividers have replaced green shrubbery and flowering oleander bushes. More and more overpasses are being added along with their accompanying on and off ramps. Most noticeable are the miles and miles of new concrete block walls designed both to keep the freeway sounds out of the neighborhoods and to add a decorative effect.

The busy-ness of the morning rush hour offers four bulging lanes of automobiles at a standstill. A number of cars hold driver and passenger who, typically, are staring straight ahead. But most cars hold only the driver preoccupied with either the radio, or what lies ahead in the day. Surrounded by concrete and lost in our own worlds, one would wonder whether anyone would recognize Jesus, were he to come along. If we, like the disciples, had met him before, surely we would recognize him... or at least his car. Not to disparage the disciples. Some of their inabilities were justifiable. After all, the Gospels of Luke and John have Jesus appearing and disappearing, recognizable and unrecognizable at will. And, it is not as though Jesus' followers were altogether hard-hearted. The text says that they "were hoping he was the one to redeem Israel," and that they were "amazed" at what the women reported after their early trip to the tomb.

Appearing and disappearing, recognizable and unrecognizable; that's how Jesus is in our lives too. But, given the opportunity, where would we look as we hope to see the One to redeem Israel? Would we not look at the redeemed? Or, where would we go to be amazed? Would we not look to the Amazing One?

The Gospel text says that the disciples eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus at the breaking of the bread. Isn't this where our recognition begins as well... as the body of Christ, the redeemed, appear and all are gathered around the table and break bread? And isn't this where our eyes are opened in amazement at seeing that with us, the whole world has been gathered 'round? First, the concrete and all that is *us* that makes us love that which is cold and hard, immovable and emotionless. Then, the bulging four lanes and all that is *us* that makes us full of ourselves and blind to our neighbor. Then, the miles and miles of concrete walls that are *us* that separate us from God and God's creation. Then, all of the on and off ramps that are *us* and make our comings and goings too numerous to name.

What would it take to recognize Jesus? It would take a world, it would take *us*, "ransomed from the futile ways inherited from our forbearers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Do not our hearts burn within us? SN

Jean's Journal

"Between believing a thing and thinking you know is only a small step and quickly taken." —Mark Twain, "3,000 Years Among the Microbes."

"After your heart has thus become firm in Christ, and love, not fear of pain, has made you a foe of sin, then Christ's passion must from that day on become a pattern for your entire life." —Martin Luther, "A Meditation on Christ's Passion."

Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 28, 1996

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

First Reading

John 9 is all about the blindness of the religious leaders, calling to mind the proverb about the blind leading the blind (Mt 15:14). John 10 goes right on after 9:41 without any change of place or time, of characters or audience. The topic seems to change, but maybe it's another way of saying what John 9 said. Chapter 10 is the Good Shepherd chapter, and shepherd was a traditional metaphor for a leader. So John 9 and 10 belong together as integral parts of one meditation on the theme of the leaders and the led.

False leaders are not called "blind" in John 10. Harsher terms are used. They are called "thieves and robbers." And worse. "The thief comes only to steal and slaughter and kill."

That word of Jesus is a terrible indictment of religious, political and economic leaders. Typically, commonly, ordinarily, regularly and sadly, leaders use the led. They sacrifice their followers. They live, they thrive on the efforts and pain and toil of their followers. They are like hired hands who roam the hills with a flock of sheep, and instead of leading the flock to green pastures and making them lie down beside still waters and defending them against wolves, they take the young of the flock and slaughter and roast them. What do they care?

These words of Jesus can be blunted if we confine their meaning to the metaphorical or spiritual realm as an accusation against some few ancient religious leaders. But in the Gospel of John, Jesus contemplates the way the cosmos operates, and he will have none of it. His way of being king or shepherd or leader does not have its root or source in the cosmos (Jn 18:36). He will not be an oppressor. He has no desire to be one more oriental potentate, kept in office by doles or bribes, by bread or circuses, or by threats of violence (6:15). He is willing to be neither Caesar nor Caesar's friend (see 19:12).

