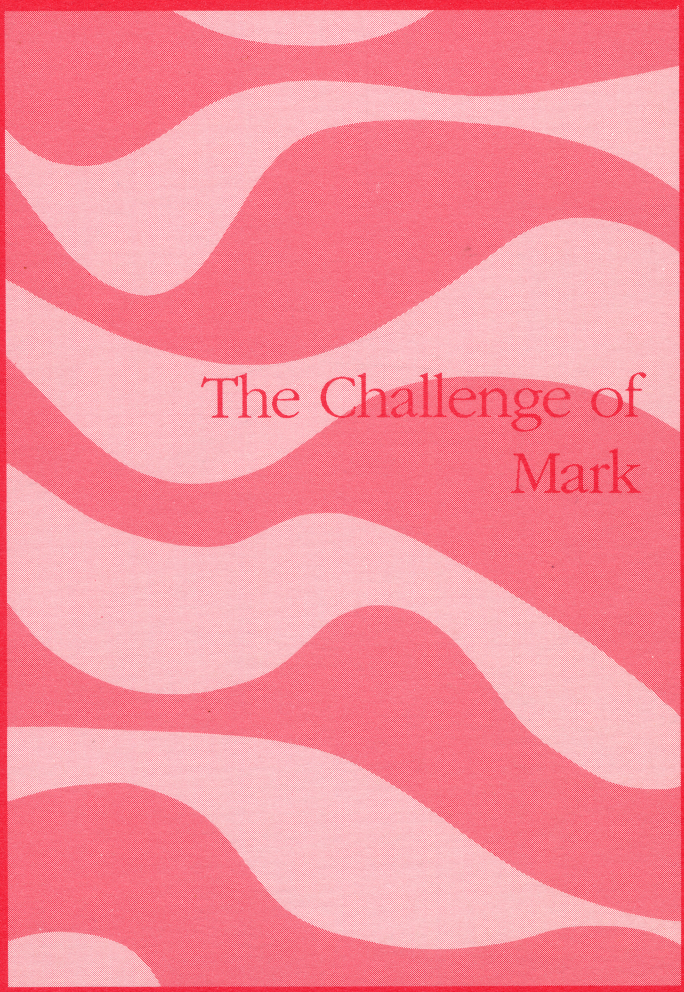
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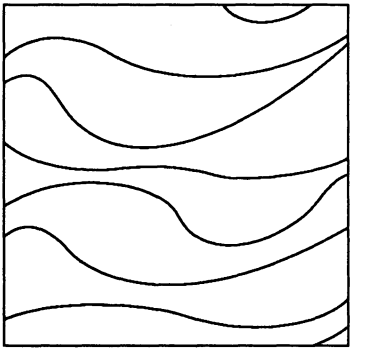
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The Challenge of Mark

Mark takes fewer than twenty pages in the NRSV, but it is plenty long enough to be the main Gospel for the 1993-1994 church year. Preachers who take texts seriously know that Mark is deceptively simple. Narrative critics today—a category hardly known twenty years ago when *Currents* got started—marvel at the intricate structure of this Gospel and the brilliance with which it portrays characters in only a few words. The closer those characters are to the author's own peasant origins, the more realistic and flexible are the portrayals. Still Mark is a book with an abrupt beginning and end, a Gospel without a nativity, without an ascension, and without a Pentecost. This first Gospel, for better not for worse, will be our weekly companion for the next twelve months.

Everett R. Kalin reminds us that the central section of Mark's Gospel is about Christology and ecclesiology, about who Jesus is and who the disciples are invited to be. The way of the cross for Jesus is the issue over which God's thoughts are distinguished from human thoughts, and thus the issue over which the community gathered around Jesus stands or falls. To follow Jesus is to deny oneself instead of denying him. To see Jesus is to serve and to follow, to the cross if necessary. In the final verse of the book the reader is asked: Will you, out of fear, say nothing to anyone about the crucified and risen Lord or will you go to meet him in order to participate in a ministry of service, open to the cup and the baptism it may entail?

Frederick A. Niedner suggests we ought to read or hear Mark as a drama. The way in which recognition finally occurs in Mark is a crucial element of the Markan theology of the cross and the dramatic effect this Gospel has on readers or hearers. Mark's Gospel joins into one the drama of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and the drama of the audience's life, death, and resurrection. The Gospel of Mark creates a community of faithful cross bearers who are prepared to die faithfully so that Christ might be revealed to whatever befuddled disciples, blinded

haters, and crusty, old centurions are hanging around the death scenes in today's world.

Mark I. Wegener employs reader response criticism and focuses on the world in front of the text. Mark's story, consisting of six scenes, a prologue, and a sequel, provokes readers into rejecting the disciples' attitude and encourages them into affirming Jesus' program. It lures readers into interacting with Jesus, whose willingness to give of himself for others climaxes in his execution by crucifixion. Mark's story frees people from the compulsion to act in selfish and self-aggrandizing modes; it enables them to empathize with the needs of others and to work toward goals which will enhance their mutual self-interest and their shared values. It frees them mentally and spiritually from being stymied by the fears of death and failure; then it empowers them physically and psychologically so they can better follow Jesus' agenda of self-giving service to others.

Richard W. Swanson concentrates on Mark's enigmatic and powerful ending and identifies three offenses: the women flee at the end of the story after the narrative has set the reader up to expect them to do well; the preceding story ends in powerful violence; Mark is long on Good Friday and short on Easter. When one enters this story through the offenses, the story's realistic account of death, violence, and disaster establishes links with readers who know this experience from the hard task of living. Wordless disciples look continually for words that will embody God's rejection of violence and promise of life to all the creation. Without the offense, the reader dismisses the ache that makes this story true.

James LaGrand examines the first miracle recorded in Mark and reflects on the role of miracles throughout this Gospel. The initial exorcism shows the messiah ready to do battle against the forces of evil, and the evil spirits know that Jesus has come to destroy them. Mark's first miracle story indicates that the evangelist believed not only in the power of God but also in other powers, specifically the power of the unclean spirit. It is the coming together of divinity and humanity in the messiah, as announced in the first line of Mark's Gospel, which makes this miracle story, and the ones that follow, understandable by faith. Mark guarded his readers against the false claims of signs and wonders,

but he and we affirm that the created universe is in fact miraculous. Consider these two miracles: Jesus cast out demons; Jesus liberates us from sin and death.

Amid this focus on Mark, **Barbara Lindberg** and **John R. Seraphine** call our attention to the "whole language" movement in education and its potential for the educational ministry of the church. The reigning philosophy of public education often neglects the individuality of pupils and teachers, the need to foster enthusiasm and skills for life-long learning, and the social context of learning. Whole language got its name from its insistence on involving students in the process of literacy through immersion in real literature. Similarly, whole faith Christian education would involve people in reading larger segments and whole books of the Bible. A learning approach built on whole language would give our members practice in critical thinking about life in mission. All we do together in the parish has learning potential. The key to the success of collaborative learning in the church is the belief that God did not go out of business with the completion of the Book of Revelation.

Margaret Sprowl told the Christmas story in her context to **Maria Wette,** who in turn helped her tell that story for publication in this issue. What if the first Christmas had been with trappers and Inuits in Manitoba instead of with shepherds and magi in the ancient Near East? What Margaret did in this story we all must do if the "once for all" is to be also "for us and for our salvation."

An anonymous woman once "crowned" Jesus as a messiah on the way to the cross (Mark 14:3-9). Was this an act of self-sacrificing obedience or merely the waste of a year's wages on perfume? Mary Ann Tolbert concludes from this story that helping the poor is a constant requirement of the moral life, but it does not substitute for personal acts of love for individuals in particular need—or vice versa! Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world also this year, what this anonymous woman did will be told in memory of her.

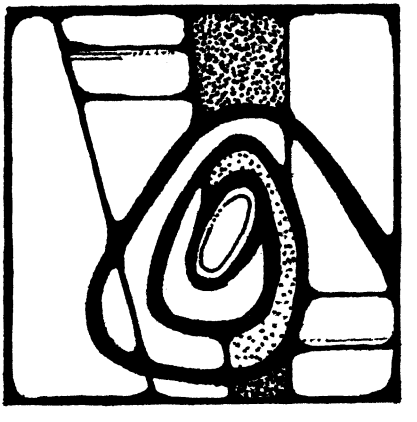
This challenging Gospel of Mark is so wondrously simple—for us and our salvation.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

"That I May See": Christology and Ecclesiology in Mark

Everett R. Kalin
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

"What do you want me to do for you?" This is the question Jesus asks blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:51, and Bartimaeus' answer is part of the title of this article: "That I may see." Jesus asks John and James the identical question fifteen verses earlier (10:36); their very different answer will be discussed below. As you begin to read this article about reading the Gospel of Mark, I invite you to hear Jesus' question to Bartimaeus in a different context. In a sense, each time you read this Gospel, you



are being asked *by Mark*, "What do you want *me* to do for *you*?"[1]

You might be coming to Mark with any number of desires, and you realize that Mark is better equipped to meet some needs than others.[2] So you are in a situation like the one you experience when you go to someone's house for dinner and they start with cocktails. You are asked, "What would you like?" and your reflexive answer is, "What have you got?" The answer to that question will limit and focus your choices.

The subtitle of this article, "Christology and Ecclesiology in Mark," has already limited and focused your choices before you even have a chance to say what you want Mark to do for you. But I believe that Mark's view of Jesus and Mark's view of the community gathered around Jesus[3] are (1) inextricably related and (2) at the heart of what Mark has to offer. They are Mark's principal answer to "What have you got?" The Gospel begins with a christological focus, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." It ends in 16:8 with a host of unanswered questions about the followers of Jesus. And its central section, this article's principal focus, ties Christology and ecclesiology together. I begin by presenting an outline of Mark (taken from Helmut Koester) that makes 8:27–10:52 its central section:

1:1-13—introduction: the beginning of the gospel
1. 1:14-8:26—the ministry in Galilee
2. 8:27-10:52—from Galilee toward the passion in Jerusalem
3. 11:1-15:41—the Jerusalem ministry and the passion
15:42-16:8—conclusion: burial and empty tomb.

Before I fill in the outline with descriptions (mostly my own rather than Koester's) of what each section contains, I want to make an observation and then propose a slight modification of Koester's outline.

---

[1] When I say that you are being asked this question by "Mark," I am deliberately using a word that can stand either for the book or its author. Some people try to discover what the author's intention might have been, while others insist that that is both an impossible and an illegitimate task and invite us to concentrate on the meaning(s) inherent in the text itself, which is all we have. I find a focus on the text itself very fruitful, but I have no interest in abandoning altogether a quest for the author's intention and for possible situations that might have evoked the text, difficult as that quest may be. In any case, the reader's role in the interpretive task is highlighted by having the author/text ask about the reader's intentions.

[2] When it came to be widely believed that Mark was the earliest canonical gospel, it was thought to offer a historically reliable picture of the ministry of Jesus (in contrast to the "theological" portrait in John, for instance). We now recognize that Mark is a mix of history and theology and that it cannot offer us a chronology of Jesus' ministry, a window into his psychological development, or an "objective" storehouse of information on Jesus' pre-crucifixion words and deeds.

[3] In the title I speak of Mark's "ecclesiology," and here I use the phrase Mark's "view of the community gathered around Jesus"; I intend those to be the same and to be essentially equal to Mark's "view of discipleship." For a discussion of discipleship, community, and ecclesiology in Mark and of the question whether the twelve are meant to represent the followers as a whole or a smaller group within the community, see Philip G. Davis, "Christology, Discipleship, and Self-Understanding in the Gospel of Mark," in *Self-definition and Self-discovery in Early Christianity*, ed. David J. Hawkin and Tom Robinson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 111-19.

The observation: one of the things I have liked about Koester's outline is that at the conclusion of each main section of the gospel there is a granting of (in)sight. In 8:22-26 we have the two-stage cure of the man who saw better and then saw clearly; in 10:46-52 we have the granting of sight to Bartimaeus; and in 15:39 the centurion at the cross sees how Jesus dies and makes the Gospel's central confession: "Truly this man was God's Son!"

It is precisely this understanding of sight that leads me to propose a slight alteration in the outline. One of Mark's favorite devices is to frame one item by another. In Mark, for instance, the story of the cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14) and the withering of the fig tree, which is noticed by the disciples only on the next day (11:20-24; contrast Mt 21:18-22) surround the story of Jesus' action in the temple (11:15-19), thereby providing the framework for understanding it (as an action of "judgment" rather than of "cleansing").

So my proposal for outline alteration is this: rather than seeing *the two grantings of sight* as the conclusions of the first and second main sections of Mark, I propose that they are the framing of the central section of the Gospel, which contains the quintessence of what Mark wants the reader to see.

1:1-13—introduction: the beginning of the gospel
1. 1:14-8:21—the ministry in Galilee
- *Jesus announces that the reign of God is at hand*
- *mighty deeds of the reign of God/ commands for silence*
- *uncomprehending disciples*

8:22-26—sight given to someone who is blind
2. 8:27-10:45—from Galilee toward the passion in Jerusalem
- *the way of the cross for Jesus and his followers*
- *three passion predictions: 8:31, 9:31, 10:32-34*
- *resisting disciples*

10:46-52—sight given to someone who is blind
3. 11:1-15:41—the Jerusalem ministry and crucifixion
- *Jesus teaches and is rejected, arrested and condemned*
- *the crucifixion, the ultimate granting of sight (15:39)*
- *fleeing disciples*

15:42-16:8—conclusion: burial and resurrection
- *what about the disciples?*
- *what about the reader?*

The central section of Mark's Gospel, 8:27–10:45, precisely the section about which the reader is invited to get (in)sight, is about Christology and ecclesiology, that is, about who Jesus is and about who the disciples (and thereby the readers) are invited to be. That is, it is about the way of the cross for Jesus and his followers.

The Christology of the central section of Mark

That Christology is central to the central section of Mark is clear. The section begins with Jesus' questions about who people and the disciples say that he is (8:27-30) and ends with his own assessment of his mission—serving—and his fate—giving his life as a ransom for many (10:45). In between, tying everything together, are the three passion predictions.

Mark 8:27-33 is a dramatic and crucial introduction to what Mark invites the reader to *see* (i.e. understand) about Jesus. First the disciples are asked who people think

In Mark's Gospel the cross is the place par excellence at which it can be seen, and thereby confessed, who Jesus is.

Jesus is, and they respond: John the Baptist (raised from the dead), Elijah, or one of the prophets. The reader awaits with anticipation the answer to the question Jesus then asks the disciples themselves, "And who do *you* say that I am?" Has the first main section of Mark (1:14-8:21) prepared us to be optimistic or pessimistic about the disciples' insight into so crucial an issue?

They start so well, immediately leaving livelihood and family to follow him (1:16-20), and they go out, preach repentance, cast out demons, and anoint and cure the sick (6:12-13). But insight is not a strong suit. They have already "asked the christological question" once of themselves, filled with fear and lacking faith as they see Jesus still the storm: "*Who then is this*, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41). They have no answer. And although in chapter 4 Jesus contrasts those outside, who look without perceiving and listen without understanding (see Isaiah 6) with "those around him with the twelve," to whom the mystery of the kingdom of God is given (4:11-12), the first section of the gospel climaxes with Jesus asking *the disciples*, "Do you have eyes and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?" (see Isaiah 6). The very last words of the first main section of Mark are this question to the disciples, "Do you not yet understand?" (8:21). They have no answer—which is, of course, the answer.

So now, at the beginning of the central section of Mark, in which the reader is invited to *see* who Jesus is, the disciples are asked, "Who do *you* say that I am?" Peter answers on their behalf, "You are the Christ." Is that *right* (i.e., is that who Mark sees Jesus to be)? In the Matthean parallel Peter's answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," *is* right, *really* right (Jesus calls him blessed, tells him the answer came by divine revelation, names him Peter, the Rock, and tells him the impregnable church will be built precisely on that rock—Mt 16:15-19). But in Mark is it right? In a book that begins, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus *(the) Christ*, the Son of God," it must be at least partly so.

But it is not the principal thing that Mark invites the reader to see about Jesus. The task of revealing *the* correct perspective *on* Jesus Mark entrusts *to* Jesus. Jesus words set off a firestorm of controversy that itself reveals that Jesus' words about himself and how one responds to them are precisely the article on which the church stands or falls, the rock on which it is built or over which it stumbles.

> Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (Mk 8:31-33, NRSV).

After asking who the disciples say he is and getting the answer the Messiah, Jesus says that the Son of Man must suffer and die.

Thereby he *is*, and he is *not* changing the subject, if the subject is who he is. Point one: he *is* changing the subject in the sense that he does not at this point supply his own—and therefore obviously correct—christological title, the Son of Man, in place of wrong ones, John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets, or a partially correct one, the Messiah. He is speaking of his fate, not offering a different title.[4] Point two: by speaking of his death on the cross Jesus *is not* going away from the subject of who he is, because in Mark's Gospel *the cross is the place par excellence at which it can be seen, and thereby confessed, who Jesus is.* That is what Mk 15:39 shows us so clearly: "When the centurion, who stood facing him, *saw that he died in this way*, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'"

The centurion's confession in Mark came when he saw that Jesus died "in this way" (*houtos*). What was the way Jesus died in Mark? "They all forsook him and fled" (14:50) is the beginning of a litany of forsaking, mocking, and reviling. And Jesus' one word from the cross in Mark is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[5] What the centurion sees in Mark is the Jesus who appears to die forsaken and alone.

What evoked the centurion's confession in Mark is seen more clearly when it is contrasted with the parallel in Matthew. Mark: v. 37, Jesus utters a loud cry and dies; v. 38, the temple curtain is torn in two; v. 39, "When the centurion saw that he died in this way... [i.e., on the outermost margin of human life], he said...." Matthew 27:50-54: Jesus utters a loud cry and dies; the temple curtain tears; an earthquake opens tombs and many of the dead are raised; after the resurrection they come out of the tombs, go into the holy city and appear to many. See what evokes the confession now (27:54): "Now when the centurion and those with him [it is now a chorus of confessors]... *saw the earthquake and what took place*, they were terrified and said, 'Truly, this was God's Son.'" What ever happened to the death of this solitary man "on the outermost margin of human life"?

So, in Mark 15:39, the central confession of the Gospel comes when the centurion sees how Jesus dies. Returning to Mark 8:31, this confirms that for Mark the passion prediction about Jesus' death is meant to be a key to who he is, a clue to what Mark wants us to see about him in this section (8:27–10:45) about the granting of sight. In fact, it is precisely what the reader is to see; the passion prediction is followed by the words, "He made this very clear to them" (Mk 8:32 TEV; these words remind us of the blind man whose sight was partially restored and who then "saw everything clearly," Mk 8:25 TEV).

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[4] Although this article is in part about Markan Christology, it is not primarily about christological titles—Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, or the like—and which one Mark would prefer. But in so far as Mark does have a preference, it would seem to be Son of God. The Gospel opens, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Already at the first Mark has told us what he wishes to tell us. God attests the same thing, saying at the baptism/anointing with the Spirit, "You are my beloved Son" (1:11), and saying on the mount of transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son" (9:7). And all doubt is removed when the centurion at the cross makes this Gospel's central confession, "Truly this man was God's Son!" (15:39). On christological titles in Mark and Markan Christology in general, see Jack Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

[5] Contrast Jesus' only word from the cross in Mark with his last word in Luke, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (23:46).

Peter, in fact, saw everything so clearly that he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, whereupon Jesus, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." In Matthew, for making the good confession, Simon gets a new name, Peter, the Rock (Mt 16:18); in Mark, for resisting a Jesus identified with the way of the cross, he gets a new name as well, Satan![6] The way of the cross for Jesus is the issue over which God's thoughts are distinguished from human thoughts, and thus the issue over which the community gathered around Jesus stands or falls. It has taken only seven verses of Mark's central section to hammer home that point.

And that point continues to be the point of the rest of 8:27–10:45. The other two passion predictions (9:31, 10:32-34) underscore this emphasis, as do other passages in this section, 9:12 and 10:38. But the point is made above all by noting that the section that begins by asking who Jesus is ends with a reference to his mission and his fate: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark does not speak much about the *saving significance* of Jesus' death (cf. 14:24, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many"). But it can be no accident that the central section of this Gospel, the section about (in)sight, closes with this statement about why he came: "to give his life a ransom for many."

That statement is preceded by a statement about the purpose of his whole life and ministry. It will conclude this treatment of the Christology of Mark's section on sight and introduce a much briefer treatment of the ecclesiology of this section of Mark: "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...."

The ecclesiology of the central section of Mark

The central section of Mark is not only about the identity, mission, and fate of Jesus; it is also about the mission and fate of the followers of Jesus. And these two issues are shown to be intimately connected. The verse that concludes the section, 10:45, which is about the mission and fate of Jesus, the Son of Man (to serve, to give his life a ransom for many), is preceded by a reference to the mission of the followers and the indication that their mission is to be a certain way *because* the Son of Man's is: "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. *For* the Son of Man came... to serve...." That the followers of Jesus are to be people who eschew power and prestige and live to serve others is a central point of the final pericope of the central section of the Gospel; it is a point that is itself "sandwiched" between the third passion prediction (10:32-34) and the saying about the Son of Man as servant and as one whose death is a ransom for many.

James and John ask Jesus to do for them whatever they want, and he asks them the question he will ask Bartimaeus several verses later in the framing story about (in)sight: "What do you want me to do for you?" They answer: "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." This is not his to grant, he says, and besides, those are concerns of the Gentiles, of the world at large (their request is the

[6] Matthew, of course, has a parallel to this word about Satan (Luke does not), so in Matthew Simon becomes both the rock (*petra*, 16:18) *and* the stumbling block (*skandalon*, 16:23).

quintessence of setting one's mind on human things and not divine things, 8:33). In the community around him everything is (to be) different: primacy and greatness are servant categories. In the course of the conversation Jesus asks James and John if they can drink the cup he is to drink or be baptized with the baptism he is to undergo (i.e., can they, like him, die for the sake of the gospel?). They say they are able, and then Jesus makes a pronouncement that will be seen to have implications for how we understand the puzzling conclusion of Mark's Gospel: "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized" (10:39). The final passage in Mark's central section is both about Jesus' mission and fate (to serve, to give his life) and about his followers' mission (to serve), and, in respect to two of his followers, at least, about their fate as well (to drink the cup).

The opening passage of the central section is similarly not only about Jesus' death, but also about that of his followers. After saying that his way is to be a way to the cross (8:31), Jesus tells the crowd, along with his disciples, what following him entails: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (8:34). The way of the cross is for the followers as well as for their Lord. They may well—the world being what it is, the opposition to their Lord and his gospel being what it is—face death for confessing him. In light of the coming of the Son of Man and the imminent coming of the kingdom with power, to follow Jesus is to deny oneself instead of denying him (8:35-9:1).

Elsewhere in the central section of Mark we are told that those who leave all to follow Jesus get eternal life in the age to come and that what they get now in this age, in hundredfold measure, is a new community and a community of goods, *with persecutions* (10:28-30). Mark 13 underscores the fact that the followers of Jesus will be handed over, beaten, brought to trial, betrayed, killed, and hated by all (13:9-13). It is hard to escape the idea that the Gospel of Mark is written to a community facing persecution for the sake of their Lord and his gospel, and that the book is meant to encourage them to hold on: "the one who endures to the end will be saved" (13:13).

> Mark is not only about the identity, mission, and fate of Jesus; it is also about the mission and fate of the followers of Jesus.

The two grantings of sight, 8:22-26 and 10:46-52, frame what Mark wants the readers to see about themselves and Jesus, the way of the cross for Jesus and his followers. To see is to serve and to follow, to the cross if necessary. When asked "What do you want me to do for you?" John and James wanted the glory at the right and left hand (10:37). When Bartimaeus was asked the identical question, he replied, "That I may see" (10:51). "And immediately he received his sight *and followed him on the way*" (10:52). To see is not just to see but to follow. On the way to where? The very next verse begins Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

How does Mark's story about Christology and ecclesiology end?

The christological story ends as the central section said it would, with a confession evoked by seeing Jesus die forsaken and by the vindication and resurrection of the one who died forsaken. The young man at the tomb says this to the women who come to anoint his body: "you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him" (Mk 16:7).

How does the ecclesiological story end? Do the followers follow? Earlier it did not look promising. "They all forsook him and fled" (14:50), and Jesus' good confession before the high priest is framed with the vehement denial by Peter that he even knew him (14:53-72). Yet all is not lost. The "all" who forsook him and fled apparently does not include the faithful women who have come to anoint him. They had been at the cross, looking on from a distance (15:40-41). Some of them used to *follow him* (*akoloutheō*; cf. 8:34; 10:52) and *minister to him* (*diakoneō*; cf. 10:43-45) in Galilee, while many other women had come up with him to Jerusalem. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza uses these women in Mark as one of her examples of "Women as Paradigms of True Discipleship," and as models par excellence of the love, service and willingness to suffer for the gospel to which Jesus calls all his followers.[7] And now these faithful women followers are told to tell denying Peter and the deserting disciples that Jesus will see them in Galilee. Mark 16:7 contains these promising words: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." There would be a reunion, a rehabilitation, and a renewal of the invitation to be disciples.

Yet Mark has one more verse, which reads as follows: "So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mk 16:8 NRSV). Is this the end of the story that begins, "The beginning of the gospel ["the good news"!] about Jesus Christ, the Son of God?" What kind of gospel, what kind of good news is that? And if that is the ending, how are we to answer our question, how *does* the ecclesiological story end? With fearful, silent women and disciples who are *not* reunited with their Lord?[8]

For some the fear of the women is not seen as necessarily negative. This fear has long been interpreted by some as a kind of numinous fear, a holy awe, that accompanies revelatory events. How else would one respond to earth-shattering, world-overturning news of this kind? And Schüssler Fiorenza says that the women's fear was a well-grounded fear of being found at the tomb of someone executed and risking arrest by being associated with that person. She further associates the "they said nothing to anyone" with the "public at large" and not the disciples whom they were to tell. Her analogy is Mk 1:44, where Jesus tells the leper who was healed, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest...."[9] But understanding the

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[7] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 315-23.

[8] Mark's ending seemed impossible to those who transmitted the text (Mk 16:9-20 is an early addition). It seemed impossible as well to one of this Gospel's earliest users, Matthew. Mark 16:8 became Matthew 28:8: "So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (even having a meeting with Jesus on the way).

[9] Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 322.

women's fear as holy awe founders on Mark's understanding of fear, which is negative and the opposite both of faith and understanding (4:40-41, to give just one example). And I find Schüssler Fiorenza's resort to Mark 1:44 far-fetched. The two situations seem almost totally opposite to me. "Almost totally" because, paradoxically, the one thing the women and the leper have in common is that they both disobey what they are told to do ("*But* they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" [16:8]; "*But* [the leper] went out and began to proclaim it freely..." [1:45]). The women, whom Schüssler Fiorenza so helpfully portrays as models of faithful discipleship, also fail.

In *Mark—Traditions in Conflict*, Theodore Weeden offers a quite different understanding of the ending of Mark's Gospel.[10] Because of the silence of the women the disciples are never told about the resurrection, never meet Jesus again, and never are rehabilitated, according to Weeden's reading of the ending of Mark. Weeden understands Mark to be countering a view of Jesus as a "divine man" attested by miracles, whose followers display their own authority by miracle-working powers. By the ending Mark discredits both the disciples and their divine man Christology, replacing it with a Christology that focuses on Jesus' cross and an ecclesiology that calls the true followers of Jesus to suffering service.

Before directly commenting on Weeden's understanding of the ending, a word about his premise that Mark champions a Christology and an ecclesiology focused on suffering service as a foil to a divine man Christology and ecclesiology focusing on miracles. It should be clear to the reader of this article that I see Mark focused on the cross both for Jesus and his followers. But this is not in itself meant to be a repudiation of an alleged divine man Christology or a denigration of miracles as one aspect of the manifestation of Jesus' authority and of the breaking in of the reign of God.[11] The way of the cross for Jesus and his followers is a Christology/ecclesiology that is a foil to denial of one's Lord for the sake of saving one's own life (8:34-38), perhaps in the face of persecution (10:30, 13:9-13); it is a foil to desiring right and left hand prestige (10:37) and greatness (9:33-34) instead of servanthood (9:35, 10:43-44).

> Mark ends in an open ended way that turns the question about what will happen next back on the reader.

But now to Weeden's view of the ending. Norman Petersen has shown us that this reading of the ending is inadequate not

[10] Theodore Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

[11] On this point see Edwin K. Broadhead, *Teaching with Authority. Miracles and Christology in the Gospel of Mark.* Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 74 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992). And for a discussion and critique of Weeden's view and related views that have seen Mark both upholding and opposing divine man Christologies, see "The Shape of the Problem: Corrective Christology in Mark," in Jack Kingsbury's *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 25-45.

because of evidence outside Mark (Matthew shows that the disciples *did* meet Jesus, or the like—Weeden could still say, that is not what *Mark* wants the reader of *his ending* to see or think about), but because of what is said in Mark itself.[12] The reader has learned to trust what Jesus says in this book, and Jesus has not only predicted the disciples' flight ("You will all become deserters," 14:27), which the reader has seen fulfilled, but also the meeting in Galilee ("But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee," 14:28, the very prediction to which the young man at the tomb refers in 16:7). The reader remembers as well that Jesus said to James and John, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized," something that presupposes and necessitates the meeting in Galilee, the rehabilitation, and the faithful following (cf. also 13:9-13).

So why does the book end this way? The Gospel of Mark ends in an open ended way that turns the question about what will happen next back on the reader: will *you*, out of fear, say nothing to anyone about the crucified and risen Lord or will you go to meet him in order to participate in a ministry of service, open to the cup and the baptism it may entail? As Bartimaeus is meant to show us, in(sight) *for its own sake*, even insight into the truest of all Christologies and ecclesiologies, is not enough: *to see* (the servant ministry and the way of the cross for Jesus and his followers) is *to follow*: "And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way" (Mk 10:52). Or, perhaps Schüssler Fiorenza's reversal of the last point is even better—*to follow* is *to see*: "True understanding of Jesus messiahship... [comes] only in and through 'taking up the cross' and following him on the way of suffering and death."[13]

"What do you want me to do for you?" was the question Mark (be it author or book) put to us at the beginning. We changed the image to one about drinks before dinner: What would you like? Mark asks. What have you got? we reply. Then Mark mixes us a "servant-ministry/take-up-your-cross" and asks us one more question: *Can you drink the cup?*

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[12] *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics,* Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 49-80.

[13] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 316-17; in connection with this point she cites P. J. Achtemeier, "Mark as Interpreter of the Jesus Traditions," *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 387-99.

Gospel Dramaturgy: Dying and Rising with Christ in Mark

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Mark's Gospel as drama

Biblical scholars have recently generated much discussion of just what literary genre Mark's Gospel fits, and they make a persuasive case for the importance of this discussion. In the words of Mary Ann Tolbert, "What readers conceive the genre of a text to be—newspaper article, poem, detective story, telephone book—determines how they read it, what they expect to find, and what they learn from it."[1] Whatever else might be said about Gospel genres, reading or hearing Mark as a drama is perhaps the most useful way to approach it. A standard dictionary definition of "drama" is "a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance." That describes Mark quite aptly, and even if the author did not consciously design this Gospel for theatrical performance, the dramatic possibilities are nearly inescapable. In fact, one contemporary version, with English actor Alec McCowen, toured the world as a one man show. A *Time* magazine reviewer wrote that in the course of McCowen's performance,

> ...living people begin to inhabit the stage: the scribes and Pharisees hardened by suspicion and orthodoxy; the disciples, stalwart but muddled; Jesus himself, patient and determined but often exasperated ("Perceive ye not yet, neither understand?").[2]

McCowen may not have been the first to perform Mark's Gospel. From time to time the suggestion emerges among scholars that some form of Mark may have served as a kind of script for rehearsing the story of Jesus in whatever precursory ritual to the Easter Vigil Mark's community practiced.

In any case, all of the classic characteristics of drama appear in Mark. Conflict is

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[1] Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's Gospel in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 48.

[2] *Time*, September 18, 1978.

pervasive throughout this Gospel. In one way or another, Jesus is set against a host of demons and unclean spirits (e.g., 1:23-26), the Pharisees (e.g., 2:24), the disciples of John the Baptizer (2:18-19), the Herodians (3:6), his own family (3:21), the scribes (3:22), the elders and chief priests (e.g., 8:31), the Sadducees (12:18-27), his friend Judas (14:10-11), the crowds who once adored him (15:11-14), the Roman governor (15:15), and the spectators at his execution as well as his fellow crucified (15:29, 32). Those who do not reject Jesus eventually abandon him, including the disciples (14:50), and finally even God (15:34). The conflict scenes are all carefully structured and set in relationship to one another in such a way that tension builds continually through the entire work.

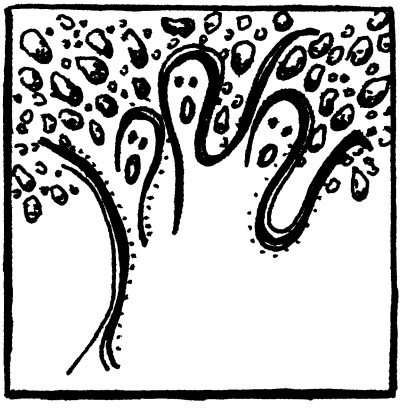
Closely related to all this opposition is a frightening sense of urgency and a nearly breakneck pace. Everything in Mark happens "immediately." After Jesus' baptism, the Spirit immediately drives him into the wilderness (1:12). When Jesus returns he calls disciples to himself and they follow immediately (1:18). More than 40 times that same adverb hurls the hearer or reader toward the moment of Peter's third denial (14:72), in which Peter, Jesus, and everyone else is caught up in a ruinous tangle of lies which can only work death. Along with this urgency runs a sense of ultimacy and insistence. Three times in the second half of the Gospel Jesus tells his followers that anyone wishing to follow further must decide if he or she is willing to take up a cross, and he describes the stakes involved in that choice as the difference between a life that counts for something before God and a life that has been wasted (8:34-38, 9:30-32, 10:32-34).

Some of the oldest elements of drama are disguise and non-recognition. Mark's Gospel is replete with concealment. Though Jesus does not actually disguise himself, he does hide his identity as the baptized Son of God by silencing the demons (the only ones who recognize him; e.g., 1:34) and speaking in code (4:10-12).

Jesus' secret is also kept effectively by the odd and sometimes amusing befuddlement of the disciples as well as by the blinding hatred of the Pharisees and the priestly class. When Jesus stills the storm on the Sea of Galilee (4:35-41), the disciples can only look at each other in bewildered puzzlement and ask, "Who is this?" On a later voyage when they see Jesus walking on the water the disciples take him for a ghost and fall into terror (6:47-52). And immediately after the second miraculous feeding of a multitude, the disciples panic when they realize they have only brought along one loaf of bread with them on their boat (8:14-21). One wonders just how Mark meant a reader to intone Jesus' response: "Do you have eyes? Do you have ears? Do you not remember? Do you not yet understand?" As for the Pharisees and other opponents of Jesus, they could only see a friend of sinners and someone who was much too lax in his observance of the Sabbath. From early on they mark him for destruction (2:15-3:6), but not because they know or suspect his true identity. That remains concealed. Even if told of that identity, the Son of God would remain disguised and unrecognized among these groups, as the scene of Jesus' trial makes clear (14:61-64). This concealment is another of Mark's dramatic devices for building a tension which will only break at the moment of the Gospel's climax.

The way in which recognition finally occurs in Mark is a crucial element of the Markan theology of the cross and the dramatic effect this Gospel has on readers or hearers. The revelation scene is foreshadowed at the midpoint of Mark, right after

Jesus chides the disciples for their lunchtime panic in the boat, when Jesus gives sight to a blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26). The story is unusual because the first attempt to heal the man is not completely successful. Jesus put saliva on the man's eyes, touched him, and then asked what he saw. "I can see people," he said, "but they



look like trees, walking." So Jesus touched the man's eyes again, and this time he could see clearly. This story is a capsule of the whole recognition theme in Mark. Jesus has been with the disciples doing miracles and teaching them many things, but they do not understand or see clearly. He must touch them again somehow if they or anyone else is to recognize him fully and completely.

The ultimate recognition scene occurs, of course, when Jesus is on the cross and with his dying breaths he cries out to God in the words of Psalm 22. The person who expresses recognition of Jesus as the Son of God is the least likely character in the whole story for such a role (15:39). "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!'" The very confession of identity for which Jesus was condemned (14:61-64) is now on the lips of the executioner, and for the first time on the lips of any human being in Mark's Gospel. In dramatic terms, this is the story's "moment of revelation." Jesus' faithful death, which he had described ahead of time for the disciples (13:9-13), has had its effect, and his identity is now revealed to the world by means of the cross. The cross, and the revelation it worked, is the final cure for the world's blindness.

A comparison with a familiar drama outside the scriptures points to yet another dramatic effect Mark's concealment device has on an audience. Throughout most of *Oedipus Rex* the audience experiences a sequence of events in which the identity of the central figure is not truly known (even to himself). When the truth about the character is finally revealed—when the drama has reached its stunning climax of revelation—the audience has gone through a process of hiding and revelation which is powerfully evocative, even though, since they have seen it before, they actually knew the truth before the play began. In much the same way, the audience for the Markan drama experiences through its sequence of events the original events which created the community of people who recognized in Jesus not only the Son of God, baptized and anointed as the Lord's messiah, but also the Son of Man who will be the judge of all creation. Along the way Mark compels the audience to come face to face with its own befuddlement and its own blinding hatreds. At last the faithful servant, Jesus, overcomes the blindness and confusion by revealing himself as the Son of God in this terrible moment through the sheer power of his faithfulness. That death marked a life that counted for something, namely, for salvation (cf. 10:45, 13:13).

That is the last we see of Jesus in Mark. But it is not the end of his story, as the young man at the tomb will explain early in the morning on the first day of the week (16:1-8). That young man is very important to this drama. He is the character who enables the audience to become fully a part of this story of Jesus, the Son of God. Mark's original audience, however, would likely have begun to see themselves in this drama long before the appearance of this young man who is so much like themselves. Scholars generally agree that Mark's first readers or hearers were persecuted Christians in the early 70s C.E., perhaps in Rome during the sporadic but vicious Neronic persecutions.[3] That audience would have recognized their own story in the account of someone who had been baptized, was compelled to hide that truth, spoke in code when necessary, and was consistently misunderstood by even the closest associates and relatives. And as they observed the traitor and the braggart who ends up denying Christ, they would recognize types of folk in their community and perhaps themselves as well.

Yes, this story was their story, not only Jesus' story. So it serves as a resource for them by setting up a model for faithful living and, perhaps for them more importantly, faithful dying. The words of 13:9-13 are addressed not so much to the original twelve, but to them:

> "As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

They are encouraged to live secretly as long as possible, but if they are betrayed or in some other way discovered and put on trial, they should make their confession as boldly and succinctly as did Jesus. Q: "Are you a Christian, are you baptized?" A: "I am." The Holy Spirit will provide the words. They can trust that. Also as they die, the Spirit will give words, perhaps those of Psalm 22, so that Mark's audience need not curse the executioners or engage in whatever other useless discourse the condemned are tempted to speak as they face the terrors of death. And the promise of Mark's Gospel is that a faithful death does not occur without impact. Even if the executioner does not blurt out a confession, he or she will never be the same for having witnessed the faithful death of one who is surely God's son or daughter.

The story of Mark's audience does not end there, however, any more than did Jesus' story, which takes us back to that young man at the empty tomb. Mark's audience would have recognized him immediately. This fellow shows up first in the arrest scene in Gethsemane where he is identified as a certain young man who followed Jesus and was dressed only in a linen cloth (14:51-52). He is nearly arrested but escapes naked, leaving behind his linen garment. This item of clothing is identified in the Greek as a *sindon*, which means it was a burial cloth. While this might seem strange to a modern

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[3] See Sean P. Kealy, *Mark's Gospel: A History of Its Interpretation* (New York: Paulist, 1982), 231; and Paul J. Achtemeier, "Mark, Gospel of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 543-45.

audience, the ancient audience would have surely recognized a neophyte Christian, wearing a burial cloth according to early Christian custom and ready for baptism. The young man loses that garment, as do the neophytes when they are baptized, and also like the neophytes he is later reclothed in a new, white robe and testifies to the resurrection of Jesus on the morning of the first day of the week when the Christians celebrate God's raising of Jesus. Robin Scroggs and Kent Groff have described Mark's method and intentions in this scene as follows:

> At the last moment that is possible within the structure of the passion narrative, Mark portrays the near arrest and escape of the follower. Through this means he points to the participation of the believer in the death of Jesus. The coherence of the story is strained to the limit because of the presence of the many symbols needed to communicate the significance of the story to his readers. The initiate is stripped of his garment and is now ready for baptism. He is baptized into the death, but only Jesus actually dies, and the substitution is symbolized by the linen which the young man leaves but with which Jesus is actually shrouded in burial.[4]

Mark invites every baptized Christian to see himself or herself in that young follower, and along with him to witness to all those who come perplexed to the tomb where the disciple and Christ have been buried together: "Don't be alarmed. There's no one here. They've all been raised."