Jesus is not ultimately from Mary and Joseph, not from Bethlehem in Judea. He is from above. A different spirit moves in him. A spirit and a truth which free people to be children of God (1:13; 8:32). And his energy and his truth were not defeated at the cross.

Resurrected, he lives. And he still goes at the head of the flock, summoning those who have ears to hear. He calls them to come and enjoy life in fullness. RHS

Pastoral Reflections

In this text, the Gospel writer juxtaposes two analogies of Jesus. John writes that Jesus is the *shepherd* and he is the *door* through which the sheep enter as they hear his voice call their names. The task isn't to figure out how Jesus could, at one and the same time, be both shepherd and door. Instead, the task is to unpack some of the fullness of John's thinking.

A similar kind of juxtaposition can be seen in *LBW* #314, "Who is This Host Arrayed in White." The second stanza closes with a similar kind of parallel usage. Speaking of the saints in glory the text reads:

"For now they have the best at last:
They keep their sweet eternal feast.
At God's right hand our Lord commands;
He is both *host* and *guest*."

And again, in the closing lines of George Herbert's poem titled "Love," Christ is both *servant* and *meal.*

"And know you not, says Love,
who bore the blame:
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love,
and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat."

Examining these juxtapositions helps us to take a closer look at the fullness that is the Lord's Supper. Jesus is the shepherd who leads and invites by name, the door through which the sheep enter and the lamb who by following is slain. Jesus is the victorious host presiding and the body gathered to receive. Jesus is the Love bearing blame and the meat to sustain.

e. e. cummings once wrote, "There is no way around but through." The depth of this statement is revealed in the ambiguous reality that *through* was the only way around even for our Lord. That *through* was the only way around for the Shepherd to lead. And, that *through* the Door is the only way to follow the Shepherd. But we, the sheep who follow through now, we are saved and will go in and out and find pasture, because, as Peter writes in the second lesson for this day, "He himself [Jesus] bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."

The idea is to listen to the voice of the Shepherd and to follow. The idea is to use the door and joyfully enter. But always, *through* it all, to know that we are following and feasting on the One who is All in all, in whom we have life, and have it abundantly. SN

Jean's Journal

"Now I lay me down to sleep
Exhausted by those dog-gone sheep."

—From "A Shepherd's Lament" by D. L. Salsbury, D.V.M. (written for Paula Simmons, *Raising Sheep the Modern Way*, A Garden Way Publishing Classic (Vermont: Storey Communications, Inc., 1988).

"Strike down the Shepherd and the sheep will scatter, but I will come back and comfort and care for the lambs. They will call upon my name and I will hear them; I will say, 'These are my people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'" Zech 13:7b, 9b (*The Living Bible*).

Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 5, 1996

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:4-10
Acts 17:1-5
John 14:1-14

First Reading

John 14 begins with a few words about the future which are really quite traditional. What Jesus does with these traditional ideas is anything but traditional.

In these words Jesus seems to say, "I am going on my final journey, but there is no reason to be sad, because the purpose of my departure is to prepare for you a room in the great heavenly palace of God. When all is ready, I will return triumphantly and take you from this dying world to live with God in heaven forever."

Jesus speaks much in these verses about "believing" and "knowing" and even "seeing" God and himself, not only in contrast to being terrified, but as an antidote to a life of terror in the world.

And he speaks much of traveling and remaining (or abiding). He is himself traveling on a particular path or way, namely traveling in absolute confidence toward the cross which is the path to God in the Fourth Gospel. That way has the attributes of truth and life, even though the cosmos rejects it as false and deadly. It is actually the only path to God. There is no other way.

What does Philip want? Maybe he hopes he can see God and know God and have benefits from God without Jesus and his path. But the words of Jesus are the words of God, and the way of Jesus is the way of God. It is not possible to gain the future promised in the opening sentence (14:1) by being bystanders, by simply having the right words ringing in our ears, or by watching Jesus move along the path and simply cheering him on. As Kierkegaard said, Jesus wants followers not admirers. He seeks our discipleship not our applause. Of course! Paths are for walking.

And Jesus coaxes his disciples up onto the path, as he elsewhere called Peter out onto the water, beckoning him forward. And it all looks very threatening. In John 14 we hear the voice of the resurrected Jesus, calling us up onto the path of life, up into a life of trust. He calls us up into a life of openness to God in which we will do greater works than Jesus himself has done! What can that mean? Perform more miracles than he did? Deeds worked by many of us, while there was only one of him? Is he talking of the miracle of our being the flesh and blood channels of divine life into the lives of other flesh and blood human beings, a task he once undertook when he himself became flesh and blood (1:14)?

Impossible? Jesus invites us to make supplication to God in his own name, and to wait for miracles to happen (14:13-14). RHS

Pastoral Reflections

It has been very comforting to many, many believers to hear this Gospel text read at a memorial or funeral service celebrating the life of one whom they have loved. That we are promised a God-kept home, a resting place, is at the core of our Christian hope. Therefore, the Liturgy for the Burial of the Dead in the *LBW* includes this text, along with prayers and commendation to restate the promise again and again. Some examples:

You are the rest of the blessed dead; Those most dear to us who rest in you; Receive her into the blessed rest of everlasting peace; Keep our sister, whose body we

now lay to rest, in the company of all your saints.

But this Gospel text and these prayers nudge us beyond the idea that there is a God-kept home for our eternal rest. Even more, we are helped to understand that God's self, God's Christ will be our resting place. Jesus says, "And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself...." *LBW* hymn #497 picks up on this same understanding:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down
Your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
So weary, worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting place,
And he has made me glad."

This hymn articulates the promise that we won't rest only in a place prepared but more in a person resurrected, namely the Christ. And doesn't this truth help us to recognize why we are comforted not only when we read this text and at the time of death, but also when we are in the middle of life? Here we are taught not only about the promises of life eternal, but also about the promises of life temporal.

Even now, we are at rest as we lay to rest those whom we have loved. Even now, we celebrate as we gather around the table to "taste the kindness of the Lord." Even now, we "do the works that Christ did and even greater" because we are united in prayer with the One "who will do all things if we but ask." Even now, those who believe will not be put to shame, but rather called to be "God's own people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."

The words spoken at the time of death are the very words that give us life before death. The place prepared for our resting then is the same One in whom we gladly rest now.

We would not be Thomas and say, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" But rather, by faith, we pray:

"Come, my way, my truth, my life:
Such a way as gives us breath;
Such a truth as ends all strife;
Such a life as conquers death."
—George Herbert, *LBW* #513. SN

Jean's Journal

"I wish people preaching today would put God as the subject of more sentences."
—Dr. Carl Graesser

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 12, 1996

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

First Reading

The Revised Common Lectionary has perpetuated a bad habit of our old lectionary in cutting up John 14. It's bad enough that the first 21 verses are spread over two Sundays (Fifth and Sixth Sundays of Easter). It is just plain terrible to have the climax to the first 21 verses assigned to a different liturgical year altogether. John 14:23-29 appears in Year C for the Sixth Sunday of Easter.

Some of the same words appear in this Sunday's reading which were so prominent in the opening verses of the chapter: the Father, truth, know, abide. But here two fresh words are added: love and Paraclete.

Jesus begins, "If you love me...." Where does that come from? Here the phrase "love me" seems to be the same as "believe in me" (14:1, 11, 12) and "know me" (14:7, 9). This love is the bond of unity between lovers. All three phrases express a nearly inexpressible oneness between Jesus and his own.

One life flows in God and in Christ and in the beloved disciples, and here Jesus names that life: the Spirit of truth or the true and authentic Spirit. The world (the cosmos) rejects and does not know this Spirit, but this Life-Giving Breath, this Divine Wind is with the disciples and in them.

Jesus departs from the world via the cross, moving upwards towards the heart of God, mounting upwards into God on the ladder of the cross, less and less of the world as he travels the cross-way. And as he goes, he does not abandon the disciples, does not leave them "orphans." The NRSV simply and elegantly transliterates the Greek. Jesus' departure via the cross is no forsaking of the disciples. In fact it is grounds for a new, more intimate and more durable bond.