Gospel as sacrament

The effect of Mark's Gospel, then, is to join into one the drama of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and the drama of the audience's life, death, and resurrection. This means that in significant ways, Mark's drama functions in much the same way as sacraments function. In a recent volume on sacramental theology, Herbert Vorgrimler defines a sacrament as an "event of the Word of God" and, reviving a medieval understanding of sacraments, offers the following description:

> The word of God is intensively involved in the sacramental structure: it causes what it perceptibly "signifies," namely the grace of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Reflection on the salvific quality of the word of God begins, from the nature of things, with the holy Scriptures. It gives special attention to its Trinitarian origins: before time, the expressibility of God implies the eternal Logos who, as word of the Father, became human, and who is in one person, the promise of God to humanity and the acceptance of that word of promise by humanity. Hence in every saving event, including sacramental events, word and materiality are enduringly tied to one another. The word of God (always clothed in human words), however it is communicated, is not limited to demonstrative or informative function: it effects what it says; it brings what it announces.[5]

In other words, sacraments call into being things which did not previously exist, and they do this by the sheer power of declaration in which God's words and our words are joined. Thus, baptism is the acting out of the divine drama in which God creates new creatures, members of the body

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[4] Robin Scroggs and Kent I. Groff, "Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising With Christ," in *JBL*, 92:4 (December 1973), 531-48 at 542. The authors have written thoroughly and persuasively on this reading of the "young man" in Mark.

[5] Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 76-77.

of Christ, by attaching promise to water. The Eucharist, in which promise is attached to remembering and to bread and wine, calls into being in the here and now the table at which Moses sat with his family one night in Egypt, the table at which Christ sat on another night with his disciples, and the eschatological table of the consummation. And the gospel, or the Gospel according to Mark in particular, by attaching promise to the physical elements of acting out in space and time the drama of Jesus and the young follower who fled away naked, creates a community of faithful cross bearers who are prepared to die faithfully so that Christ might be revealed to whatever befuddled disciples, blinded haters, and crusty, old centurions are hanging around the death scenes in today's world.

Enacting Mark's Gospel in our space and time

What does proclamation of Mark's drama create among us? And what all might this mean for those of us who are likely never to face serious or genuine persecution or risk our lives for the sake of the faith?

Most obviously, this drama, which begins with Jesus' baptism and ends with the baptism of the young follower who gets the last word, calls into being a family, the baptismal family. All in this family are the sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Christ. Jesus spoke of this family when his mother and siblings came to get him because they heard he had gone out of his mind (3:21,31-35). "Who are my mother and my brothers?" Jesus asked. Looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Doing the will of God presumably entails doing the things Jesus did or living by God's commandments in the manner that Jesus taught the scribe who sought to do God's will in 12:28-34: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." As Mark's depiction of Jesus' friends and disciples makes clear, the family which this Gospel calls into being is hardly perfect. Its members are often fearful, fickle, and slow to understand. Among its numbers are potential traitors and those who would deny any association with Jesus. But the baptismal promise holds this family together despite all that: "You are my son, my daughter, the delight of my soul. Period."

Among the many ironies of Mark's drama is that a story of abandonment and conflict should create a community or family. Another irony is that this family, as Mark's Gospel understands it, is both set against the powers and people who oppose its existence and at the same time bound to those who threaten it. Both ironies come from the situation of persecution which helped shape the Gospel according to Mark, which means a certain danger lurks behind them. Persecuted people of all sorts in human history have seen the world as thoroughly polarized and easily divided into good guys and bad guys. The literature which persecuted communities produce invariably sets themselves against "the world" and claims that "God is on our side." Mark is no exception. Mark's Jesus lives in a world filled mostly with opponents, and Jesus' followers along with Mark's hearers end up with the same opponents. Not only that, the destiny of their leader is to be the Son of Man who will judge the bad guys and rule the world (8:38, 13:26, 14:62).

It is easy, therefore, especially when proclaiming Mark in pericopal bits and pieces, to use Mark quite specifically for the

purpose of creating and maintaining opposition and engaging in subtle forms of self-righteousness and triumphalism. Taken as a whole, however, Mark has no room for such attitudes. When the sons of Zebedee ask for seats of honor next to Jesus' throne of glory (10:35-45), Jesus tells them indirectly that those places of honor are on crosses, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." Jesus' task was to live and die faithfully, not to see to the undoing of his opponents.

Moreover, as we have noted, the family Mark's Gospel creates contains traitors and those who deny their baptismal identities. In the drama itself these family members are Judas and Peter. Neither Jesus nor the Gospel writer excludes these two for what they did. Jesus passes the bread and cup in Mark with the traitor present and unidentified (14:17-25). As for Peter, Mark's audience knew this epitome of the lapsed Christian as the leader among the apostles. The Markan family's task is not to identify traitors or potential traitors so they might exclude them, or to drum out of their midst the weak ones who deny and curse Christ to save their necks. Their role is to live and die faithfully, saying words the Spirit gives them.

Mark's Gospel does not call the family to judgmental confrontation with any other group or individual, inside or outside the family. Rather, it summons Christians today to take up their crosses and follow Jesus to the place of execution. If faithful living along the way means doing what Jesus did or doing what he told his disciples to do when he commissioned them (6:13), then this family is primarily concerned with standing up to demons and unclean spirits which isolate and wreck people, and with healing. In Mark, healing happens mostly through touching. Again and again Jesus touches others (e.g., 1:41, 6:5, 7:33, 8:23, 10:13) or they touch him (3:10, 5:25-43, 6:56, 8:22) and are made whole.

Mark's Christ lived to serve and to make a gift of his life. Those are the only things that count for something.

As for faithful dying, among safe, unpersecuted, more or less prosperous cross-bearers of today those faithful deaths can take many forms. They occur in the face of injustice, unwarranted criticism, and abuse. They come in the company of pain and disease or in the collapse and downfall of families. Folks die a little at a time, beginning at birth. And every time something happens which kills a big or a little piece of someone, there is an opportunity to respond in kind with deadly curses or storing up lethal hatreds, and there is opportunity to act with Christ's integrity and the courage of the conviction that one is nothing more or less than God's beloved child. Mark's Christ lived to serve and to make a gift of his life. Those are the only things that count for something. Which is why God raised Jesus, so he could go on back to Galilee, where the family of disciples could join him in serving and making gifts of their lives.

So, members of the Markan family, exit, stage left! And leave your linen cloths behind.

Reading Mark's Gospel Today: A Cruciforming Experience[1]

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Reading the Gospel of Mark today as a discrete piece of literature which tells the story of Jesus and his disciples can have a considerable aesthetic impact upon sympathetic readers. Such an approach means paying special attention to the rhetorical and narrative devices inherent within the text to understand how the story continues to function and affect modern auditors. It focuses on the world "in front of" the text, between text and reader, rather than on the biography of Jesus or the history of the early church "behind" the text.

This type of analysis, known as "aesthetic response criticism" or "reader response criticism," holds the readers responsible for interacting with the text and to some degree for constructing the story's meaning. It requires that readers use their imaginations both to anticipate the direction the story will take and also to reflect on changes in its development. In the case of Mark's Gospel, which does not give clear indications of its structure or outline, readers must decide how the narrative shall flow.

This study divides it into six scenes of roughly equal length, bracketed by a brief prologue and sequel. This is a helpful device for following the surface of the story and appreciating its dramatic action, for it enables readers to appreciate Mark's oral-aural character and track the flow of the narrative. Furthermore, this six-scene structure highlights the fact that Mark is a piece of performance literature. Although the Gospel most closely approximates the genre of an ancient biography, this study treats it as dramatic history in the tragic mode. This choice enables readers to focus on its continuing narrative impact and to recognize how it resonates with modern life.

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[1]This article is an adaptation of the concluding chapter of the author's 1992 Th.D. dissertation at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

Literary analysis includes considering such factors as the story's setting and atmosphere, its implied author and implied reader, and its tone and ideology. However, the two most basic elements of any story are its characters and plot. Mark's story pits its protagonist, Jesus, and his companion disciples against their antagonists, the religious leaders. Jesus, his followers, and his opponents interact around his dealings with a series of lesser characters, most of whom are beneficiaries of his healing and teaching ministry.

In most stories readers naturally identify with the role of the hero or protagonist. But in this case the figure of Jesus is too exalted and removed for easy identification. Instead, readers will choose to identify with the disciples, for these characters are depicted in realistic terms with both positive and negative traits.

Thus the readers of the story, like the disciples in the story, are in a position to respond to its central character. In this Gospel Jesus is a man of mystery and strength, ambiguous yet compelling. His provocative teachings, especially his parabolic riddles which invite auditors to experience life in the kingdom of God, his miraculous healings which are powerful expressions of kindness and care for marginal people, and his various titles, especially his enigmatic designation as "the Son of Man," combine to make Jesus a hard-to-define character. The impression that one cannot easily assess Jesus' role provokes readers into becoming involved in the story as they continually reassess their reaction to his personality.

More importantly, both disciples and readers must decide whether they will adopt Jesus' agenda of self-sacrificial service for others. Modern readers' natural inclination is to promote their own well-being and to live in ways that can be counted successful. Although Jesus begins his ministry with successful miracles and a style of teaching that attracts fame, the first half of the narrative is studded with numerous counter-indicators that all is not well and that he is not satisfied with merely enhancing his reputation.

The second half of the story explicitly refutes any expectations of success by recounting Jesus' determination to travel to Jerusalem where he will suffer an ignominious death by crucifixion. Along the way his disciples receive fuller instructions in the ethical implications of his method and purpose, but these they either misunderstand or repudiate; in the end they completely desert their mentor.

Thus readers who identify with the disciples through most of the story stand challenged at its end: either they must adopt the attitude of the disciples and reject Jesus' agenda, or they must recognize that the disciples' response is inappropriate and in effect resolve to improve on their behavior. Ultimately Mark's story enables readers to find pardon for their own failures, provokes them into rejecting the disciples' attitude, and encourages them into affirming Jesus' program.

The narrative in overview

The Prologue (1:1-13), with its title that suggests this will be but the "beginning" of the gospel, disorients readers by setting the story in the wasteland. Scriptural quotations which predict the arrival of John plus his own prediction that someone greater will supersede him raise high expectations for Jesus. But his arrival and baptism lead to conflicting results. He is proclaimed "God's son" but is immediately subjected to satanic testings. Thus readers are caught in an uncomfortable situation as the story begins.

Both disciples and readers must decide whether they will adopt Jesus' agenda of self-sacrificial service for others.

Scene one (1:14-3:6) opens abruptly in Galilee where Jesus initiates his ministry by enlisting his first followers. Readers immediately have an entry into the narrative in the role of these disciples who promptly follow him. A series of healings of a demoniac, Simon's mother-in-law, and a leper in and around Capernaum establish Jesus' reputation as a powerful and compassionate healer.

But then a concentric series of controversies involving healing and forgiving a paralytic, enlisting a toll-collector and dining with sinners, refusing to fast, allowing his men to pluck grain on the Sabbath, and restoring a shriveled hand on the Sabbath all place him at odds with the religious leaders.

Two major themes begin to develop in this scene: Jesus and his followers begin a series of journeys "on the way." Also, several of the events occur in the context of "eating food." Neither of these motifs is fully expanded, but they will return in future scenes to set the thematic tone.

Readers begin already in this scene to experience conflicting tendencies which keep them off balance: on the one hand Jesus is a caring healer, but on the other hand he displays anger and frustration. The disciples evidence such positive characteristics as following Jesus without question and practicing his style of living (which invites readers into identifying with them), but they also commit several inappropriate blunders such as trying to direct his itinerary (which makes them fallible and therefore realistic characters). Jesus' actions guarantee the spread of his reputation, but they also incite the opposition of the religious leaders. In fact, already at the conclusion of this first scene his enemies are plotting to destroy him.

Scene two (3:7-6:6) begins with the appointment of Jesus' twelve closest companions followed by an awkward sequence in which he rejects his family, who try to put him away because they think he is crazy, and replaces them with "those who do God's will." This movement brackets an incident in which he accuses his opponents of sinning against the holy spirit after they accuse him of exorcising demons with the aid of Beelzebul.

A section of teachings composed of parabolic riddles and sayings about a sower, seed, and soils plus its "explanation," a lamp and a measure, the automatic growth of seed, and a mustard grain offer tantalizing samples of the failures and successes of life in God's dominion. But readers, who identify with the disciples and like them are privy to Jesus' private instructions, may be perplexed—because the positive impact of Jesus' teaching is countered by a statement that their purpose is to prevent people from understanding!

Then a series of the most dramatic, even bizarre, events in the entire Gospel, including rescuing his boat from shipwreck, exorcising a demoniac at Gerasa by drowning the neighbors' pigs, raising Jairus' comatose daughter, and healing a woman's menstrual hemorrhage, enhances the read-

ers' appreciation of his power and compassion. But the scene ends with a bewildering development as Jesus' hometown neighbors take offense at his performance and reject him.

The "journey" motif continues to tie together the events in this scene, although there is no clear direction or pattern to Jesus' various trips. More important are the conflicting motives and reactions of the people who approach Jesus: some coming to seek his help, others to impede his work; some responding with faith or trust, others with fear or terror.

The readers' engagement with the role of the disciples becomes more complex, for sometimes they enjoy privileged favors (as with the four who accompanied Jesus into Jairus' bedroom) and other times they prove disappointing (as with their fright during the storm at sea). Their conflicting position corresponds to Jesus' progress: On the one hand, his ministry expands as he fends off opposition, goes public with his teaching, and rescues distressed people. On the other hand, his alienation also expands as his parabolic riddles thwart understanding and both his family and hometown associates reject him. Again, the final word in this scene is rejection.

Scene three (6:7-8:26) also begins with Jesus assembling his men and then sending them on a successful healing and preaching mission. A flash-back recounting the beheading of John the Baptizer fills in the time of their venture and foreshadows the fate of Jesus and his emissaries. After their return he takes them across the lake to the wasteland; there he feeds those who followed him on shore, 5,000 men plus women and children, by multiplying two loaves of bread and five fish. Readers who delight in the miracle will be disturbed by its sequel, where the disciples fail to recognize Jesus as he walks over the water to their boat, quiets a gale, and berates them for their "hardened hearts."

The next sequence, embodying several random trips by land and sea, includes an argument with the authorities about Jesus' non-kosher food practices and more miracles, each of which is problematic: Jesus insults a Syrophoenecian woman before exorcising her daughter, resorts to magical manipulations to cure a deaf-mute, and requires two tries at healing a blind man.

Furthermore, his disciples seem as ignorant of his ability to feed a crowd of 4,000 as if they had not been present at the earlier feeding of the 5,000. More disconcerting is another incident on board the boat where the disciples debate how they can all eat with only one loaf, while Jesus warns against "the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees" and denounces them for their lack of understanding.

The motif of food and bread permeates this scene. Frequently the theme raises positive, nurturing connotations, especially in the case of the two miraculous feedings. There the disciples cooperate with Jesus by providing and distributing the loaves and fish, and the crowds are satiated and collect baskets full of leftovers.

But just as frequently the food-bread-loaf motif signals a disturbingly negative development, as inexplicably the disciples' hardheartedness and ignorance provoke Jesus' exasperated anger. So the logic of reading collapses under the weight of conflicting signals, and readers reach the midpoint of the story frustrated and anxious for some resolution to these narrative tensions.

Scene four (8:27-10:52) resolves some of the tension of Jesus' random journeys by recounting his trip with his disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem. The three stages of their pilgrimage are signaled by his own

predictions that at their destination "the Son of Man" will suffer, die, and rise again. The first prediction counters Peter's claim that Jesus is "the Christ" and continues with astonishing calls to "take up your cross" and "lose your life to save it." More astonishing are the next events, Jesus' mountain-top transformation in the presence of Elijah and Moses, a mountain-side conversation about the return of Elijah, and a back-on-the-plain healing of an "epileptic" boy whom the disciples had not been able to help.

The second prediction is also followed by strained conversations with the disciples about their respective greatness, about the role of outsiders, and about giving offense. Subsequent teachings about marriage and divorce, the value of children, and the renunciation of wealth elaborate on the ethical dimensions of living in God's dominion.

The third prediction is followed by James' and John's opportunistic attempt to gain favored positions in the kingdom, and the scene ends at Jericho with Jesus healing blind Bartimaeus.

Two themes interact to give readers a feeling of apprehension and to goad them into questioning the values of the disciples even as they continue to identify with that character role. First, the journey motif permeates the scene. Continuing on "the way" is a positive experience insofar as it provides progress and the promise of closure to the narrative, but it is a negative experience insofar as its goal is Jesus' death.

Second, Jesus' teachings predominate. He treats his disciples to extended discussions of such specific topics as cross-bearing, greatness, scandals, divorce, riches, eternal life, and wielding authority, all of which are intended to change their attitudes. But his companions largely fail to assimilate these lessons, and they even contradict his basic principle of self-giving service. Twice they engineer blatant attempts to secure personal prestige immediately after his clearest calls to renounce self-aggrandizement. The mixing of such "high" and "low" experiences within this scene leaves readers feeling that they are wrestling with paradox and contradiction.

Scene five (11:1-13:37) does not recount Jesus' death, as might be expected from the predictions in scene four. Instead it makes his impending death credible by showing how he antagonized the religious leaders in a series of confrontations at the site of their temple headquarters. Three days in a row he enters Jerusalem and invades the temple. Entering the city in a semi-triumphal parade, cursing a fig tree, desecrating the temple, refusing to answer the authorities and telling a vineyard story against them are all calculated to provoke the leaders' enmity.

A concentric half dozen teaching episodes in the temple precincts further cement the leaders' animosity toward Jesus. He parries the Pharisees and Herodians in a practical argument about paying taxes, stymies the Sadducees in a theoretical argument about the resurrection, compliments a sympathetic scribe during a discussion of the commandments to love God and one's neighbor, and squelches the scribes with a theoretical riddle about the Christ being David's son followed by a practical warning against their avarice. The last incident contrasts with the generosity of a destitute widow's offering and Jesus' prediction that the temple will be demolished.

Then, in a private "apocalyptic" farewell address to four select disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus anticipates that the disciples' story line will continue into the future. Bizarre predictions about the fate of the temple, international distresses, astrological disruptions and the parousia of the

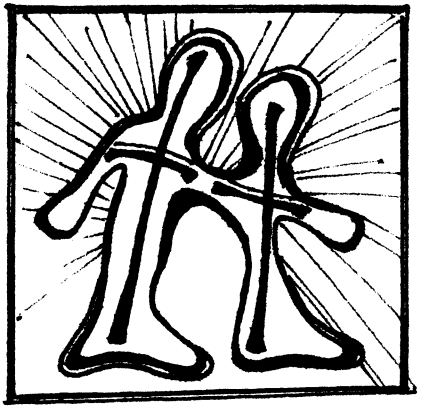
Son of Man are overshadowed by parenetic exhortations for disciples and readers to keep awake and stay alert. This enigmatic mixture of warnings and encouragements provokes Mark's readers into assessing their own continued performance.

Two motifs dovetail in this scene to ensure the continuity of the story's thematic background. The "journey" concept comes to an end with Jesus' three forays into Jerusalem, where an "anti-temple" motif takes over and continues to the end of the story. The anti-temple theme embraces the mutual animosity between Jesus and the religious leaders, which credibly accounts for their enmity and Jesus' eventual death in the next scene.

An increased number of allusions to the Jewish scriptures gives his impending demise a sense of inevitability and divine necessity. Throughout, readers do not need to disassociate from the disciples, who function largely as passive observers, and consequently they will anticipate resolving their own desires to preserve life and self-respect with the unfolding drama leading to death and dishonor.

Scene six (14:1-15:41), divided into five panels, embodies the longest and most emotionally charged sequence in the Gospel. In the initial movement toward betrayal (14:1-26) Jesus' own disciple Judas collaborates with the authorities to arrest him. In meal scenes an anonymous woman anoints Jesus "for his burial" as he dines with Simon the leper, and his men reserve a hall for their Passover seder, which becomes their "last supper" together. Thus meals, which previously were supportive and life-affirming events, here anticipate absence and death.

The next panel, a movement toward desertion set on the Mount of Olives (14:27-52), contains three incidents contrasting Jesus' action and the disciples' inappropriate reaction. When Jesus quotes a scripture passage predicting scattered sheep, Peter protests that he would die before deserting; but when Jesus asks them to stay awake



while he prays for release from his impending doom, Peter, James and John repeatedly fall asleep; then when Judas arrives with a mob to apprehend Jesus, all the other disciples make their escape, and in the confusion someone's ear is sliced off and one young man flees naked.

The third panel, a movement toward rejection (14:53-76), contrasts Jesus' treatment by the Jewish leaders who interrogate him and by Peter who watches the judicial proceedings. Although perjured charges about demolishing "this handmade temple" are not sustained, Jesus' self-incriminating admissions that he is the "Messiah," the "Son of the Blessed" and the future "Son of Man" are sufficient to convict him of blasphemy. Peter, who is in a position to testify in Jesus' behalf, thrice disavows any association with him. From this point on no disciples participate in the story-line, and readers must watch the outcome from a more distant, less involved perspective.

As readers experience Jesus' slide into abandonment they realize what it means to be abandoned.