Jesus lives in God and the disciples are in Jesus and Jesus in them. Here is the true and final commentary on John 14:1 with its traditional images of many rooms in a heavenly palace. The dwelling places which Jesus prepares by his dying and ascent and exaltation are the hearts and lives of his disciples. He has withdrawn from sight but has not withdrawn from their lives.

His goal is a great mutual indwelling, resulting in a shared godly life. It is then no alien thing, no rude effort, to want what he wants and to enact his commands. Odd that "commands" should be plural. It all boils down, he says, to a singular "new commandment," namely, that his own love one another (13:34; 15:12). The other evangelists stress love for the neighbor, even love for enemies, but the Fourth Evangelist goes behind those extraverted moves and fixes our minds on the great wellspring and fountain of all spiritual life: oneness with Christ in Christian community. RHS

Pastoral Reflections

The two poles of human existence are presented in this text from the Gospel of John. At the one pole there is desolation and at the other, inspiration.

To be desolate means to be left alone, solitary; deserted, uninhabited, barren, dismal; forlorn, grief stricken and wretched. John's description of desolation includes a world that cannot receive or see or know or love the Christ and his Spirit. Such a world is unquestionably the world in which we live and of which we are a part. There is something about Northern California and the

Sierra Nevada that is desolate. There is something about Berkeley, Oakland, and the San Francisco Bay area that is desolate. There is something about our homes, our parishes, our workplaces that is desolate. The more- than- implied- truth is that there is something about us that is desolate.

For Jesus to say to his disciples, "I will not leave you desolate," implies that there was something about them that, at his departure, would be desolate too. That, at his departure, even though they had seen the Lord, they too would need a power beyond their conjuring that would do for them that which they would not be able to do for themselves, namely keep the faith. They would need a power to be able to receive, see, and know the presence of Christ even when Christ would not be present. And then, in that same power, to love. To love so much as to want to obey the commandments and to keep God's word, "...so that the world might believe... so that the world might know..." (John 17:21 and 23)

From this Gospel text on through chapters 15, 16, and 17, Jesus sets forth what it means when he says, "I will not leave you desolate." He says that "another Counselor" would be given "to be with them forever, even the Spirit of truth."

What does that mean for those of us who believe? Luther says in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed that the Holy Spirit "calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies us and keeps us in the one true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth.... He daily and richly forgives all our sins... and at the Last Day will raise me up with all believers... to eternal life...."

By the power of the Holy Spirit we need not live in the desolation of our sin. In the inspiration, the in-Spirit-ness and the Spirit-in-us-ness given in Christ's name, we know that *the faith will be kept in us.* In the gift of baptism we have received the Holy Spirit poured out upon us. We have been given the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in God's presence. *LBW* p. 124.

This Spirit we know. This Spirit dwells in us and will be with us. This Spirit is under our skin and in the beating of our hearts. In this Spirit, we live in God and God lives in us. SN

Jean's Journal

"The office of the Holy Spirit is to make alive, to brood over Creation in order to hatch it to life." —From *Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 9. Therefore, believing in God is putting all your eggs under one chicken!

The Ascension of Our Lord May 16, 1996

Psalm 47 *or* Psalm 93
Ephesians 1:16-23
Acts 1:1-11
Luke 24:44-53

First Reading

"Ascended into heaven, he sits at the fight hand of God." This language is to a large extent the gift of St. Luke (Luke 24 and Acts 1-2). All our evangelists wrote their Gospels to identify for their audiences who it is whom Christians call "Lord." What kind of Lord or King or Shepherd is he? What kind of realm or dominion or sovereignty does he govern? And most important of all, what does good citizenship under such a sovereign amount to?

Disciples old and new too often answer these questions no better than the eleven did when they encountered Jesus during the forty days between Easter and Ascension. Now that Jesus had taken care of all that unpleasant business of suffering and dying, they felt that his program was back on track and moving forward more powerfully than ever. Now surely is the moment when he will overpower the powers, pull their teeth, exalt a chastened Israel over her enemies, clear out the old rascals and install in their place none other than us, they thought (Acts 1:6; see Luke 22:24; 9:46).

But the sovereign rule of Jesus is qualitatively different. Forget about timetables, Jesus says (Acts 1:7). Leave the future in the hands of God. Turn your energies instead to faithfulness in the present.