In the fourth panel, a movement toward crucifixion in the Roman governor's palace (15:1-20a), the Jewish authorities manufacture another indictment, accusing Jesus of pretending to be "King of the Jews." Although Pilate apparently rejects this sarcastic charge, he fails to acquit Jesus. Instead he allows the crowds to demand the release of Barabbas the assassin and then permits his soldiers to humiliate Jesus with a string of "royal" mockings.

The final panel, a movement toward death (15:20b-39), does not emphasize the physical agony of Jesus' death by crucifixion but focuses on his growing alienation and despair and thus taps every reader's experience of having abandoned someone or having been deserted by someone in a time of need. After the soldiers coerce another Simon, a peasant from Cyrene, into carrying Jesus' crossbar to "Skull Hill," they divide up his clothes and unsuccessfully offer him a drink of wine and myrrh. An inscription labeling him "King of the Jews," plus public ridicule by priests, scribes, passers-by, and even two brigands strung up on either side of him continue the dynamic of sarcastic mocking. Bystanders mistake his final cry, "My God, my God, why did you desert me?" as an appeal to Elijah, but no rescuer comes before he shouts once more and expires defeated and forsaken. Unexpectedly, the captain of the execution squad then declares that he was a "god's son," and a drapery in the temple rips in two.

An *addendum* to the scene (15:40-41) introduces female followers of Jesus who observe his death from a safe distance.

The narrative impact of this climactic scene involves its readers in an experience of tragic reversal. The tragic dimension comes not only from the fact that Jesus' death seems so inevitable throughout the story but also from the way it thwarts every hope of escape: Judas could have remained loyal; Jesus' prayer could have been answered; the disciples could have defended him; Peter could have testified on his behalf; Pilate could have released him; "Elijah" could have rescued him.

As readers experience Jesus' slide into abandonment they realize what it means to be abandoned, and insofar as they identify with the disciples who deserted Jesus they also experience what it means to abandon someone else. The total experience overturns one's normal expectations for affirming life, for surviving and prospering. Because that reversal entails negating one's natural propensities for self-aggrandizement, they can then more realistically confront their own mortality and adopt Jesus' agenda of self-giving service to others.

The sequel (15:42-16:8) is an open-ended conclusion. It leaves readers in suspense and challenges them to continue the story in their own lives. Councilman Joseph of Arimathea secures Jesus' corpse from Pilate and gives it a hasty burial. But two mornings later some of the women who witnessed Jesus' death and interment find the tomb open. A white-robed young man

inside announces that Jesus has been raised and instructs them to inform his disciples, especially Peter, that they should travel to Galilee to see him. His message confirms Jesus' earlier predictions of his resurrection and reengages the "journey on the way" motif from previous scenes. However, the women are overcome with terror, and the story stops as they flee without speaking to anyone.

Such an abrupt ending confounds readers, especially those who remember other versions with more triumphalistic resurrection stories, and forces them to decide for or against this account; either they must choose *against* Mark's story and supplement it with fuller assurances of Jesus' resurrection, or they must choose *for* the story with all its ambiguity and its final hint of resurrection and restoration.

Mark's cruciforming impact

For readers who do affirm the story, with its climax on the crucifixion and Jesus' despairing death and with its suspended ending, the narrative will resonate with their personal experiences of abandonment and their own fear of death, but it will simultaneously encourage them with the prospect of restoration beyond betrayal and with the hope of resurrection beyond death.

As readers repudiate the disciples' self-aggrandizing attitude and reluctance to appropriate Jesus' teachings, they will resolve to avoid the same mistakes, to adopt Jesus' agenda of self-giving service for others, and to live more comfortably (or to endure their discomfort) with a realistic sense of their own limitations as mortals. In sum, Mark's story of Jesus and his disciples will function as an antidote to failure by enabling its readers to live a more "cruciformed" existence.

Post-modern readers near the juncture of the 20th and 21st centuries may find that Mark's narrative strikes a responsive chord with their own experiences of contemporary living. Their social, political, and economic environments pose a bewildering array of options: electronic media have shrunk the world to the size of a global village, yet many feel alienated and lonely; medical science continues to produce striking breakthroughs, yet affordable health care still eludes millions; communist totalitarian systems have crumbled around the world, only to have old nationalistic rivalries surface in bloody confrontations. A generation of middle-class Americans enjoyed unprecedented affluence, only to discover that their children's generation may not be able to sustain the same standard of living; agricultural advances enable a smaller percentage of the population to grow surpluses of food, yet millions throughout the world continue to starve; the threat of swift nuclear annihilation has dwindled, while the reality of creeping ecological destruction has escalated; the ability to manage the environment is offset by the discovery of holes in the atmosphere's ozone layer, depletion of the tropical rain forests, and a global warming trend.

In short, contemporary men and women live in a world shaped by unsettling forces which give a tragic dimension to their existence.

Some may bend under the pressures and adopt the defeatist attitude of survivors intent only upon enduring distresses with little hope of relief. Others may defy the pressures and opt for the self-aggrandizing posture of those determined to get all they can at the expense of others.

Mark's narrative encourages a radical alternative. It lures readers into interacting with Jesus, whose willingness to give of himself for others climaxes in his execution

by crucifixion. Thus his own story has a "cruciformed" shape because it is directed toward the cross. As Mark's readers interact with Jesus they fill the role of disciples, but because the disciples in the story react in such an unsatisfying manner readers feel compelled to improve on their performance. Mark induces them into continuing the story in their own lives. They must then allow the story to give their own performance a "cruciformed" shape. They, too, will be enabled to confront the tragic dimensions of contemporary life as well as their own mortality with realistic expectations.

Such a realistic perspective allows women and men today to choose to live more freely and responsibly and joyfully, for they can embrace a world view that includes the possibilities of restoration after alienation and resurrection after death. This frees them from being caught in the compulsion to act in selfish and self-aggrandizing modes; it enables them to empathize with the needs of others and to work toward goals which will enhance their mutual self-interest and their shared values; and it offers the added benefit of investing life with a more gladsome and gratifying feeling.

To summarize, reading Mark's Gospel is a satisfying literary experience that shapes readers in a "cruciformed" pattern with twin effects: first it frees them mentally and spiritually from being stymied by the fears of death and failure; then it empowers them physically and psychologically so they can better follow Jesus' agenda of self-giving service to others.

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"They Said Nothing"

Richard W. Swanson
Augustana College
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Every reader has run into Mark's brick wall. At least since the 2nd century (as witnessed in Irenaeus) it has irritated readers into producing smoother, fuller, more comfortable endings. At least since the 5th century (as witnessed in Victor of Antioch), readers have made hermeneutical decisions based on what is more satisfying, more fulfilling, more attentive to the church's need to expand, explain, and edify. At least since the 16th century, parents and children working with Luther's Small Catechism have been directed to the longer ending of Mark for answers about the promises linked to baptism. From ancient manuscripts to medieval catechism to modern worship texts, longer endings to Mark's narrative have been preferred.

This durable preference for a more complete completion of the story is not lightly to be dismissed. Ancient readers, after commenting on Mark's lack of order and plan, produced endings they liked better. They padded and "improved" Mark's story because it offended them.

Contemporary readers seem not so offended. Perhaps we have read enough Beckett and Kafka to expect and enjoy dead-endings. Perhaps we expect a certain offensiveness in our stories, a certain incoherence. Perhaps Annie Dillard is right when she suggests that such things have become "almost predictable" for contemporary readers.[1]

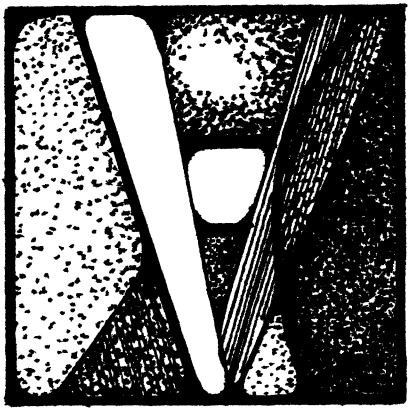
For contemporary interpreters, it may be that such shattering of narrative conventions may not only be predictable, it may be requisite. Kermode's classic, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, is finally a celebration of the aporia in Mark (and in all narrative), and exploration always of the roads that go nowhere. Mark's ending delights Kermode. It is the place in the narrative from which readers can always be persuaded that they hear the door to radiant meaning slamming forever shut.[2]

And it is not only avowed outsiders who find the end of Mark agreeable. The abrupt and broken ending allows an insider

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[1] Annie Dillard, *Living by Fiction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 24.

[2] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 145. See also his extended discussion of the end of Mark, 66-73.



such as Mary Ann Tolbert to hear a bracing challenge to readers to outdisciple the disciples.[3] This, too, is a thoroughly contemporary celebration of the brokenness of the end of Mark.

To be sure, such interpretive moves are rooted in the text-as-it-sits, and represent responsible contemporary attempts to engage the text in productive interpretive play. They also provide a service. For readers who have lost both their context and their meaning,[4] and for whom "nothing temporal, spatial, perceptual, social, or moral is fixed,"[5] the broken end of the narrative seems oddly comforting. It is to be remembered, after all, that it is not only on text-critical and literary grounds that contemporary interpreters have grown comfortable with the abrupt end of Mark. It is to be remembered that, on both methodological and philosophical grounds, a truly offensive text, for Kermode, would be one that did not cooperate in its own deconstruction, one that did not look somewhat frowsy as a result of inconsistent attempts to replace the pins that continually work loose and fall out. Fortunately, no such texts exist, at least for Kermode. Mark's complete incompletion confirms that.

Such interpretive moves, rooted and responsible though they are, provide an important service for contemporary readers: they read the text into chaotic submission. The wind whistles through the door of the empty tomb. The silence absorbs the words of the messenger. The reader hears only the sounds of terrified flight, inhuman and non-communicative. All these things the ancients heard. What is missing is the ancient offense, swallowed, ironically, by the very contemporary intention to focus on it.

Offense in Mark

I would argue that Mark requires a hermeneutics of offense. Such a hermeneutics would imply that one must not lose the offense that has so fascinated readers for so long. Such a hermeneutics would imply that Mark's story will always be misread whenever that offense becomes domesticated.

Such a hermeneutics would imply that we may need to find new ways to hear the offense, and even to hear new offenses, if we are to read Mark's story responsibly. We will still dance, in good Gadamerian fashion,[6] with Mark's ancient problem, but we will go though different doors to do it.

I note three basic, related offenses in the way Mark ends.

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[3] Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 295-97.

[4] Dillard, *Living by Fiction*, 26.

[5] Dillard, 24.

[6] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1975), 130, 146.

The first offense: it is women who flee at the end of the story.

Why is this offensive? Read the story to a group of children and listen to what they hear, and to the things the boys say to make fun of the "girls" who ran away. One wonders at what has been heard by women and men when this story has been read through the years. One more time, women are presented as quailing before momentous events. Once more time, they are flushed from history and scatter without accomplishing anything. That such behavior is not typical of our mothers, daughters, and colleagues only makes things worse. Such portrayals have a way of overwhelming what we ought already to know. That such stories can be used to encourage our daughters to expect timidity and incompleteness from themselves creates a powerful sort of offense. Such portrayals have a way of overwhelming what our daughters already know about themselves.

That this provides a desperate sort of gender balance at the end of the story only makes things worse. Everyone knows the story of Peter's failure: Peter, that most rock-like of men, cracks and claims never to have heard of Jesus. When the women run, it at least spreads the disgrace around: it is not only men who desert. The use of such narrative structure to achieve a balance in betrayal would be offensive simply because it is cheap, and unworthy.

The flight of the women is offensive, however, for other reasons, reasons rooted in Mark's narrative structures. Interpreters have rightly noted that the simple presence, and faithful activity, of women throughout the end of the story constitutes a promise of continued discipleship, the promise of a future.[7] Whatever one makes of the gender of these last active characters, the story is structured to imply that they will succeed though others have failed.

This implication may be seen in the symmetry of Mark's story. At the beginning of the story, Jesus gathers disciples. James and John, Andrew and Simon are gathered before the crowds come together. Levi and the others are added later. The crowds increase; the story approaches Jerusalem. Peter, James, John, and Andrew make one last group appearance as Jesus sits on the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple. Then Judas punctures the bubble. When next we see this group, gathered apart with Jesus in Gethsemane, Andrew is missing. Next to go are James and John. At the high priest's house, only Peter is left, and he claims never to have heard of Jesus.

Just as quickly as Jesus gathered disciples at the beginning of the story, just so quickly are they scattered at the end. But once the male disciples have been scraped away by the disastrous events surrounding Jesus' arrest, trial, and execution, Mark's story reveals a surprise: under this changeable overburden of men with names there is a solid and unbroken bedrock: there are women watching from a distance. They do not yet have names, but they have always been there, we are told. We have not seen them, but they have been supporting the story from the start, from Galilee onwards. The reader is offered the possibility that there is a reliable continuity beneath the shifting, eroding surface of the story. This possibility is made stronger when the surprising revelation of the rock-like women is quickly followed by the unexpected appearance of Joseph of Arimathea. Here is another supporter whom we have not previously seen, who appears only after the real

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[7] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 322.

bedrock of the story is finally revealed. Maybe the faithfulness of the revealed women is what makes his faithful action possible.

The appearance of women on the way to the tomb encourages this hope further. Though the community of Jesus' male disciples has been hopelessly fractured, very early, on the first day of the week, women are walking through the light of just-dawn. These are women with names, and they are doing what no one else in the story has thought to do, what no other character is able to do. Undeterred even by the danger and public disaster of Jesus' death, they do what women in many cultures do: they tend to community integrity and trustworthiness by tending to the dead. Though all other characters have abandoned the story, these women have not. They emerge, faithful and strong, after everything has ground to a halt, and they calmly prepare to move the story forward. Their surprising presence and their faithful activity imply that there may still be hope for community and continuity.

They meet the messenger, they hear the message, and they run, silent forever. The offense here is not just that women are, once again, portrayed as running away. The offense is that they run away after the narrative has set the reader up to expect them to do well. The buildup only intensifies the crash that follows. The offense is made worse by the specific activity that brought the women to the tomb in the first place. Their terrified flight ends the possibility of community and cuts off reliable continuity. More has died than Jesus, and more has ended than the story.

A second offense: the preceding story ends in powerful violence.

This violence, though sharply restrained (at least when compared to 4th Maccabees), is offensive in itself, especially if Mary Daly and Wayne Booth[8] are right about the power of metaphor to create social and cultural worlds. An even greater offense, however, may be heard in the way the violence is handled, the way the narrational tension is resolved. This is, after all, a world that knows violence, a world in which it is hard to tell an extended, true story without some violence. In such a world, the deeper offense lies in the telling of violent stories in which there is no consolation, to use Bruno Bettelheim's term.[9]

Is Mark's violence unresolved? This is a thorny question. There is long and thorough preparation for the violence that is coming. As early as 3:6 the death plot is hatched. Halfway through the story, Jesus announces his impending Passion. He repeats his announcement, and repeats it again, each time to broadly-played incomprehension among the disciples. The reader understands, and this understanding, together with the plain announcements, prepare for the violence that is coming. Details that mean nothing to characters in the story become portents of the end for the reader who knows and can feel where all this is going.

The creating of portents is a common and effective narrational practice. Remember the knobless gearshift in *The World According to Garp* by John Irving? Even on

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[8] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 77. Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 370.

[9] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Random House, 1977), 147. The term is drawn from J. R. R. Tolkein's essay, "On Fairy Stories," which is collected in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, ed. C. S. Lewis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 38-89.

a first reading, the reader feels the story slow and swirl around the gearshift each time it is mentioned. Some of this comes from the context, some from the way Irving swirls his language around the lever. The reader senses something ominous coming. When Garp's son falls onto the lever and loses his eye, the reader has been prepared, and feels the whole story pull together around that event.

The portents do not make the promised disaster less shocking. They do not make it smooth and easy to take, but the reader finds the disaster to fit with what has seemed to be coming. The narrative world offers coherence, if not comfort, and there is something reassuring in coherence. There is something rewarding in having known what to expect.

Mark's portents do the same thing for the reader. Jesus' death enters the story as the disaster for which the entire narrative has been waiting.

But the story has been preparing for more than violence. It has been preparing also for a resolution to the violence. The Passion predictions always promise that resurrection will follow death, and, in any case, the reader knows all this ahead of time. Again, knowledge and promises work together to create portents of what is coming, this time a resolution to narrated violence. The reader reads, details are gathered, the story is shaped. All the signs point to a successful outcome. Jesus speaks with an authority that may finally only belong to the resurrected one.

The story gets out of hand during its final scenes. Jesus on the cross reveals a depth of disaster that has not been promised ahead of time: he accuses God of deserting him just as have all the other characters in the story. Without the preceding promises of resolution, this accusation would complete the swing into disaster that has been promised. With the preceding promises, however, it functions to increase the cry of the narrative for resolution. What was accepted as a promise of resolution now becomes a demand.

There is no resolution here. There is scarcely a resurrection.

As the conclusion of the story approaches, the promised disaster has been deepened. The narrative, and its readers, demand an adequate resolution. Will violence be accepted as a proper part of the working out of the story? Will violence be accommodated, tolerated? Will it be presented as a model for future working out of the stream of effects of the story? Will it be rejected? Will it be ignored? Does the ending ratify the violence or reverse it? All these questions, and more, wait on the resolution with which the story will end.

The women, Jesus' last and most faithful followers, come to the tomb. They see it empty. They hear the message for which the story has been waiting. They are shattered into incoherent silence.

There is no resolution here. There is scarcely a resurrection. The messenger says that Jesus is raised, but no one sees him, not even the reader. If this ending to the story finally blesses violence by refusing to undercut it, then more has died here than Jesus, and more has ended than the story.

Mark's narrative does not support an interpretation which would treat Jesus' death as a brief interruption of an otherwise successful career.

The final, cumulative offense: Mark is long on Good Friday and short on Easter.

Any working preacher knows that Mark will never be the Gospel for the week of Sundays that is Easter. Few congregations would sit still for a seven-fold, week-after-week recitation of the eight verses with which Mark's story ends. In fact, most congregations of which I have been a part read Mark's brickwall Easter story not at all. The perpetual option, John 20, is chosen instead.

This would appear to be yet another evidence of the offense of Mark's story, and of the durable preference for smother, fuller, more comfortable endings to the story. To the extent that we tell Mark's story in the year of Mark, we stop telling that story during the Easter season, when we tell every story except the one that Mark tells.

Whatever one makes of this customary practice on literary and liturgical grounds, there simply is not enough at the end of Mark for a proper Easter. There is not enough because the women bolt in abrupt and terrified silence just when they carry the promise of continuity, both to the narrative and to the community gathered around the message that can now never be delivered. There is not enough because the violence of the preceding narrative still rings louder than the message of the resurrection. In the silence of early dawn, which the narrative offers as a promise flowing back against the dead silence in which the crucifixion ended, the last followers hear the message for which the story has been waiting. They hear it, and they run away. It appears that silence has the last word, and swallows it.

As can be seen, this offense is not *merely* liturgical, it is powerfully liturgical, if community narrative and community ritual are understood to together create and express the community's world. Is it to be understood from this that Mark is content to leave its readers wallowing in Good Friday, with nothing coherent to say on Easter? Does Mark work against the extended celebration of Easter in favor of the enforced meditation on the disaster which preceded it? Is the clear-sighted celebration of life out of death precisely what Mark wishes to undercut? The old discussions about whether Mark is arguing against a faith based on reports of the empty tomb and for a faith based on appearances of the resurrected Jesus simply will not do, since Mark finally has neither. Mark has only silence and flight. The question that must be asked is: does Mark's story finally dispense with Easter?

If this is so, the offense in this story is powerful and theologically frightening. This offense draws strength from the other offenses I have sketched, those rooted in gender portrayals, in the shattering of convention, community, and continuity, and in the refusal to resolve narrated violence, and uses this strength to undercut not just the resurrection of Jesus, but resurrection itself.

If this is so, the violence of the story is not only unresolved, it is celebrated. Having been promised a resolution, readers are

shoved back into the disaster and left there. If this is so, Jesus' words on the cross are the last word on what Derrida refers to as the "absence-presence" of God in the world, only Jesus goes further than Derrida.[10] If this is so, Jesus' instructions to his followers twist the knife: take up your cross. If this is so, this is a dead-end gospel of the deadliest sort. Much more has died than Jesus, and much more has ended. This is an offense, perhaps, for any reader in any time.

How shall we read this story?

The temptation now, as always, is to look for padding, to look for improvements, to look for ways to get on with the story that must go on. I will offer, instead, a few parting observations.

First, whatever else it does, Mark's narrative does not support an interpretation which would treat Jesus' death as a brief interruption of an otherwise successful career. The death in the story is a deep and dangerous disaster which shocks the reader when it arrives. The story is told so that the crucifixion cannot be skipped over. As the reader runs through that part of the story, something grabs her sleeve. What grabs the reader's sleeve is Jesus' death. The breaking of stride creates an uncomfortable focus on this death.