And faithful living is not a matter of taking up arms in defense of the heavenly king (see John 18:36). The required power is "power from on high," power from above, the power we call "Holy Spirit, Holy Breath of Life, Holy Storm" (Acts 1:8).

And the citizenry of this realm will grow not by boats and babies (immigration and births) but by words spoken from heart to heart, people bearing witness to their own experiences of Christ's graceful ruling.

Jesus speaks in Acts 1 of leaping over hard, fixed geographical borders: from Jerusalem to all Judea to Samaria (!) to the ends of the earth. That last phrase "the ends of the earth," in the perspective of Luke-Acts, is Rome, way off to the west.

The story of Luke-Acts as a whole is the story of the enthronement of Jesus. The Gospel tells how, through serving and suffering, Jesus was enthroned (on a cross!) as king in Jerusalem, holy city of the Jews. And Acts reports how, through the serving and suffering and witnessing of many, climaxing in the adventures of Paul, the good news of God's new sovereignty in Christ was "enthroned" over Rome, the capital city of the empire of the Caesars. Finally the good news, the proclamation of the new kingship of Christ, did arrive in Rome and was announced "freely and boldly" (Acts 28:31).

How would Luke have us celebrate the Ascension? By sharing with one another, and with all, the liberating news and the life-giving energies of the sovereign Christ. RHS

Pastoral Reflections

According to Luke, Jesus followers were very happy with his (Jesus') ascension. There is no record of anyone saying, "Hey, wait a minute, come back," or "Gee, we barely got started," or "Where is he going, anyway?" No, Luke says that "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God."

Maybe they were so full of joy because they had the opportunity actually to see the Lord.

Or, maybe they were able to accept his sudden departure (again) because he had "opened their minds to understand the scriptures," and their questions were answered. Or maybe they were enthused because they were ready and eager to begin the mission of preaching repentance and forgiveness in Christ's name to all the nations. In any case, the event was one that clearly set their confidence in this crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord.

In our day, one might envy such confidence. We would like, perhaps, to think that we would be so confident were we able to have the experiences of Christ that they had. But, as it is, we haven't, and when life is too tough, too often, we might be found, not in continual worship, but rather in continual questioning: "...*Where IS God?*"

Up in the Sierra foothills, near the small town of Mi-Wuk Village, a road winds through the pine trees toward the town of Sonora. As one drives downhill, there is on the right side of the road a sign with an arrow that points the way to South Fork—Confidence Road. I suppose one could just ride on by. But the South Fork of Confidence Road is there none the less, calling the traveller to journey another way.

Because time and history separate us from those first followers, and from the presence of the earthly Christ, we do journey *another way* to experience the whereabouts of God. We journey in the way of faith. And this is exactly what the Apostle Paul is writing about in his letter to the Ephesians. Everything that they (the Ephesians), or we, or any latter follower needs is given to us in "the immeasurable greatness of God's power in us who believe, according to the working of God's great might which God accomplished in Christ...." Our confidence comes not in locating God, or in devoutly yearning to have been on location at the event of the ascension. No, our confidence comes in the one who enlightens our hearts, who calls us to hope, who gives us the glorious inheritance of all the saints, and who, finally, fills all in all, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And as God fills all in all, God is filling us with faith. So that now we, who are the body of Christ, can *see* Christ's body in one another. So that now we, who have heard and read the Scriptures, can *be* worders of the Word in order to open minds to understand. So that now we, every time we take and eat the body of Christ and take and drink the blood of Christ, we *hold* our future, the world's future in our hands.

South Fork Confidence Road? Sign says, turn here. SN

Jean's Journal

"If you care enough to send the very best, you come yourself—if you're God."
—Dr. Robert Goesser

"For forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, actually alive, and proved to them in many ways that it was really he himself they were seeing." Acts 1:3, *The Living Bible.* One time when he appeared to them, they asked him, "Lord, *now* are you going to really *do* something?" (Acts 1:6, according to Dr. Margie Brown and Rev. Jean Lebbert)

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 19, 1996

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11
Acts 1:(1-7) 8-14
John 17:1-11

First Reading

I complain again about snipping and cutting up a complex, integrated chapter and scattering the bits and pieces over several different Years of our celebration. One way around such fragmentation would be to read aloud only the designated short selection (John 17:1-11 in this case) but exercise your freedom in preaching on the entire chapter if that seems best to you.