Second, the narrative is in no doubt about the resurrection of Jesus. This is true in the preparation for the resurrection, as has been seen. This is also true, however, precisely in the telling of the end of this story. Upon a first reading, the reader can only notice what is missing: any sight or sound of Jesus himself, any hope of such in the future. Both sight and sound have been promised, and the longer ending sets out purposefully to keep these promises, carefully and in order. Though a reader may well notice, on a first reading, all that is missing, subsequent readings make it clear that the narrative intends to state solidly and simply that Jesus, who definitely is not here, is definitely raised.

Third, we must be clear that the narrative still presents a powerful promise of continuity, even if this promise is only implied by the telling of the story itself. Though the way the story is told makes impossible C. W. B. Cranfield's old, too-easy supposition that Mark ends in witness, not in silence, because the silence of the women "was only for a little while,"[11] still the fact *that* Mark knows the story to tell it, and the reader knows the story to hear it, implies a continuity that may be trusted, even if it may not exactly be seen.

Does this promise of continuity redeem the violence that went before? Both the deepening of the disaster and the imposed silence of the narrative make it clear that nothing redeems violence. Jesus does not breeze through his death. Death stops him. The narrative does not breeze through his death. Death stops it as well. And the narrative does not breeze through its completion. There, too, it is stopped as mouths are stopped just when they must speak.

Nothing redeems the violence in this narrative. Against those who would see Jesus' death as a simple *quid pro quo* transaction to be endured until the business is done, at which point all parties exit, even at a horse apiece, this telling of the story renders in a surprisingly realistic fashion what death and violence and disaster mean

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[10] Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 107.

[11] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 469.

to human communities. These all-too-normal parts of life intrude, they break continuity, they leave people feeling kicked in the stomach. When one enters this story through the offenses, the portrayal of the running women, the crunching violence, the achingly insubstantial Easter, this realistic portrayal of the effect of death and violence and disaster establishes communal links with readers who know this experience, not from their reading but from their living.

Without the offense, the reader dismisses the ache that makes this story true.

This is still a story about life, not a story that celebrates the obscenity of death. Jesus is not here, says the messenger, he has been raised. This is, however, a story about life around which words do not easily fit. As the last followers run for their lives, the words of resurrection, spoken by the messenger, drift on the breeze after them.

As the last followers run from the tomb, this story about life starts its readers talking, as can be seen from the durable preference for smoother, fuller, more comfortable endings to the story. To the extent that this talking is in response to an implied challenge to outdisciple the disciples, it will be assertive and vaguely desperate, finally unconvincing.

There is, however, another possibility. This broken ending with fleeing messengers and a message that begs for words makes experiential sense and establishes community with other disciples. They have heard the message: He is not here, he is risen. It is a simple message, but difficult to hold in words that do not imply truths too big for us to tell and be honest. This broken end to the story establishes a community of wordless disciples who have heard a message, and who look continually for words that will drift on the breeze, carrying God's rejection of violence, God's promise of life to a creation that listens for it. Without the offense, the reader dismisses the ache that makes this story true.

The First of the Miracle Stories According to Mark (1:21-28)

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Mark is the most attractive of the four canonical Gospels for many modern readers. This attraction is linked to the consensus among twentieth-century biblical scholars that Mark's Gospel is the earliest written account of Jesus' life and work. The evangelist's presentation to action-oriented Romans of the late first century seems designed also to catch the attention of twentieth-century Europeans and Americans. Much of the action in the narrative, however, is based on miracle stories which sometimes present a problem for readers at the end of the twentieth century. After considering the first of the miracle stories incorporated into Mark's Gospel, we shall return to face some of the awkward questions about miracles.

Mark's story

The first words in the Gospel according to Mark declare that Jesus is the "Messiah" and "God's son" (1:1). The story of Jesus' baptism by John includes a voice from heaven which reinforces this identification, and the brief account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness includes elements which seem to imply miracles.

After John the Baptist is arrested, Jesus returns to Galilee and announces that the time has come for God's government to be established. Recruiting four aides for his campaign (1:17), Jesus proceeds to Capernaum where he teaches in the synagogue on the Sabbath and performs an exorcism. This teaching and exorcism stand together as the first act of Jesus' public ministry which is described by the evangelist.

The focus of this story in Mark's Gospel is on Jesus' power and authority (1:22 & 27). As a young teacher, Jesus might have been expected to shore up his teaching with references to acknowledged authorities, but this was not his style (1:22). Without recording or even summarizing Jesus' words, the evangelist tells readers that Jesus' teaching created a very strong impression. But the audience is allowed little time to sort out their reactions before the synagogue meeting is completely disrupted by the shouting of a man possessed by an evil spirit.

Speaking with his victim's voice, the evil spirit identifies Jesus by name and with

Every illness is a disorder in God's creation, but demon possession is an acute manifestation of universal disorder.

the designation "the holy one of God" (1:24). The possessed man shouts other things as well, but Jesus remains on top of the situation and counters with a stern command: "Shut up! And get out of him" (1:25). Shaking his victim violently, the evil spirit departs, howling (1:26). Now *everyone* is astonished, realizing that the earlier remarks about this young teacher's authority were understatements. This is a new kind of teaching, indeed.

This exorcism in a Galilean synagogue can be described as the archetypal miracle for Mark's Gospel. As the first sample of Jesus' mighty acts in his public ministry, the exorcism shows the Messiah ready to do battle against the forces of evil as the new age is ushered in. Having survived temptation by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus is now prepared to take the offensive in the eschatological confrontation. The evil spirit's bravado in trying to exorcise the LORD'S *anointed* only confirms Jesus' authority for those witnessing the event.[1] The evil spirits' fear that Jesus has come to destroy them (1:24) is justified.

As an indication of things to come, this first recorded miracle story illustrates several motifs which recur throughout the Gospel, such as *faith*, *compassion*, *healing*, and the setting in *Galilee*, besides the motif of power and authority.

The connection between *faith* and miracles is mysterious and multifaceted, demanding our attention at every level at which we consider this story. Jesus' power is an expression of his own faith in God, and the congregation's response of amazement at Jesus' teaching (1:22) is also an expression of faith. Further on in the Gospel, the evangelist notes a direct link between people's faith and Jesus' ability to perform acts of power (6:5, cf. 5:34). As inchoate and ambiguous as the congregation's faith is here, it forms a sufficient base for the demonstration of God's liberating power. Whether the victim's voiced confession is also to be understood as supporting the demonstration of divine power is more difficult to say, since in the text Jesus attributes this confession to the evil spirit.

Jesus' *compassion* can be inferred as a motivating factor in this story of rough confrontation, although the word itself (*σπλαγχνίζομαι*) is first used by the evangelist in the story of the healing of the man with leprosy (1:41). In well-run synagogues and churches, even today, guest speakers can expect those in charge to shield them from serious disruptions. In the setting for our story, the ruler of the synagogue seems to have failed in his responsibility to keep the possessed man away from the meeting. With the congregation off balance and fall-

[1] B. D. Chilton points out that "In the literature which mentions exorcism, the technique of naming (sometimes with multiple designations) generally appears as the means by which the exorcist gains control over the demon. That convention is here reversed." "Exorcism and History: Mark 1:21-28," in *Gospel Perspectives: The Miracles of Jesus* vol. 6, ed. David Wenham & Craig Blomberg (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 261.

ing into confusion, a signal from the speaker probably would have triggered some fall-back system to get the demonstrator out of the meeting quickly. But Jesus moves in the opposite direction from such evasive tactics.

No human being is a write-off in Jesus' calculations, as Mark's Gospel demonstrates again and again. Here, instead of claiming protection for himself in an embarrassing social situation, Jesus takes the side of the wretched man in an escalation of the spiritual confrontation.

Exorcism is a kind of *healing*, and so this story stands as the first of a series of Jesus' healing miracles. But, as Gerd Theissen rightly insists, exorcism is a distinct kind of healing which can be seen as an independent theme in the Gospel.[2] Following the healing of Simon's mother-in-law, Mark's summary account of Jesus' activity distinguishes the healing of "many who had various diseases" from the driving out of "many demons" (1:34). Every illness is a disorder in God's creation, but demon possession is an acute manifestation of universal disorder.

The setting in *Galilee* is a significant element in Mark's Gospel which few modern interpreters claim to understand fully. The evangelist emphasizes Galilee as a focus of Jesus' ministry from beginning to end (16:7), but Mark never explains the meaning of Galilee as Matthew does (Mt 4:12-16). Perhaps Mark himself intuited but could not explain the district's significance for Jesus' mission. Jesus' death and resurrection, the climax of the Gospel, took place in Jerusalem with the account of the journey and the days before his death taking up almost half of the book. Nevertheless, Galilee represents the closest human ties of "the Son of Humanity" (2:10 & 28) and also, perhaps, the staging platform for crossing over to the nations.

An appeal to Roman superstition?

Redaction criticism, by crediting the whole composition to a single writer or 'editor,' has the great advantages of focusing the interpreter's attention on the text that we have. Questions about Mark's sources are relevant to redaction criticism —especially regarding miracle stories. But how (and why) the evangelist uses the material available to him is the main concern.

In proportion to the length of his book, Mark includes more miracle stories than any other canonical Gospel writer. The tendency of critics in the recent past to de-emphasize miracles in Mark's Gospel tells more about the critics' intended audience than about Mark's. Gerd Theissen's wry comment, against this tendentious line, confronts us with the prominence of miracles in the Gospel: "Can Mark really have told sixteen miracle stories solely to warn against belief in miracles? It seems a rather clumsy way of doing it."[3]

How did the evangelist himself understand traditional Christian miracle stories?

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[2] G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983 [1974]), 85.

[3] *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* 294 in response to G. Klein *Wunderglaube* 56 and K. Kertelge *Wunder* 206.

The chart in B. L. Blackburn's article "Miracles and Miracle Stories" in *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green *et al.* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992) lists eighteen miracles performed by Jesus in Mark's Gospel besides miracles noted in summary reports. In this list, all but five ("Calming the Storm," "Feeding the Five Thousand," "Walking on Water," "Feeding the Four Thousand," and "Fig Tree Withered") fit into the broad category of healing miracles.

And why did he incorporate so many of them into his Gospel?

Mark himself believed that the miracles recorded in his Gospel actually happened.[4] We have no direct information about whether he also believed reports of miraculous power related to pagan gods. In principle, belief in Jesus' miracles does not require belief in pagan miracles any more than belief in Jesus' God requires belief in pagan gods. But Mark's first miracle story indicates that the evangelist believed not only in the power of God but also in other powers, specifically the power of the unclean spirit.

For readers today, the power of the unclean spirit is at once the most difficult and the easiest to acknowledge. In the story, the victim's actions suggest extreme mental illness of a kind which we ourselves have seen or heard reliably reported. Moreover, we know that crack-cocaine addicts sometimes go wild, and we have been astonished at the power of ethnic prejudice to possess people for the destruction of others and themselves. In such cases, we sometimes say that a miracle would be required to save the possessed person. Such analogies from our experience remind us of the limits of our understanding of evil powers in relation to human personality. We must admit that our understanding of God's power is probably even more limited.

"Power is a fundamental religious phenomenon," as Martin Hengel reminds us.[5] In Mark's narrative, John the Baptist has already explained that the source of Jesus' power is the Holy Spirit (1:7-8). The reader is now challenged to believe that God's government is being established (1:15) by "Jesus Messiah, the Son of God" (1:1). Faith in almighty God is basic to any understanding of the Gospel. Here God's power is channelled through Jesus, specifically in a restraining order directed at the evil spirit (1:25). Jesus' demand for silence recurs throughout the Gospel as a major theme closely connected to the miracles.[6]

'The Messianic secret' has been interpreted in various ways since W. Wrede first identified this Markan theme. Theissen correctly protests the use of this theme to downplay or dismiss the significance of miracles in the Gospel.[7] Nevertheless, it is true that this theme and the whole framework of the Gospel function as a restraint and critique of credulity regarding signs and wonders (*n.b.* Mk 13:22). In this first miracle story, the inexplicable power that Jesus channels demonstrates his divinity. But the nervous excitement of the young teacher's audience, the embarrassment of the disruption, Jesus' compassion and cour-

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[4] M. E. Glasswell persuasively argues that this is not a focus of the evangelist's concern: "Mark is clearly not so much concerned about the historical status of miracles, whether they actually happened—though he would seem to have no difficulty in stating that they did—as with the question of faith in Jesus as he is proclaimed in the Gospel." *Miracles: Cambridge Studies*, 159.

With reference to the reliability of Mark's sources and Mark's editorial focus, Gerd Theissen concludes, "There is no doubt that Jesus worked miracles, healed the sick and cast out demons, but the miracle stories reproduce these historical events in an intensified form." *Miracle Stories*, 277. Likewise Paul Achtemeier concludes that "Whatever else Mark may have thought about Jesus, he surely also understood him as one who performed acts of power." *Mark.* Proclamation Commentary (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 85.

[5] M. Hengel, *Christ and Power* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977 [1974]), 5.

[6] M. E. Glasswell, *Miracles: Cambridge Studies*, 154. Jesus' rebuke of the demon here anticipates but can also be interpreted independently from what Glasswell calls "the Markan secrecy theme."

[7] G. Theissen, *Miracle Stories.*



age in treating the possessed man, and the detail of the violent cure all emphasize the humanity of Jesus. It is the coming together of divinity and humanity in the Messiah, as announced in the first line of Mark's Gospel, which make this miracle story, and the ones that follow, understandable by faith.[8]

Ancient and modern, modern and post-modern

Not long ago I heard a good sermon on Numbers 22. That Bible story includes the fantastic report of a donkey talking back to Balaam. By way of introduction to his sermon, the preacher observed that various spiritual movements of our time, including New Age religion, have made Americans much more ready than we used to be to reflect positively on reports of supernatural happenings.

I doubt if this new wave has extended so far as to reach critical readers of Mark's Gospel. Theological professors and pastors can still be heard expressing frustration to each other about the pre-Enlightenment views held by some seminarians and influential parishioners. But these "enlightened" complaints themselves are beginning to sound quaint and old-fashioned. Put another way, we might say that these complaints seem 'modern' and 'rationalistic' over against ascendant post-modernism.

Ramsay MacMullen describes what might be called a common world-view in antiquity in his study of paganism in the period C.E. 125-325 (somewhat later than the time of Mark's composition): "Jews, Christians... and most other people in the Empire... were united in perceiving a pyramid of powers above them—real powers capable of suspending the laws of nature."[9] In another summary statement MacMullen says, "They... took miracles quite for granted."[10] But not every reported miracle was believed by everyone, even in antiquity.

Readiness to believe stories of miracles —and, it seems, readiness to make up such stories—seems to have followed regular socio-political patterns in antiquity. Credulity seems to have flowed and receded in waves. Some stories of miracles were never intended to be believed. As an example, Robert Grant points to the miracles in Antonius Diogenes' romance, *Incredible Things Beyond Thule*. But in a later century the Neoplatonist Porphyry took these stories

[8] C. S. Lewis, in a book which is still instructive, declares that "The central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. They say that God became Man. Every other miracle prepared for this, or exhibits this, or results from this." *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 131.

[9] R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 88. MacMullen's point is clear, but the notion of "suspending the laws of nature" as a definition of miracles is susceptible to anachronistic interpretation.

[10] R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 22.

seriously, as Grant also notes.[11] Whether all Christian miracle stories written after Mark's Gospel (such as those about Jesus' childhood) were written to be believed is a question beyond the scope of this article.

Even in antiquity people knew that persons who died and were buried did not rise from the dead.[12] According to Mark's Gospel Jesus was tortured to death, was buried, and rose again so that the women who came to the empty tomb ran away in fear. The details of this human response to an actual resurrection are convincing, but the claim itself is surely as hard to believe in our time as in Mark's, and more difficult to believe than any of the other miracles recorded in the Gospel. (See Acts 17:31-32.)

The Enlightenment is often characterized as a watershed in modern biblical studies. But anyone who reads "A Discourse of Miracles" by John Locke will realize that the watershed must be located later.[13] D. F. Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, published in 1835, triggered a series of 'Lives of Jesus' which were constructed on "a framework in Mark of a well-attested, early and reliable tradition."[14] Despite Albert Schweitzer's devastating critique of this movement which minimized miraculous and eschatological elements in the Gospel,[15] biblical scholars continue to be influenced by the 19th and early 20th century Enlightenment world-view which shaped this movement.

When preparing to preach on this text about Jesus' teaching and exorcism in a Galilean synagogue, modern pastors do well to heed the warning of Shakespeare's Hamlet:

> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. (I/v.)

Except for older New Testament critics, it seems that everyone today is interested in miracles. Pastors must guard parishioners against the credulity which the supermarket tabloids encourage just as carefully as Mark guarded his readers against false claims of "signs and wonders." But preachers of the gospel know the God who created all things. We know that there is truth in the sentimental talk about "the miracle of a sunset" and "the miracle of life."

The created universe *is* miraculous.[16] We know the Creator through "Jesus Messiah, the Son of God," who not only cast out demons but also liberates us from sin and death. The power of the Spirit that raised the crucified Messiah from the dead has been given to us as a guarantee of life under the government of God, which was first proclaimed by Jesus in Galilee.

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[11] R. M. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1952), 62.

[12] See "Resurrection in the Bible" and "Resurrection in Apologetic" in Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, 221-65.

[13] John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity with A Discourse of Miracles and Part of A Third Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. I. T. Ramsey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958 [1702]), 77-99.

[14] Summary by Ralph P. Martin, *Mark, Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 36.

[15] A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1964 [1910]) *passim.*

[16] Ludwig Wittgenstein, who did not confess Christian faith, rightly noted that "The miracle is not *how* things are in the world, but that they are" (*Nicht wie die Welt ist, ist das Mystische, sondern dass sie ist.*) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6.44 [my translation] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971 [1921]).

Whole Language and Christian Education

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A grass-roots movement among teachers of reading and writing has great potential for calling the church back to what it does best: providing dynamic learning communities in which more of God's people can grow in faith and contribute to the richness of the church's theology and ministry. That movement is called "whole language."

The triumph of assembly-line schooling

Schooling as we know it today in the United States developed in the early twentieth century as a part of the industrial-technological revolution and of the parallel cultural enthusiasm for the promise of science. Educators then sought a "scientific" approach to learning, and experimental psychology was on hand to satisfy them with a highly quantitative theory. Psychological research into learning has largely been carried on under laboratory conditions where strict control of variables and measurement are considered to be essential to the scientific process. To maximize research control the variables of individual interests and even the meaning and relevance of what was being learned had to be eliminated. Learning models were developed, for instance, by noting the speed and accuracy of the memorization of nonsense syllables, and the resultant models tended to stress various types of external reward as the prime motivators for learning.[1]

Two other ways education tried to become more "scientific" was to implement mass, commercially prepared materials and standardized testing, both of which helped to make learning appear logically and hierarchically ordered. Schooling's aim has been to provide consistency from teacher to teacher, classroom to classroom, and pupil to pupil, thus emulating the laboratory and the assembly line.

As prepared materials were expanded into whole curricula, the role of the teacher changed from learned educator to manager of pre-packaged systems. The task of pupils was no longer to be so immersed in

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[1] Frank Smith, *Joining the Literacy Club* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Books, 1988), 109-16.

Education theorists have noted that the dominant assembly-line model has woefully neglected several key elements of learning.

classics that they could become critical thinkers (an aim of education before the twentieth century), but to amass a pre-determined and measurable set of competencies. Published programs today typically include so many activities and competencies that teachers must be selective about what to use with their particular classes. This, the publishers claim, gives teachers control; but the packaged programs, the teach/test format, and the underlying assumptions of this system inevitably place persistent and unnatural limits on the decision-making of teachers and pupils.

Over the past twenty years, an increasing number of education theorists have noted that the dominant assembly-line model has woefully neglected several key elements of learning: the individuality of pupils and teachers, the need to foster enthusiasm and skills for life-long learning, and the social context of learning.

These same criticisms are relevant for Christian education. Today if you ask most seminarians, pastors, lay professionals, or church members about education in their own congregations, they will most likely talk about classroom programs and publishing house curricula. This is an indication of the extent to which the main-line church has bought into the assembly-line schooling approach and forsaken its enviable heritage of nurturing faith formation through community life. Though only a third of our members regularly take part in organized classes,[2] we have come to rely only on schooling and forget the great power of a community in mission with its shared values, meanings, and symbolic rituals. Learning is programmed to take place in classrooms, in ways that have been largely determined by "experts" with no knowledge of specific communities of learners. The decisions of teachers and learners are thus curtailed, and since there is an increased distance between the curriculum and the people there is inevitably an increased distance between the texts and traditions of the faith and the people of faith.

Whole language and whole faith

Whole language is essentially a philosophy of learning rather than a program for teaching. Out of a set of enthusiastic beliefs about language and learning has come a host of effective tools and procedures, but the emphasis is always on returning the power of choice to both the classroom teacher and the pupil.