The lectionary offers an interesting collection of texts. What they have in common is not simply the idea of community, but the notion of a beleaguered community, a community separated from its social context described in John as "the cosmos," a community with the fiercest attachment to God and the loosest attachment to unbelieving neighbors, a community under pressure and suffering, a community sustained by the exercise of prayer.

All three of the readings work well as a hinge between Easter and Pentecost seasons. In John and Acts Jesus is clearly departing, and he has the needs of the post-Ascension community on his mind. In one sense the community will be on its own, no longer enjoying the old, personal, physical presence of Jesus.

It would be easy to talk about the challenge of the post-Ascension time, to emphasize the need for disciples to live up to their name and be disciplined, to focus on the kind of conduct required for the living of these times, to compare our contemporary Christian conduct unfavorably with the conduct of our earliest Christian ancestors.

But apart from everything else, that strategy would obscure what the texts themselves say about what God and Christ are doing. And the texts focus on that at least as much as they speak about what Christian people are doing or are supposed to do.

No doubt we need to stoke up our own spiritual lives and get into better prayer habits. But the wonder of John 17 is not that it calls on us to pray but that it describes Jesus as praying, and he is praying for us. And in Acts the Holy Spirit is brooding over the whole scene and is about to descend upon the disciples. And in 1 Peter, the Spirit of God's glory rests upon the community, and we have that wonderful declaration, "Throw all your care upon God, because God cares about you." God is the God of all grace who has invited you to his eternal glory in Christ.

Jesus prays in John 17 that his disciples might be one, as he and the Father are one. He prays that we might not be broken, splintered, fragmented, distracted, schizophrenic or polytheistic but that we might be one, integrated, centered, and whole. Oneness in John means having all the elements of our lives gathered up and held in the heart of God, so that we are secure and free and loving beings, no matter what our external circumstances may be. A great prayer to guide us all the way through the Pentecost Season. RHS

Pastoral Reflections

Have you ever noticed how Jesus is always in the middle? Artists depict him in the middle of the Last Supper. The Bible says that he was often in the middle of a crowd and in the middle of trouble. He is the middle person in the Holy Trinity, and he was in the middle between two thieves on Calvary.

Maybe a helpful way of talking about the high priestly prayer of Jesus is to say it is the one in which Jesus is always in the middle.

This very simple understanding of Jesus' high priestly prayer doesn't even begin to get at the complexity of the content contained therein. But it is useful when it comes to helping us see that God is very near and knows what is going on in the middle of our lives. Many say we are sorely lacking connections in our ever-growing, ever changing society.

But the mission of God's Christ is to reveal just how wrapped-up in the middle of our world, how connected with each of us, God has chosen to become. Connectedness is what Jesus is praying about when he closes this prayer asking that all might be one, just as he and the Father are one.

Of course, God's Christ doesn't just land in the middle of our lives by magic. We say that it is the work of the Holy Spirit. But even the Holy Spirit works through some means to make known God's will and grace. Bobby Knight, the basketball coach, is known to have stood in the middle of the basketball court and say to his players time and time again, "You've got to get in position to get in position." That is to say, a player can't simply float from half-court to the top of the key to under the rim to making the basket without taking some steps to get in position to get in position.

The Spirit of Christ is hard at work in us, calling us to "get in position to get in position."