A dialog between Christian educators and whole language practitioners seems most appropriate and promising at this time because many of the same concerns and ideas are currently being explored by both groups.

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[2] Peter L. Benson and Carolyn H. Elkin, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990).

Following is a listing of a few of the key ideas of whole language, ways in which similar concerns have been raised by religious educators, and some suggested ways the notions may be applied in Christian congregations.

1. Help learners become fully involved with texts. Whole language got its name because of its insistence of involving students in the process of literacy through immersion in real literature. Teachers learned that well written literature, especially when it is read in unabridged and complete form, has the power to involve and motivate students the way that basal readers, with their fragmentation of story and shallow "see Dick run" style do not. Teachers work to tap into this evocative power of well crafted stories to involve learners in literacy as a wonderful interaction of author and reader. This exchange is encouraged as teachers allow spontaneous student reactions to the text to drive their further explorations. Pre-planned activities, work sheets, and canned questions are avoided because they tend to close off the process.

Throughout history there have been those who have thought the Bible too complex and profound (perhaps even too dangerous) for young or unschooled learners. But there is a growing number of people who think that the most important aspect of Christian learning is the process of interpreting the Bible and other authoritative "classics" of the faith. Assuming this to be true, we believe it is a matter of urgency to allow the church's learners of all ages access to the text itself.

In whole faith Christian education we will involve people in actively reading larger segments and whole books of the Bible from beginning to end. Teachers will be on guard against film strips, children's Bibles, workbooks, and other materials that despite all good intentions distort the Bible's words. They will resist the temptation to skip over portions of the Bible that seem to elicit fear and confusion among young learners, and provide patient and non-judgmental adults to assist children in engaging the text and responding to it as they are able. Learners of all ages will be free to ask their own questions of the texts and explore their own answers rather than to respond only to the questions invented by the authors and publishers of curricular materials. In this way learners will discover together how scripture, creeds, catechisms, and other works may help them name their experiences and call them to deeper faith commitments.[3]

2. Respect learners and what they bring to the process. Whole language calls on us to respect all learners for what they know and for what they learn. Learners have their own way of knowing and exploring subject

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[3] For the argument that hermeneutic is a basic process of thought and life see Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). Edward H. Everding argues that hermeneutics should "provide the proper frame of reference within which to develop educational theory" in "A Hermeneutical Approach to Educational Theology," in *Foundations for Christian Education in an Era of Change*, ed. Marvin J. Taylor (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 41-53. Jack Seymour and Carol Wehrheim extend the idea of hermeneutics to include a broader sense of meaning-making or understanding in "Faith Seeking Understanding: Interpretation as a Task of Christian Education" in *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education*, ed. Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 123-43. Cf. also Richard Osmer, "Teaching as Practical Theology" in *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*, ed. Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 216-38. Maria Harris sees teachers and learners

matter and searching for meaning. Respecting this tenet changes the role of the teacher from manager of information to supporter and facilitator of learning. Attention in whole language classrooms is not focused on the teacher as disseminator of information from the front of the room but on the process of meaning-making and communicating, which varies greatly from person to person. Pupils turn to their peers to learn from other points of view. Teachers learn from the unique perspectives of their students. All become co-learners in a vital process.

The learner is not an empty vessel, and education is not the process of correcting people's deficits.

Related to this respect for the learner is the realization that the meaning of any given text is a dynamic psycho-social reality. The learner is not an empty vessel, and education is not the process of correcting people's deficits. The literacy event happens when a reader and text together construct a "poem" or new creation of meaning.[4] Because of the special and important role of the reader, who brings to the task a personal intent and a unique prior knowledge, a new text is fashioned from the encounter.

One of the most powerful contributions of whole language to the learning method is the encouragement of the free use of trial and error as necessary for assertive self-investment in the literacy process. It is commonly understood that beginners in golf or swimming will learn from their mistakes and improve through practice. In whole language, mistakes are called "miscues,"[5] and because errors are seldom random, learners and teachers search together for miscue patterns that will lead to new insights. Teachers strive to maintain a supportive and collaborative environment to keep embarrassment to a minimum and to encourage the taking of those risks that may unlock doors to new insight.

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working with ideas in ways analogous to sculptors drawing form out of clay or stone in *Teaching and Religious Imagination: An Essay in the Theology of Teaching* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). Roger A. Gobbel and Gertrude G. Gobbel call for giving children direct access to the stories of the Bible and describe teaching as assisting children in "playing with" the stories on their own terms; cf. *The Bible: A Child's Playground* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). Augsburg Publishing House is now publishing a new adult Bible study series called "Cross Signs" that emphasizes learner control and learner questions. See also the approach developed by Walter Wink in *The Bible in Human Transformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973) and in his other works.

[4] Louise M. Rosenblatt uses the image of learning as the creation of a poem of new meaning in *The Reader, the Text and the Poem* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

[5] Kenneth Goodman, in his early research in reading, coined the term miscue which he defined as any deviation from a text made during oral reading. He noted that *all* readers make miscues and that analyzing them provides a window into a reader's processes. See Yetta M. Goodman, Dorothy J. Watson, and Carolyn L. Burke, *Reading Miscue Inventory* (New York: Richard C. Owen, 1987).

For theologians the issue of the importance of what learners bring with them to the process of growth in faith raises the concern over the nature of faith tradition and the relation of experience to revelation. In our century the religious-education movement sought to maintain a vital dialog between the social sciences and theology, and some understood this as an over-reliance on human sources of insight as opposed to divine revelation found recorded in scripture. The neo-orthodox movement, at its strongest in the 1930s and 1940s, insisted that there was a sharp tension between Christology and the biblical witness over against humanistic and scientific sources of knowledge.

Today however many theologians are stressing the commonality of the language of the Bible and the "language" of the human religious imagination. Scripture shares in the natural human limitation of having to point to the transcendent God by means of analogy or metaphor. Whether they come from the Bible or from our own reflections, our analogies (and all talk of God is analogical) bear a truth that can be neither absolute nor timeless since they hold meaning only in process. These metaphorical images are the human tools for speaking of the God we cannot see by means of comparison with things that can be seen. Indeed it is of the nature of the Bible itself that it is a tradition-in-process, reflecting the cumulative insights of succeeding generations as they received accepted ideas and images, applied them to new experiences in changed contexts, and proceeded to hand on a tradition-in-process to the next generation.

Seen in this light the authority of the Bible rests not so much in representing absolute, ageless truth, as in modeling a process of experimenting in truth. Feminist and liberation theologians have argued that the truth of the Bible is limited and even distorted by dependence on one point of view, and that new, powerful, and quite appropriate interpretations are forthcoming when one respects the special experiences of the oppressed.[6] Critics of feminist/liberation approaches protest that truth involves more than politics and power, and that western civilization has bequeathed to our generation much more than a system of dominance and oppression by privileged white males. However we also believe the true cause of justice and democracy will be served by facing up to the way education and language have been used as tools of control, and by freeing learners to deal critically with both the limitations and powers of metaphorical-imaginative thinking.

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[6] For the role and limitation of metaphor and analogy in theology see Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); and David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Oak Grove, MN: The Winston, Seabury Press, 1975); and *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1986). For contrasting feminist approaches to the Bible see Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), and the works of Sallie McFague cited above. See also a fine summary of the ramifications of the feminist approach for Christian education in Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "Feminist Theology and Education" in *Theological Approaches To Christian Education*, ed. Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990). For liberation theology and education see next note.

How might Christian educators allow a fuller and more appropriate role for personal experience in congregational learning ministry? A first step is to insist that religious truth lies neither "out there" in the Bible or the ancient traditions of the faith, nor "in here" in the realm of personal experience and private imagination. Religious truth is instead experienced as, by the Spirit's living inspiration, we bring these authorities together to answer life questions within a community of faith. Whole faith teachers invite learners to ask their own questions and thus join this ancient process. They encourage people to reflect on their own life stories and on the ongoing activity of God in their lives. Teachers withhold judgment in order to allow students to develop fluency in speaking of doubts and of God as an agent in their world without fear of censure. They affirm the importance of provisional hunches and hypotheses as pavement on the road to understanding. They avoid workbooks and examinations that bring closure, but encourage learners to test out knowledge and new ways of knowing in the arenas of personal action and the life of the church.

3. Choose activities meaningful to the learners. Learning language may be the most complex thing people do in life, yet children do it easily and intuitively. They learn the rules of language as a byproduct of meeting their needs, getting things done, and becoming an active member of a community. Their learning is, in fact, accelerated because they are communicating for purposes that transcend learning itself. They learn to speak in order to get a glass of milk from a parent, or to find out why the sky is blue, or to gain the approval of a grandparent or big sister. Most of the very complex rules of language are intuited through authentic and real use, not through memorization. This is why whole language teachers give so much choice to learners. They invest a great deal of time and effort in determining what the learners want to say, write, and read. They listen to learners to discover what is meaningful to them. They help pupils learn about grammar, spelling, and style by engaging them in such authentic language use as writing letters to important people in their lives, and writing stories, songs, or poems to make sense of their world and of their own experiences and emotions.

Religious educators have sounded the call for the purposefulness of learning in diverse ways. Some argue that all learning should lead to mission, while others stress the goal of personal transformation. Liberation theologians are calling the church back to its prophetic role of raising the consciousness of the institutionalization of oppression in church and world. For them the effectiveness of education is to be tested by the way it helps people to examine and change policies and actions that aid or allow the abuse of power.[7] They claim that legitimate learning will arise from a constant dynamic of examining practice in the light of theory with the aim of reforming both for the sake of the oppressed. This search for a well grounded practice is called a "praxis" approach, and many have advocated that the church make strong use of the "praxis" method of action/reflection in its educational ministry.[8]

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[7] For an introduction to liberation education see *Language Arts* 67:4 (April 1990).

[8] For liberation theology and Christian education see the many works of Gustavo Gutiérrez, Paulo Freire, and the survey in Daniel S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1988). Action/reflection in its highly developed form of "shared praxis" as a

Most of the very complex rules of language are intuited through authentic and real use, not through memorization.

Whole language can help us find effective ways of making Christian education meaningful by building on a solid base. People who are not accustomed to "praxis" thinking in the micro-environments of their own family, school, or congregation, may not be well equipped to respond to the call for mission to the larger society or liberation of the "oppressed." They may respond to such calls out of a sense of guilt, resignation, or anger. A learning community approach that builds on the insights of whole language will give congregation members ample practice in critical thinking about individual and congregational life in mission. The people of God will develop confidence in their own voices and points of view as they join others in working out theology and strategies that work for peace, justice, and healing.[9]

Such a whole faith approach can help us be thoroughgoing in developing learning activities that are purposeful beyond the classroom. A first step should be to talk to learners of every age and find out what is important to them. Group planning of projects that will serve the congregation and community will be an infinitely rich source of activities from which everyone will learn. Young children may learn about prayer by illustrating a booklet of prayers for nursing home residents. Young adults may choose to learn about worship by planning and leading a Sunday service, or they may want to explore parent-child relationships by setting up an intergenerational forum on the subject. Our congregations can provide a great service to society by providing a place and format for citizens with diverse points of view to gather to discuss social and moral issues. Why not then give broader purpose to our adult forums by gathering comments and giving feedback to the denominational leadership on social issue statements, composing consensus statements for adoption by the congregation, or even forming advocacy/action groups to meet on an ongoing basis? Make even more of an impact by inviting neighboring congregations or citizens to join in these important tasks. Older adults have shown enthusiasm for sharing that allows them to reflect on their marriages, parenting, and jobs in the light of Christian values and beliefs.

A big part of making learning meaningful in congregations will be catching the vision that all that we do together has learn-

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method of religious education is best described in Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980) and *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious and Pastoral Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991).

[9] Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and James D. Whitehead stress the role of congregations as mediating communities in which individuals and primary groups learn how to work toward inclusivity and diversity in *Community of Faith: Models and Strategies for Building Christian Communities* (New York: Seabury, 1982). Whole language, or whole faith strategies can likewise help individuals practice the praxis thinking that can lead to the mission and ministry of justice.

Whole language teachers have recognized that sharing is a natural and highly productive way to learn, not to be denigrated as cheating.

ing potential. Choir practices, and meetings of the council, committees, and other groups are all natural settings in which to call on people to reflect deeply on their vocations, policies, and actions. Involving congregation members in learning where and when they are making decisions and doing ministry not only ensures that faith will be a meaningful and vital part of life, but it will also involve those great numbers of people who are not likely to join formal classes.

4. Provide an environment for collaborative learning.[10] The best learning takes place in a social context because people learn in order to be part of community. In spite of this, most schools actively discourage cooperation through a competition-based system of grading and the placement of grades on curves. The resultant pressure often prevents the development of learning assertiveness. This system discourages students from investing themselves, sharing what they know, developing personal voices for self expression, and exploring their own questions of meaning. A strong motivation to learn is aroused when pupils realize they are contributing to the life of the community by what they know and create. Furthermore, most of what we learn in life we learn naturally by watching or emulating others. Whole language teachers have recognized that sharing is a natural and highly productive way to learn, not to be denigrated as cheating.

Recently Christian educators have been trying to reclaim the historic and very appropriate role of congregations as centers for the collaborative learning of faith. The advantages of personal sharing in the classroom and group-centered learning projects have been recognized for years. New to the scene is the emphasis on mentoring and intergenerational work. Some congregations have teamed senior high school youth with adult mentors as a way to continue meaningful Christian education beyond the rite of confirmation. Intergenerational learning can be as simple as allowing older Sunday school students to interact with younger students in the classroom, or it may move beyond the classroom to intergenerational retreat settings, committee or task force work, or the establishment of ongoing groups that combine emotional support, prayer, and Bible study.[11]

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[10] For the theory and practice of collaboration in classrooms see Nancy Atwell, *Side by Side* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991) and Jerome C. Harste, and Kathy G. Short with Carolyn Burke, *Creating Classrooms for Authors* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1988).

[11] For intergenerational learning see Donald Griggs and Patricia Griggs, *Generations Learning Together* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976). The Roman Catholic Church has pioneered a highly developed program for involving the congregational community in the education of the adult learner who is being initiated into the life of the church: *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, study ed., rev., prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1972-1988).

The key to the success of collaborative learning in the church is the belief that God did not go out of business upon the completion of the Book of Revelation. Leaders must speak and act out of a belief that God is alive and performing miracles of love and peace in the lives of people today. Learners need to see that belief at work in the actions of their partners and leaders in education. They need to practice watching for and witnessing to God's activity around them—in the wonders of nature, in Word and sacrament, in the caring of the people of God for one another, in the inner voice of the Spirit, and even in the mystery of spiritual visions. We give learners the opportunity to practice that witnessing and watching when we ask them questions that open them up. Asking, "what does this mean?" may close their hearts and minds. Asking, "what does this mean *to you*?" or "what has God been doing in your life today?" or "how can we minister with this idea today?" may open us all to exciting new learning. Alert to the expectation that God is indeed creating, sustaining, nurturing, liberating, and healing them constantly, people will be encouraged to live out their faith in holy decisions and bold ministry.

A time for conversation

Whole language is a quiet but growing revolution in the teaching of literacy in our schools, and the chances are great that most congregations have one or more members who are familiar with whole language theory and practice. We think parish learning ministry leaders have much to gain by starting a conversation with those teachers now, and by working with them to make our congregations into more vital communities of faith and growth.

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Book Reviews

The New Handbook of the Christian Year. By Hoyt L. Hickman, Don E. Saliers, Laurence Hull Stookey, and James F. White. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992. 304 pages. Paper, spiralbound. $21.95.

This resource from United Methodist liturgists is an extremely useful and valuable resource for Lutherans. The Eucharist is taken for granted as *the* liturgy of the church, the church year is accepted as the armature for worship, and Easter is the focal point of the year. In all these respects we are in agreement.

In terms of specifics, just for example, we are offered two orders for a Good Friday tenebrae, an outline for an Agape Service for Maundy Thursday, and an All Saints liturgy. All services have commentaries on the texts. All eucharistic services offer seasonal collects and eucharistic prayers. Hymn suggestions are given for each Sunday and special day. Appendices cover symbolism, liturgical terms, bibliography, indices for scripture readings and psalms.

For a change, there is an invitation to reproduce any and all services to use in a local parish for the price of a citation in your Sunday or weekday bulletin.

The singular drawback to the volume is that it was prepared to correlate with the common lectionary, which Lutherans by and large are not using. The differences are greatest during the green seasons, but there is usually one lesson different between the two lectionaries on every Sunday throughout the whole year. Furthermore, the common lectionary is not printed anywhere in full so that you can observe the differences from our system at a glance; you have to look under each season, and then the way the lessons are organized is different from what Lutherans are used to, so it takes extra effort to comprehend the distinctions. But don't let this criticism stop you from buying this book; it belongs as a resource in the working sacristy and at worship and music committee meetings.

Jay C. Rochelle

The Church: Selected Writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn. Edited and introduced by Michael P. Plekon and William S. Wiecher. Afterword by Richard John Neuhaus. Delhi, NY: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 1993. 304 pages. Paper.

It says in Genesis, "Noah was a righteous man in his generation," and the Talmudic rabbis note that this phrase sets Noah into a context, with its relativity. In another generation, would Noah have been so righteous or merely one of a crowd? Noah stood out, but he stood out within a context.

Arthur Carl Piepkorn stood out within a context that we need to remember. In his classes were no women preparing for ministry; the issue is absent from his writing. In his classes, predominantly, were white men 22-23 years of age. These men had undergone a peculiar education to prepare them for seminary training: we read (or faked knowledge of) Greek, Latin, German, and Hebrew by the time we got to seminary. We had a basic background in philosophy, humanities, and English. We understood Lutheranism as a confessing movement in the western church. All of this could be and was presupposed by our professors.

As one concerned about the quality of ordained ministry in the church from a professional and an educational perspective, I am encouraged to see a younger generation of pastors and scholars take interest in earlier models of faith, life, and scholarly ministry. So I welcome this volume, handsomely produced by the ALPB, which gathers into one source the scattered writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn. But remember the context. It matters.

Piepkorn was essentially an essayist, not a writer of sustained and self-contained pieces we

call books. Martin Marty called Joe Sittler master of the paragraph. Piepkorn was master of the single-focus scholarly essay, many of which are collected here. Just in time, we might add: Piepkorn occupied himself with concerns that are in danger of being swept away in our ecclesial slide toward relevance and contemporaneity. Even those who sat in his classes who were *not* dazzled by his military precision, rabbinic wit, and awesome knowledge would admit that he was always and foremost a *churchman*, in the best older sense of the word. As Richard John Neuhaus remarked in his inaugural essay for the Piepkorn Prize at LSTC in 1984, reproduced in this volume, "there was nothing of himself that he would transmit, except insofar as he was the bearer of the tradition, of the sacred story." How such men and women are needed today, when the church's gospel seems to be drowning under the flood of personal and ideological agenda. Piepkorn was a confessional Lutheran.

In this time it seems almost strange to say "confessional Lutheranism"; the phrase rings quaint. The nineteenth century battles are over and forgotten. The twentieth century battles were won by the 1950s and now seem lost again, almost hopelessly.

What the confessional movement did best was to establish an understanding, perhaps even an attitude, and a set of parameters, loosely held but firm enough in clarity and content, about what "Lutheran" means. Today confessionalism seems to be reduced to the slogan "justification by grace through faith." It was the genius of Piepkorn, and few others like him, to make specific and concrete the meaning of confessional faith in liturgical and pastoral practice. Whether or not his program would work out in fine detail is actually beside the point, I think; we should not lose sight of his true gift and genius: he actually believed the confessional faith had practical ramifications in terms of how we worship, what we do when we worship, what the content of our worship should be, and what this means for service in the ordained ministry. Many other "confessionalists" held the intellectual content of the confessions but were unwilling to put them into practice as Piepkorn did, for weal or woe. This concern for practicality made him write on seemingly obscure topics like *the survival of the historic vestments in Lutheranism* or *altar decorum* (not included in this collection). But to him they were not obscure; they fit a pattern even if most of us could not see it yet.

So some of these essays are visionary and prophetic rather than scholarly, and all of them show Piepkorn's *tendenz*, which is to see Lutheranism as "evangelical catholic" (this is where the phrase comes from!) and confessionally based. The man makes you *think* about basic steps in theology and ecclesiology. As the black smoke continues to trail from the fuselage of confessional Lutheranism, and we nose-dive into God knows what end, Piepkorn is one of those whose writings might become a parachute.

Jay C. Rochelle

Revelation: Vision of a Just World. By Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Proclamation Commentaries, ed. Gerhard Krodel. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. 150 pages. Paper. $9.95.

This recent volume in the Proclamation Commentaries series contains three major sections: a 37-page introduction that argues for a rhetorical analysis as the appropriate method of interpretation; a 76-page commentary that traces the rhetorical movement of biblical text; and a 22-page conclusion in which Prof. Schüssler Fiorenza reflects on the significance of her own interpretation of Revelation.