We might do so in these ways: First, by believing Jesus' high priestly prayer that says we are already one with God and not by adding more meaningless peripheral rules to our regime. Second, by listening to the call of the Spirit as it comes to us in the reading and proclaiming of the Word, and then in being bearers of that Word to one another. By the power of Christ's Spirit, we will be changed. We will begin to hear our words and see our ways change in the middle of our relationships. Third, we "get in position to get in position" by kneeling to receive the sacrament again and again and again. By the power of God's Spirit, its benefits won't run out and by the power of our faith we will be strengthened in Christ's presence. And finally, we pray without ceasing, knowing that the Spirit helps us in our weakness... and intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words (Rom 8:26). Here, in the middle of prayer, we meet the Christ again, exchanging our sin for grace, our despair for hope, our death for life. SN

Jean's Journal

"The more you join with people in their joys and sorrows, the more nearer and dearer they come to be to you.... But it is sorrow and trouble that brings you the nearest." —Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer Abroad*

The Day of Pentecost
May 26, 1996

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

Pastoral Reflections

Several different ideas come to mind regarding the Feast of Pentecost.

The first idea: The second stanza of *LBW* #497, "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," picks up on the reading from John 7.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one;
Stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him."

You've heard them all before: "Coke is the real thing".... "Got milk?".... "Tea for two." Now there are billboards around the Sacramento area that say it best for when you're *really* thirsty. They advertise Crystal water as H 2 Ahhhhhhhhh.....

The third stanza of the hymn picks up the John 20 text. Sitting there in the dark, the fear-filled disciples were transformed. Their sadness was changed to gladness when they saw the Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit they "got a life."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,
And all your day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Til trav'ling days are done."

The second idea: In Rome there are hours and hours worth of people from around the world lined up every day to see the Sistine Chapel. Once the doors open, crowds and crowds of people pour through the chapel in order to see Michelangelo's famous painting. In the midst of the ongoing tumult, there is one uniformed guard who holds his post in the chancel area. While he's standing there with head held high, he opens his mouth and from his lips come, "shhhhhhh, shhhhhhh, shhhhhhhh." "Shhhhhhhhh, shhhhhhhhhh, shhhhhhhhhhh." Then he pauses for about 30 seconds, until again, "shhhhhhhh, shhhhhhh, shhhhhhhhh." And the cadence continues all through the day. A still small voice? A sound come from heaven? The rush of a mighty wind?

The third idea: A colleague, while typing a paper on the work of the Holy Spirit, ran the spell checker. Interestingly, the spell checker had never heard of the Paraclete, and it suggested that "percolator" might be used instead.

The fourth idea: In Paris, France, we saw pilgrims making their way from Notre Dame to Chartres Cathedral. Following the custom of pilgrimage that grew in popularity during the 12th and 13th centuries, people young and old (infants in pushed strollers and elders with canes) filed behind their priests who were vested in cassock and surplus, sun hat and hiking boots. For three days they walked with their colorful banners, most of the while chanting in French. What we saw was an amazing and moving demonstration of faith. But even more, what we were seeing was really the unseen. What we were seeing was the unseen work of the

Holy Spirit moving people into faith and hope and new life. The pilgrimage was and is the pilgrimage of the Holy Spirit *in us.* It is the Spirit, relentlessly traveling the heights and depths of our hearts and minds, journeying the countryside between doubt and faith, spanning the miles between life and death and life again. All of this on Whit Monday, the day after the Feast of Pentecost. SN

Jean's Journal

"[When the gospel] enters your heart and you sincerely believe in Christ you do not remain your former self."
—From *Luther's Works* 22:371.

Graffiti on a Queens Street west wall: "When we light a candle at midnight, we say to the darkness, 'We beg to differ.'"
—From Dr. Herbert Anderson, "Modern Maladies of the Soul," *The Lutheran*, May 1, 1991.

Dictionary trivia: Spirit level: a glass tube containing a bubble in liquid, used to check horizontal and vertical surfaces. (After all, Jesus *was* the son of a carpenter!)

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The Word Made Flesh

Richard A. Jensen
Director of Covenant Cluster Planning

Advent is a wonder-full season of the year. As I write this in the season of Advent I watch the world and the church get ready for Christmas. Not that these are equal preparations! The world's preparation is fundamentally about commerce. The church's preparation is focused on the birth of him who is the *word made flesh incarnate among us.* Christmas spirituality is centered on a baby in diapers, a baby sucking at Mary's breast. "This is the only God we ever get," Luther once said. Christmas spirituality is a spirituality that is deep in the flesh. Out of Mary's womb he came in blood and tears. In a manger stall he took his place alongside the animals. Angels sang and shepherds came to celebrate the birth of God in human form deep in the flesh.