Of particular value are the introduction and conclusion, where the author establishes methodologically a case for her rhetorical approach and then utilizes clues in the biblical text to reconstruct the rhetorical situation in which Revelation was fashioned. Her concise yet informative commentary does not vary significantly from other scholarly explanations of the textual details. In light of the commentary alone, it is thus not obvious that Schüssler Fiorenza's attempt at a rhetorical analysis of Revelation yields fresh exegetical insights regarding the text itself.

The real value of the rhetorical approach, however, becomes apparent in part three where Schüssler Fiorenza clarifies her reconstruction of the socioeconomic political situation of oppression (late first century C.E. in Roman domi-

nated Asia Minor) in which John shapes his "theo-ethical rhetoric" as a persuasive alternative vision of the future for his Christian audience. She concludes the following: (a) that Revelation dramatically asserts that God's rule of justice and judgment will overcome the demonic and death-dealing power of Roman rule; (b) that the experience of "tribulation" for Asia Minor Christians was one of economic and political oppression, not one of extreme and violent persecution; (c) that John's message sought to motivate his Christian audience to resist Roman culture and power; and (d) that John's vision had to compete rhetorically with other Christian voices much more willing to accommodate with the Roman rule.

It is the consideration of Revelation as a prophetic-apocalyptic rhetorical strategy within a concrete social context which sharpens our ability to distinguish fitting from unfitting interpretive uses of Revelation in today's church. For example, since John's vision in Revelation largely sets divine power over and against the coercive power of the Roman empire, it is inappropriate for some contemporary interpreters to stress "the book's depiction of cosmic destruction and holy war" (122) rather than its more important desire for ultimate justice. If, as Schüssler Fiorenza rightly sees, contemporary interpreters of Revelation are not in situations that cry out for justice but share in privileged socio-political groups, then they can easily distort its message by using it "to sacralize dominant authorities and preach revenge against their enemies" (139).

This small volume is worth reading. In particular, pastors, teachers, and theological students will benefit from the author's rhetorical approach to the text and context of Revelation. A careful study of the concluding part will assist the contemporary reader in avoiding illegitimate uses of Revelation.

James L. Bailey
Wartburg Theological Seminary

The Place of the Heart. By Elisabeth Behr-Sigel. Trans. by Fr. Stephen Bigham. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1992. viii and 180 pages. Paper. $11.00.

This book is a translation of a text used for correspondence study by the Orthodox Church in France.

Ms. Behr-Sigel works with the concept that there are six elements to Orthodox spirituality: Bible, especially Gospels and Psalms; early Christianity; Hellenistic intellectual thought; early monasticism; liturgy; and contemplation. Spirituality is itself a term not used by Orthodoxy; a more likely term would be "mystical theology" (Lossky), which attempts to preserve the double perspective: the faith of the church which is perceived by the faithful through liturgy and prayer. Throughout all these elements, several key themes emerge: the call to service and/or martyrdom, the joy and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of the eschaton. In the text, Behr-Sigel deals with the first four elements in brief chapters, and omits a chapter on the liturgical element; she says this needs far more coverage than she could give in this text. She spends no time at all with the icon, a surprising turn for a book which offers an overview of Orthodox spirituality. She spends most of her energy and pages on a well-done consideration of the contemplative life. Her book is thus a history and overview of Orthodox spirituality.

The last 40 pages are a meditation by Bishop Kallistos Ware, "The Power of the Name: The Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality," which can be purchased also in a separate pamphlet from Fairacres Press, Oxford, England, for $5. This is a wonderful introduction to the Jesus prayer, written in Kallistos' eloquent English and peppered with quotations from his storehouse of sources. The power of the name is to gather the disintegrated portions of our personalities into one and to center us in the transcendent holiness, the "burning bush" of God's presence. Bishop Kallistos' treatise enables Behr-Sigel to conclude the book with a practical guide to that prayer which is so central to Orthodox spirituality.

Jay C. Rochelle

Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible. By Emanuel Tov. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992. xl and 456 pages. Cloth. $39.95.

As Editor-in-Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls publication project, Tov possesses encyclopedic knowledge of the Massoretic Text of the Bible, of the Septuagint and all the other ancient versions, and, of course, of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves. This handbook, revised and expanded from an earlier version published in Hebrew, treats every subject the textual critic needs to know about, always providing ample bibliography and writing with a fairness and equanimity that are models for all scholars.

He explains simply and clearly items like vocalization, Massoretic notations, the kinds of text represented by the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Dead Sea Scrolls, how ancient texts were copied, and what the goals and procedures of modern textual criticism should be. Thirty plates at the end of this book illustrate what ancient manuscripts and what various editions of the Hebrew Bible have looked like over the centuries. Amid this thicket of issues he has to take positions on dozens of controverted questions, that naturally will not satisfy everyone, but will always provide the reader with sufficient reasons for Tov's own position and the data on which one could build an alternate viewpoint.

He divides the Dead Sea Scrolls into five groups. Twenty percent of the scrolls are written in the "Qumran practice," that is, they reflect a free approach to the text, frequent errors, and numerous corrections. Sixty percent contain the consonantal text of the Massoretic Text—thus they offer no new information. Five percent of the texts are either in the pre-Samaritan tradition or are close to the presumed Hebrew source of the Septuagint. The rest are unaligned.

At the end of the process of the composition of a biblical book there was one textual entity, which it is the object of textual criticism to reconstruct. Tov acknowledges, however, that textual studies sometimes uncover earlier editions of biblical books that had been circulated before the final edition was produced—the shorter text of Jeremiah witnessed to by the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls would be a good example. Tov views such discoveries as exercises in literary criticism, which may be enormously useful in reconstructing how a book came to be, but they are not really what he means by textual criticism. The text that we have in our Hebrew Bibles was not created by ancient textual critics, nor did the Massoretic Text finally triumph over all others. Rather, those who preserved it constituted the only organized group within Judaism which survived the destruction of the Second Temple.

Tov believes that the so-called rules of textual criticism have very limited value. This applies to both external and internal criteria, and to such handy guides as the preference for more difficult or shorter readings. He concludes that it is the choice of the contextually most appropriate reading that is the main task of the textual critic, and he acknowledges that this is as subjective a criterion as one could imagine. Common sense and mature judgment are the main guides.

This book will soon be viewed as a classic of biblical studies.

Ralph W. Klein

Meetings With Remarkable Women: Buddhist Teachers in America. By Lenore Friedman. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1987. 290 pages. Paper. $19.00.

Blessed are religions when women oppose, question, and protest while they journey on their spiritual paths. And blessed is the reader who is able to intuit that message from Lenore Friedman's book. Several important reactions may be experienced from reading this enlightening work. If one is drawn to the contemplative form of a religious life, Friedman's self-disclosing interviews with these seventeen meditation masters will arouse that sweet yearning for the ineffable One. The author, a psychotherapist by profession, is a seeker herself and shares openly her attempts to learn from these spiritual teachers.

According to theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, one of the primary ties that bind the world's classical religions is the "suppression of women's autonomous development" (1992 address to the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions). For the reader called to

global justice and ecumenism, Friedman's well-researched introduction explaining Buddhist teaching on women may further dialogue on the emergent feminine spirituality in one's own religion.

And, finally, a reader of this book may undergo a paradigm shift (the modern word for leap of faith?). Current analyses of creativity and problem-solving tell us the best solutions come when we are able to shift our mindsets and see troublesome issues in new ways. Then we are able to discover possibilities not seen before. Paradigm shifts come most readily to those at the fringe of the core group. The pioneer thinkers at the fringe need great inner faith to stay firm in the validity of their findings, for the core group cannot accept readily what it cannot comprehend. Paradigm-paralysis prevents participation in real solutions (Thomas Kuhn: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*).

The seventeen remarkable women of this book found themselves on the fringe of the core group of their religion because of their gender and because their faithful quest for God led them to challenge entrenched ways of perceiving and experiencing the Real, God, No-thing, the All. Evident throughout their stories are their conviction, their freedom and courage, their love of truth, their intense discipline, and their ineffable love of the all-glorious One. The reader may ask: Would religions really suffer by listening to their women on the spiritual path? After reading this most hopeful and joy-filled book, this reviewer thinks not.

Jean Schwartz
Chicago, Illinois

No Longer Be Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Women. By Cheryl Anne Brown. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992. 256 pages. Paper. $17.99.

This volume is a very interesting reflection on the first century Jewish treatment of Deborah, Jephthah's daughter, Hannah, and the witch of Endor. The author contrasts two first century documents which rewrite biblical stories: *Biblical Antiquities* by an unknown author called Pseudo-Philo and *The Antiquities of the Jews* by Flavius Josephus. She also shows how other contemporary Jewish writings portrayed these women.

Pseudo-Philo generally enhances the portrait of these women by transformations and elaborations. He portrays Deborah as a counterpart to Moses—a prophetess, covenantal preacher, witness, leader in battle, and able to control the cosmic elements. He elevates the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter into a symbol of the destruction of Jerusalem. He shows Hannah reflecting Israel's own story, a noble character who serves as leader, teacher, and nurturer. Interestingly, Pseudo-Philo denounces the witch of Endor as a (Gentile) magician who leads Israel astray.

By contrast, Josephus generally depreciates female characters as emotionally unstable and in need of the authority of men. He limits Deborah's role to that of prophetess. He has the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter express her willingness to set aside her own welfare for family, people, and country. He portrays Hannah as weak and in need of male supervision. However, Josephus has made the witch of Endor into a positive character who models the Roman ideals of generosity, compassion, and hospitality.

The book is clear and engaging. It supplements the traditional treatments of male figures like Moses and Abraham and demonstrates well the diversity of portraits of women among writers of this period.

David Rhoads
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians. By James D. G. Dunn. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. 277 pages. Paper. $19.99.

In this volume, Dunn collects nine essays, written between 1982 and 1988, on related themes. They are arranged not according to their date of origin but according to the progression from Jesus to Paul. The fact that they were published previously gives him the opportunity to respond to criticism. He attempts to show a connection between Jesus' attitude toward the Torah and the Pauline position.

In the essay on Mk 2:1–3:6, he presents convincing arguments for a pre-Markan collection of these controversy stories. He believes that Mk 7:15 was spoken by Jesus, however, not in the exact form in which Mark presents it. In general, he believes that the picture of the Pharisees and of the sinners in the Synoptic Gospels is quite correct although we should not generalize. The significance of the conversion of Paul is his being called as a preacher to the Gentiles. In Galatians, chapters 1 and 2, Paul wants to emphasize the independence of his gospel and apostleship but also its acknowledgment by the leadership in Jerusalem (though on p. 261, n. 33, Dunn says that Paul's principal concern in Galatians 1-2 was not to defend his apostleship as such). The Antioch incident (Gal 2:11-18) has always been a puzzling problem for interpreters. It is not surprising that Dunn's treatment of this case is the longest chapter in his book. A large amount of the essay deals (very informatively) with the historical context of the incident. Dunn rejects both the possibility that Jewish Christians at Antioch had completely given up Jewish practices and the possibility that the people from James required circumcision of the Gentile Christians, and advocates an intermediate position so that, e.g., no pork was used but the delegates of James demanded a more scrupulous observance of dietary laws. This has some appeal, but it offers other difficulties because it is hard to describe this position and Paul does not enlighten us sufficiently. It also does not explain Peter's behavior. Dunn is probably right in saying that Paul did not prevail against Peter. He further believes that this meant a break between Paul and Antioch; however, there is no proof if Acts 18:22-23 is to be believed. Dunn also advocates the Province theory for Galatians, a view which is not defended widely today.

In chapter 7, Dunn accepts Sanders' description of Judaism as "covenantal nomism" but criticizes his view of Paul as unsatisfactory. He points out that Paul attacks exactly the basic Jewish understanding of the marks of a Jew (circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath) as leading to justification. "Given that in Jewish understanding covenantal nomism is not antithetical to faith, then at this point the only change which the new movement calls for is that the traditional Jewish faith be more precisely defined as faith in Jesus Messiah" (196). Dunn believes that the only "work" which Paul castigates is circumcision. Dunn thinks that in this way the continuities and discontinuities between Paul and Palestinian Judaism can be more coherently constructed. This is not very convincing, for Paul speaks of "works of the law," and his opposition to these works, even to the law, is much more pronounced than Dunn would accept. In the additional notes he attempts to refute similar criticism.

Chapter 8 identifies the "works of the law" as the distinctive marks of Judaism (circumcision and dietary laws), the social function of the law. Paul opposes this function. But why doesn't Dunn draw the conclusion that thereby Paul opposes the Jewish law as such?

The same question must be asked of Chapter 9 where Dunn deals with the theology of Galatians. Actually Dunn comes close on p. 250 when he mentions Paul's assertion: within the law = outside Christ (5.4). He likes Sanders' term "covenantal nomism" because it includes God's prevenient grace and because nomism should not be misunderstood as legalism. But, according to Dunn, covenantal nomism is closely tied to national identity. Circumcision would not be the way to enter the covenant but is the first obligation under the covenant. Paul argues against covenantal nomism: 1. The expression of life within the covenant should be consistent with its beginning. 2. God's promise from the beginning had the Gentiles in view. 3. As long as the law is not misunderstood in restrictively nationalistic terms, it still has a positive role to play. Against this view, I must ask: how can the law *not* be understood in these nationalistic terms? It seems to me that there is no way in which a positive attitude toward the law can be combined with Paul's arguments in Galatians.

Greek accuracy leaves something to be desired. Frequently Dunn is quite detailed and technical, analyzing individual terms. I wished he would write with more clarity. The book presupposes familiarity with the current discussion, such as Sanders, Hübner, and others.

Wilhelm C. Linss
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Humanity in God. By Elisabeth Moltmann-Wedel and Jürgen Moltmann. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983; reprint, 1993. xvi and 133 pages. Paper. $11.95.

Elisabeth begins with the biblical women Mary Magdalene and Martha. She presents the NT image of these two women and then briefly traces how they came to be interpreted in subsequent centuries. Throughout Christian history both Martha and Mary Magdalene are subject to what she calls "patriarchal distortions" of interpretation. For example, in the four Gospels, Mary Magdalene is presented as an example of leadership and discipleship. However, despite this exalted position in the NT, in subsequent centuries she became identified as the model of sin and sexuality. Elisabeth argues that this change in perception is the result of patriarchal distortions.

Two findings of feminist theological research guide Elisabeth's analysis. First, in the early church there was equality between men and women and they shared the same tasks of leadership. Second, the church and Christian theology, since the early church, is permeated with patriarchal characteristics and structures. Elisabeth desires to recover the traditions, images, and significance of Mary and Martha that were suppressed by patriarchy. She believes that women's suppressed history can be recovered.

Jürgen shifts the focus and offers theological reflection on the significance and power of the Trinity for liberation and freedom. In chapter four, Jürgen argues that freedom does not come in possessions or lordship, but rather, true freedom is in God and in the event of resurrection. In the next chapter, Jürgen tells the trinitarian story of Jesus. He argues against Harnack's thesis that the message of the gospel lies only in the Father. Jürgen argues that Jesus' life, death and resurrection exemplifies that the message of the gospel is trinitarian. The actions of Jesus on earth show that Jesus was acting in community with the Trinity. For Jürgen's trinitarianism, community is central. The unity of the Trinity lies in the interpersonal community of the Trinity. The way that the Trinity acts and lives in community with itself is the model and vision for a future humanity without domination and submission. In chapter six, Jürgen lays out some of the implications for a vision of society in which the Trinity is the primary model.

The final chapter is a dialog between the two authors that sums up the theological and anthropological concerns which they address in their respective parts of the book.

Humanity in God originally grew out of the February 1982 E. T. Earl Lectures and Pastoral Conference held at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. It is a very insightful and stimulating book. Elisabeth offers many significant observations about Mary, Martha, and the negative effects of patriarchy that would be particularly fruitful in Bible studies. However, caution needs to be offered: recovering the lost history of women is risky business and can never be completely conclusive because it does not deal directly with a text. The recovery process involves making inferences from surviving art, legends, and literature from fringe groups. Aside from this caution, Elisabeth offers important insights and connections. While Jürgen's style and focus are different, he is equally interesting to read. Chapter five, "The Trinitarian Story of Jesus," is an especially rich resource for preaching and Bible study. I highly recommend this book.

Jeffrey S. Zell
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Briefly Noted

Since I grew up around and have lived among Amish and Mennonite people and have subsequently spent time also with Hutterites, I continue to look for sources of literature to help pastors and congregations members who live in areas of the U.S. where such folks abound: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, southern Illinois, northeastern Iowa, the Dakotas, and eastern Montana, chiefly. We need to observe that the Amish community has *doubled* in size in the last ten years, to some 150,000 adherents; the Hutterites continue to grow. If you add the Church of the Brethren, which is an anabaptist/pietist community that developed later in history but is grounded in the same beliefs and values, the anabaptist community is sizable indeed. In light of the appeal to LWF by the international anabaptist community that Lutherans consider repealing the anathemas in our confessions against Anabaptists, some enlightenment would be generally helpful for Lutheran clergy.

Over the past years, we have reviewed a number of books from this tradition. The most notable presses are Herald, Scottsdale, PA (Mennonite); Plough, Farmington, PA (Hutterite); Brethren Press, Elgin, IL (Church of the Brethren); and Good Books, Intercourse, PA (Amish and Mennonite). Forthwith some new titles briefly noted.

Mirror of the Martyrs. By John S. Oyer and Robert S. Kreider (Good Books, $9.95). Lutherans publish creeds and confessions; Anabaptists publish histories of martyrdom. This book is an introduction and digest to the *Martyrenspiegel*, the big book of martyrs which stands next to the Bible and the Ausbund (hymnal) in many Amish homes. A sample of the 104 copper etchings from the original book are reprinted; these show in gory detail the deaths of the martyrs at the hands of good Christian magistrates and sheriffs, with clergy both Roman and Reforming waiting to hear final confessions at the roasting. This is a history which ought not be forgotten, and shows the kinship between peoples' church movements across centuries.

A Treasury of Mennonite Quilts. by Rachel and Kenneth Pellman (Good Books, $19.95). Lavishly illustrated with over 100 well-done photographs, this book gives personal histories of quilts in private and published collections and demonstrates all the primary patterns found among the Mennonites in the 19th and 20th centuries. In contrast to Amish quilts, the Mennonites use more patterns, colors, and textures in the execution of their quilts. Not a pattern book but definitely worth the price for those interested. A wonderful gift book in these years of the return of the quilt.

Readings From Mennonite Writings New and Old. By J. Craig Haas (Good Books, $14.95). A 20-page introduction on Mennonite spirituality precedes the body of the text in this 440-page book, which is intended primarily for daily devotional readings. Indices in the back of the book tell briefly about the authors of the individual pieces, the chronology of the pieces, biblical references, and topics. Although the bulk of the writers are Mennonites from the four-century history of the movement, enough pieces are included from Amish and Hutterite and Brethren writers to have warranted calling the book "Readings from Anabaptist Writings"—except that "anabaptist" is still a term of opprobrium for many of these Christian folks. A very well done and well rounded book.

Who Are the Amish? By Merle Good (Good Books, $19.95). Beautifully illustrated with many color photographs, this book offers a concise introduction to Amish culture and history, faith and hopes, interaction with the rest of American culture and countercultural stance. For all the falderol about the film *Witness* which came out the same year as Merle Good's book, that movie did show the distinction between Amish and secular culture with stunning clarity.

Good's text is unsentimental; he is not out to make the Amish paragons of virtue or spirituality. He notes problems Amish communities face without embarrassment or shyness, and he points to the central ambiguity of Amish life, namely the twin search for perfection and for humility wherein one may often cancel out the other. This affords a welcome accompaniment to a more scholarly but less accessible text like Donald Kraybill's *Riddle of Amish Culture*, or the book next reviewed here.

A History of the Amish. by Steven M. Nolt (Good Books, $9.95). This first book by a young Mennonite church historian is itself the first to survey the history of the 300 years of Amish life. It is filled with interesting stories, interconnections among various groups, and specific problems confronting the Amish communities in the twentieth century. Many charts, tables, and sidebars highlight the text throughout the book; the publication would have been enhanced by a listing of these following the spare table of contents. More compellingly written than many history books!

Community in Paraguay: A Visit to the Bruderhof. By Bob and Shirley Wagoner (Plough, $13). This book's 280 pages includes 60 illustrations by Leslie Holland and over 90 photographs. To recall: the Bruderhof is the ongoing communitarian experiment, initially founded by Eberhard and Emmi Arnold in the early decades of the twentieth century, which subsequently united with the Hutterite communities. Following Eberhard's death in 1935, the community came on hard times, first from the Nazis and then from exilic conditions. In 1941 the community removed to Paraguay to start all over again; in the fifties Bob and Shirley Wagoner visited the community for six months. Subsequently the community moved again to New York, and it has remained there, growing and spreading throughout several adjacent states and also in England and, most recently, in Germany.