The Christian church receives from this event some of the basic lineaments of its understanding of *spirituality.* True spirituality, bespeaks the Christmas event, is a spirituality grounded in the stuff of the earth. It is in, with and under the stuff of this earth—words and water and bread and wine—that God meets us in the flesh yet today. Christian spirituality begins with the stuff of this life. Christian spirituality begins where the word becomes flesh and finds its fruition in deeds of love for real live neighbors in real live need.

Spirituality is a rage in our culture today. This spirituality sponsored by the world, however, is not usually a spirituality born deep in the flesh. A few years ago a very interesting book by Harold Bloom titled *The American Religion* was published. Bloom identifies himself in his book as a Gnostic Jew. In his book Bloom argues that "the American religion" is basically a revival of gnosticism. Bloom defines gnosticism as follows:

> ...the gnostics, in a narrow sense, were a proto-Christian sect of the second century of the common Era, whose broad beliefs centered in two absolute convictions: the Creation, of the world and of mankind in its present form, was the same event as the Fall of the world and of man, but humankind has in it a spark or breath of the uncreated, of God, and that spark can find its way back to the uncreated, unfallen world, in a solitary act of knowledge. (p. 27)

Gnosticism, that is, reflects an ancient Greek dualism between the divine and the human; between the spiritual and the material worlds. Bloom is convinced that the religion that has arisen in America (as opposed to the religions that were imported here from Europe) basically follows this gnostic script. He maintains that the sects that arose in 19th century America were basically gnostic in nature: Mormonism, Christian Science, Seventh Day Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostalism. Twentieth century sects and cults that have arisen in

America also live out of gnosticism, according to Bloom. (This is certainly true of Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, and others.) His wildest claim is that American Baptists are really gnostic at heart. The Mormons and the Baptists, Bloom claims, dominate the religious landscape in America making this land a land of gnostic spirituality.

Gnostic spirituality, according to Bloom, is a spirituality of the spirit. The created world is a fallen world. We need to escape this materialistic world. Fortunately we do have the *inner spiritual resources* to enable our escape. We can escape the world of creation and be creators again. We can return to our true home in God. Frankly, much of what I see of the new spirituality in America does appear to live out of this script. Such a spirituality wants nothing to do with a word made flesh. There is a spirituality among us that wants to escape the flesh and the world around us and move toward the divine that is within us.

Theologically speaking, Gnosticism violates two fundamental realities of the Christian faith. First, it insists that the created order is evil. This stands in direct opposition to the story of creation in Genesis 1 wherein God sees the world God makes and says, "it is very good." Secondly, gnosticism blurs the distinction between the creator and the created. In the biblical story God the creator creates us as creatures. The story in Genesis 3 makes it clear that to wish to "be like god" is a fundamental temptation of the human spirit. Equality with God is not a thing to be grasped. (Phil 2:6)

The spirituality fostered by gnosticism is a spirituality that leaves the world behind! It says that we have within ourselves divine resources that can enable us to rejoin the creator and triumph over the physical universe that will to hold us in bondage.

The word became flesh for us that we might become flesh for others! That's the heart of Christian spirituality.

This is a spirituality that begins within ourselves and finds its home in the divine world. This is an attractive message: we are really gods who can save ourselves from the evils of this world.

Christian spirituality, in contrast, begins with the conviction that we are sinful human beings who need help from the creating and redeeming God to bring wholeness to life in the good world that God made. Christian spirituality would do well to begin with the revelation of God come-into-our-world in the word made flesh. *The focus of this spirituality is outside of ourselves.* The goal of this spirituality is such transformation of human life that our lives can be lived for our neighbors in this world.

The message of the Christmas season, the message of the word become flesh and dwelling among us, is the touchstone of a genuine Christian spirituality. Let us keep this earthly Christ of Christmas squarely in the middle of our conversations concerning Christian spirituality. The word became flesh for us that we might become flesh for others! That's the heart of Christian spirituality—a spirituality grounded deep in the flesh!

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