The book is more than a simple reflection on time spent away from college and graduate school; the Wagoners were perceptive enough to see both the joys and the sorrows of communitarian life, and they raise the three principal questions that continue to define the Hutterites and others who would be like unto them: what is the relationship and what the boundaries between church-community and secular society? What is the relationship, in the church-community, between the individual and the group? and lastly, How can the church realize the vision of New Testament Christianity in each age? The struggle with these questions is the real heart and soul and worth of the book, although the illustrations add charm and the photographs give a good depiction of a past phase in Bruderhof life. JCR

Study Bibles aid readers in understanding and interpreting the biblical text. **The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms** (Thomas Nelson, $25), written by members of the St. Athanasius Orthodox Academy of Santa Barbara, California, uses the New King James Version as its text. The notes, written in the spirit and tradition of Greek Orthodox theology, are extensive and useful, even for those who stand outside that tradition. They give traditional views when discussing historical matters (date, author, etc.), though not without knowledge of critical alternatives. The volume includes Morning and Evening Prayer according to the Orthodox rite (in English), the lectionary tables for the liturgical year, the lessons for the seventy saints and martyrs commemorated by the Orthodox, an introduction to the Orthodox Church and its doctrine, a glossary of biblical and Orthodox terminology, suggestions for "interpreting the Scripture," and an English concordance. Representations of eight paintings in icon style enhance this handsomely produced study Bible, which will prove helpful and edifying for all Christians, not just the Orthodox, but especially the Orthodox. *Edgar Krentz*

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Preaching Helps

Ash Wednesday—Good Friday, Series B

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger of peace, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isaiah 52:7)

The Price of Peace

It looks like a typo, as though the title should say "prince" of peace. But I write this in the week when Israel and the PLO put their signatures to papers of mutual recognition in the hopes of bringing peace, princely peace, even divine peace, to a tortured area. And the price may be high.

Hawks in both camps are outraged at the blossoming of the olive branch and the flight of the dove. They prefer to nurse their memories of battles and bullets, attack and counterattack, blood shed and wounds suffered, maimings and killings. They can neither forget nor forgive. To do so would mean swallowing too hard, giving up the right to hate and the instinct for vengeance. Doesn't the shedding of the blood of my family demand that I shed the blood of the murderers or die in the effort?

Peace is harder and perhaps even costlier than war. Can real enemies make real peace?

Lent gets to the heart of the human condition, demanding that we examine the foundations on which our lives are constructed. If the foundation is faulty, the whole structure will settle and crack and even collapse.

Is it all a matter of keeping score and not letting others take advantage of us? Or are our lives built upon an incredible act of divine generosity, the "justification of the ungodly"? God has concluded a costly peace with us, so that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Lenten cross is a window into the heart of God and announces the ground not of Christian life alone but of all healthy and authentic life.

In this season we are blessed with the words of two intriguing pastors. One is just beginning her ministry and the other has lately entered a very active retirement. Both live close to the texts, delight in the good news, and know how to clothe the good news in good words.

Jean Lebbert, once the food editor of *SUNSET* magazine, is associate pastor at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Lodi, California. She and her friend Margie Brown recently took first place in the Spam cooking contest at the Alameda County Fair, and they entertained hopes of winning at the national level and using the prize money to subsidize a trip to the Holy Land. What a wild mix of cookery and theology!

Our other contributor is Professor Ed Schick. After graduate studies in New Testament at Princeton Seminary he served at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, and then at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. In retirement he still teaches and serves, as he meets "fairly regularly," he says, with a group of local pastors for the Tuesday morning text study and continues to ponder the movement from study to pulpit, from lectionary to sermon.

Thanks to these two friends and colleagues!

And peace to you proclaimers of God's peace!

Robert H. Smith
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Ash Wednesday
February 16, 1994

Psalm 51:1-13
Joel 2:12-19
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

FIRST READING

One of the weighty Greek nouns is *dikaiosyne*. We hear it twice in the Ash Wednesday readings. In the second lesson (Paul's appeal to be reconciled) the word translates as the familiar "righteousness" (NRSV, 2 Cor 5:21). In the Gospel (Matthew's directive to secrecy) it has become the less familiar "piety" (6:1). Here religious expression is not to be a parading of disfigured faces but a private doing, seen by God "in secret" and rewarded also "in secret." Despite this emphasis (six times), the liturgy reminds us that we are "dust" and provides less than secret "ashes" on the forehead as a reinforcement.

The second lesson, starting in the middle of a sentence itself in the middle of a finely-honed paragraph, is only half a lesson. The plea to "be reconciled to God" (5:20b) dies "awithering on the vine" apart from its rootedness in God's prior reconciliation (5:18-20a). Before we get to the "righteousness" of 5:21 we should have heard the earlier words beginning at least as far back as v. 18. To postpone this hearing until 5 Pentecost B is to have de-stabilized what we do hear on Ash Wednesday.

Of course the first lesson has to come "first," and yet it sounds "final." Joel is a prophet, and more than a prophet. He has crossed the threshold into apocalyptic. Withering drought and clouds of devouring desert locusts (resembling all too ominously hordes of enemy war-horses)—all this, and more, has taken center stage for a final curtain of the great-and-near "Day of the Lord," (1:15; 2:1,11). To "prophesy" in the midst of ecological disaster is one thing. To paint the crisis as "apocalypse now" is something more. It is not artificial to make a connection between Joel's "integrity of creation" (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1992, 3, 876) and the references to "creation" in the "exhortation" of the Ash Wednesday Liturgy.

"Yet even now," even this late, there is time for Judah to "return" (NRSV, 2:12-13). "You" (pl.), you elders and farmers and ministers of the altar, all of you together in your semblance of a restored Judah after exile, you get back to the Lord! This is the key prophetic directive, followed quickly by the key question, "Who knows?" (2:14). Who knows whether God will not also "turn and repent, and leave a blessing?" In NRSV "repent" on the part of God has become "relent," though *nicham* of the Hebrew and *metanoeo* of the Septuagint are not that defensive about repentance on the part of God (2:13 & 14).

If Judah were to "return" without pretense—and we, too—who would dare say what the consequences could not be? Who knows whether...? This is where Joel leaves us, with as haunting a question as we'll ever face. Is it ever too late? To expand the earlier metaphor, if God too can "turn and repent," what finally has to stay in cement?

If however it was late for Judah in Joel's day but not too late, it was also too early. The Day of the Lord was "near" but not that near. The solidity of things carved in stone remained immune to lasting change, and history had to await the later visitation of the spirit upon "all flesh" (2:28). What are *we* waiting for? EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

We are told in Joel to blow the trumpet, but we are told in Matthew not to blow the trumpet. So, when do we toot our own horn?

In Bible times, trumpet blasts were the sirens. The blasts varied depending on what they were signaling: a time of jubilee, war, peace, new moon, the beginning of Sabbath, prayer hours, the death of a notable, warning of approaching danger, excommunication, exorcism, 9-1-1 to God. Jerusalem must have sounded like a brass band.

Today, we pray for the same reasons that ancient Israel sounded the *shophar*. We pray in times of jubilation, war, peace, newness, worship, death, danger, brokenness, healing.

We don't pray because we're on the right side. Trenches have two sides, no matter why they are dug, and people on both sides of trenches pray. And if we pray in order to become more

righteous, God would rather we hold our breath and remember that the position of Savior has been filled.

However, we would hurt ourselves if we gave God the silent treatment. God lives longer.

I was with a woman as her husband lay in intensive care. His body was shutting down; he couldn't talk, couldn't swallow. His hands were tied to the bed rails because he would pull out the tubes. His wife said, "When all this started, he just wanted to go home, and he never got to. I know that God is preparing a place for him and that God will take good care of him. I know it's time for him to go." She paused, then said, "Unless there's a miracle." What a great prayer! I'll never forget it.

God wills that we toot our horn whenever we need God to be God. Our need in prayer is to thus glorify God.

As we enter Lent, time for prayer and fasting and almsgiving, we re-stake that claim—that we don't do these acts which benefit ourselves for our sakes! We do them because the doing glorifies the One who fought alone in the trench dug by sin so that the blast of Resurrection could pierce creation's waiting silence. It is an amazing claim, that we benefit whenever we glorify God! JL

First Sunday in Lent
February 20, 1994

Psalm 6
Genesis 22:1-18
Romans 8:31-39
Mark 1:12-15

FIRST READING

Unclear on what to call the Abraham-Isaac story, we remain unsure about preaching on it. Do we call it "typology": Abraham prefiguring God who spared not his own son Jesus, and Isaac carrying wood prefiguring Jesus bearing the cross? (See the second lesson, Rom 8:32 & 34.) Or do we focus on one of the two rather than on both: calling it then "the testing of Abraham" (v. 1) or "the sacrifice of Isaac" (v. 3)? If the former, the lesson functions as a counterpart to "the temptation of Jesus" in the Gospel. "Testing" or "tempting"—what's the difference? One word can express both, in Hebrew and in Greek. Abraham "passed" the test on the mountain in Moriah as a model of both "faith" (Heb 11:17) and "works" (Jas 2:21). What about Isaac? Jewish tradition delineates "the binding of Isaac" (v. 9), and Islam grounds its "festival of the sheep" (v. 13) in Ibrahim's sacrifice of Ismail at Mecca. *Fear and Trembling* is what S. Kierkegaard in 1843 called his one hundred troubled pages on the Genesis story. He was consumed by Abraham's own trial (*Anfechtung*), with an almost total unconcern for the feelings of Isaac and Sarah.

This text has been called "a dangerous text" (*Currents* 17:6 [December 1990]: 476), and so it is. A father binding his son in order to cut his throat—what does that sound like in contemporary nightmarish situations when a child may no longer distinguish friend from foe even at home? Exalting father Abraham at the expense of Isaac, and in the process ignoring mother Sarah, cannot carry the day the way it once did. Whose "fear and trembling" has it turned out to be?

We can give the second lesson a "First Reading" by punctuating it. I once heard Paul Scherer preach a sermon on the importance of correctly punctuating our religion. It's a matter of putting the question marks, the periods, and the exclamation marks where they belong. Questions are passionate, persistent, and confrontive. Paul was not afraid of them: "What then?"—"Who?" (four times in the text before us). Answers end in periods: "It is God who justifies" (period). "It is Christ Jesus who died, was raised, and intercedes" (period). Then the exclamation: "No, in all these things...!" If the exclamation point isn't there (NRSV), put it there! If it is there (TEV), keep it.

The Gospel is an example of extreme Markan brevity, two texts in one reading, and they couldn't be any briefer and still be texts. Verses 12-13 are hardly more than a mention of the temptation of Jesus, and the presence of wild animals and ministering angels is noted without comment. Verses 14-15 are equally succinct in bringing Jesus the preacher on the Galilean scene. Jesus has returned from his test in Judea, preach-

ing the gospel of God and saying four things in doing so: making a dual announcement and extending a double imperative. First, the announcement: the time (*kairos*) has been filled up, having come to full term like a pregnancy. The other half can't wait. The rule of God is already so near it can be touched. It's "at hand." Then comes the directive in the form of two present imperatives: "You" (pl.), do an "about face" and hold it! "You" (pl.), stake your faith on the good news and keep it there. EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

I saw Superman III with my sister and her kids. In the movie, a bazillion-dollar screen version of a 25¢ comic book, Superman is exposed to some bad kryptonite, which brings out his dark side. At one point, for example, the sooty and soused man of steel, complete with five-o'clock shadow, breaks bottles behind a bar with his x-ray vision. It climaxes with the good, but nerdy Clark Kent going one-on-one in a wrecking yard with the bad, bad Superman.

When we got home, my nephew went off by himself and sat on the front porch. I sat with him for a bit. He was not easily getting over seeing super good turn so sour.

Sometimes our hearts get wrenched when we hear the grizzly Genesis 22 story and hear Mark's blunt blurt that the Holy Spirit drove the Savior of steel to the devil's ball park.

When Paul asks, "If God is for us, who is against us?" we mutter, "God."

Will not even our disgust at God separate us from God?

Especially a God who would send the Only Son *to die*. Talk about child abuse.

In all of scripture, in all of the stories smeared with just as much blood as angels, God never takes away from the fullness of life, the fullness and potential of creation. God saves it all—the hallelujahs and the hells. Maybe because the outcome of creation will come out of it all.

Perhaps God had been hanging on the very edge of heaven as Abraham and Isaac made the journey to Moriah and had more riding on the outcome than even Isaac did. Perhaps this was just as much, or more, a test of God's faith as Abraham's. We shudder to think about it and cloud the story with etiologies and justifications, like there was no real test of faith. Yeah, sure, it's a story explaining why Jews don't sacrifice humans and do blow a ram's horn. JL

Second Sunday in Lent
February 27, 1994

Psalm 115:1, 9-18
Genesis 28:10-17(18-22)
Romans 5:5-11
Mark 8:31-38

FIRST READING

Jacob is on his way from Beersheba to Haran for two reasons: to run for his life from brother Esau (27:41-42), and to seek a non-Canaanite wife to keep the bloodline from grandfather Abraham pure, at the request of both mother Rebekah (27:46) and father Isaac (28:1). At lonely Bethel Jacob has a dream.

Four points need to be made: 1) The ladder or stairway (a word used only here in the entire Bible) is for the ascent and descent of God's angels *on* it (*epi*, LXX), with God at the top, or at the bottom by the side of Jacob (vv. 12-13). The ladder is *not* the means of human ascent, either for Jacob or anybody else. 2) The experience is an encounter of the holy kind. It's awesome. What Jacob did not know before he knows now. God is in that place (vv. 16-17). 3) Jacob's subsequent "vow" leaves a lot to be desired. With the pronoun "I/me" occurring no less than ten times in the three verses (20-22), the vow could serve as an appropriate model for any "me generation." 4) Beyond the Jacob story in its own right, there comes eventually the new reality in the life of Jesus with the angels of God ascending and descending, not on the stairway of a dream but *upon* (*epi*) the Son of Man (Jn 1:51). See "Son of Man" in the Gospel for today.

Mark 8:31-38, at the heart of Mark's Gospel, throbs with three questions and answers. 1) Who

is Jesus? He is the Messiah. 2) What *kind* of Messiah? Jesus is the "suffering, rejected, killed, and rising again 'Son of Man' kind of Messiah." 3) And what *kind* of *followers* does this Messiah want? He wants the "self-denying, cross-bearing, losing-their-life-and-finding-it" kind of disciples. There is nothing secret about this; Jesus says it "quite openly," and almost in the same breath he refers to the "will-come-in-glory Son of Man" (8:31-38).

In gender-difficult terms, Mark has thus made the important point that there can be no "Son-of-Man" Messiah without a number of "sons of men" invited into his company. The term sounds exclusive; as "*the* Son of Man" it is exclusive. There is only one Son of Man in the Gospels, but he does not lead the lonely life of an isolated individual. The Semitic term is generic and therefore inclusive. In spite of its technical usage, "son of man" must in English also be read simply as "humanity or human being." A son of man is a person, any person, no more male than female. Who now is invited to accompany the Son-of-Man Messiah on his Lenten journey? All people are being summoned, to the breakdown of prejudiced preference or gender exclusion. Anybody willing to push the question of hidden identity beyond a superficial disclosure becomes eligible to join the company. We cannot assume that we have understood the "messianic secret" (Wilhelm Wrede) fully enough ever to have it comfortably filed away. Mark is light-years removed from Jacob's self-serving vow at Bethel. EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Halfway through the Gospel According to Mark, two Bethsaidans have trouble seeing the forest for the trees: a blind man whom Jesus has to heal twice because the first time the man doesn't look intently, and Peter, hailing from Bethsaida (Jn 1:44), whose vision gets clouded by his own messianic expectations. Two Bethsaidans see and see but do not perceive and hear and hear but do not understand.

The site of Caesarea Philippi, where pagans worship their impotent gods, is rich story stuff, where even our notions of what is impotent get shattered by Jesus the Christ.

When rehearsing Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" last Christmas, our choir members weren't pushing out that "omn" that drops a whole octave. So it sounded like they were singing, "For the Lord God impotent reigneth"!

Indeed, in Jesus, God reigns impotent, if the power that was relinquished was omnipotent. But indeed, in Jesus we get a glimpse that there are many powers and a higher power, just as in Jesus we see that what we often make our god is merely one of many gods and there is a God Most High.

We can look and look and listen and listen, but until we relinquish our confidence in our abilities and admit our own impotence and become the helpless that God died for, we will never gain the intention that will take us up to perceiving and understanding. All the details of running and maintaining a congregation will consume our vision. All the ladders will be used for clearing cobwebs, replacing light bulbs, climbing up only to ceilings and roofs, and will disappear out of our dreams. Messiah will remain merely the stuff of expectations. And all the crosses on all of the churches will just look like so many trees. JL

Third Sunday in Lent
March 6, 1994

Psalm 19:7-14
Exodus 20:1-17
1 Corinthians 1:22-25
John 2:13-22

FIRST READING

Today's Gospel, the so-called "cleansing of the temple," is narrated by John in a manner different from the synoptic telling.

First, *context*: In contrast to the Synoptics, John has put the scene of temple conflict with its violence near the beginning of Jesus' ministry and not toward the end. And at this beginning he has sandwiched the incident between the beauty and peace of the wedding at Cana and the night visit of Nicodemus.

Second, *designation*: Calling it "the cleansing of the temple" has become so embedded there seems little point in trying to change it. John's view is however much more serious. It is not a matter of reforming the temple but of getting rid of it.

Third, *terms*: The temple is described in the three stages of the narrative with distinctive and contrasting terms: 1) in vv. 13-15 the temple is a *hieron* (twice)—the entire complex—with the "cleansing" taking place in an outer court; 2) in vv. 16-17 the temple is a "house" (twice), "the Father's house" desecrated as a "market-house;" 3) in vv. 18-22 the term is *naos* (three times), naturally understood to be "the sanctuary" but meant by Jesus to be "his body" instead.

Fourth, *kind of language*: The temple is a literal structure, but as the body of Jesus the term has gone beyond the literal. As the former, it is in process of "being built;" as the latter, Jesus "will raise it up."

Fifth, *time*: The temple has been under construction for "forty-six years;" Jesus will raise it in "three days."

Sixth, *zeal*: A fire burning within is consuming Jesus (Ps 69:9). This early, according to John, he is in deep conflict with the status quo of an entrenched temple leadership, to say nothing of Jesus' attitude toward the complacency of the populace.

What conclusion is called for? It could be stated like this: A "temple" we need, but who needs "the temple"? "Destroy this temple" (v. 19, NRSV)—only John recorded this tough word. It was a scary prospect then, and it continues to be. "Destroy"—that's a second person plural imperative. Yes, imperative. "You" (pl.) do it!—not the Roman military and not Jesus, accused of subversion, but "you," the leaders. It has to be said to the lasting credit of Rudolf Bultmann that he hit this point (and many others) in as incisive a commentary on John as has ever been written. He published it in Germany in 1941. Do we remember those terrible times? If we're too young to have been around, let's remember nevertheless.

According to Bultmann, "Destroy this temple" is not a condition (if perhaps you might) but an "ironic imperative" (go ahead, do it), in the manner of the Hebrew prophets like Amos. As Raymond Brown puts it, in another great commentary on John, this expression means (building on Bultmann): "Go ahead and do this and see what happens." The scary thing is that it did happen. The temple, begun by Herod in 20/19 B.C.E., was finished at long last in C.E. 63. And it lasted exactly seven years. That fate of the temple is so like "the shaking of the foundations" that a "once-over-lightly" sermon on "cleansing" misses the more serious point of the text, both in its Johannine setting and in the ongoing human predicament. EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Fellow pastors, please admit with me that sometimes the old close-your-eyes-open-the-Bible-and-point still works. It's one of the unsung miracles of our Holy Scriptures. Recently, it unearthed for me Prov 4:7a, "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom." Period. Thank you very much.

Great formula. Try it with righteousness and you get law and gospel in a nutshell—The beginning of righteousness is this: Get righteous!

As a fledgling pastor, I struggle teaching the Ten Commandments. The discussions always get tangled up in works righteousness. I find that a lot of Christians don't believe that they are saved.

Jesus, mixed in with God's commandments and the refreshing waters of baptism, gets us righteous. Righteousness, which is the result of salvation, is our starting point, not our goal. Our goal is simplest stated at the end of Ezekiel 18 (which I found by the aforementioned method as well): "Turn, and live."

God's commandments, summed up best by our Savior as "Love God and love each other," are good guidelines by which we can make good decisions and live. Will you love God by doing it? Then do it! Will you love others by doing it? Then do it! It won't help you love God? Don't do it!

Granted, the decisions aren't simple, but the guidelines are clear.

I get zealous, like Jesus did in the Temple, at insisting that Christians believe that they are saved and that they can live in this hard-edged, wicked, old world. So many Christians cower behind their failure to keep the law and their

horror at how others don't even try. It's not our job to keep the law or make others keep the law. Our job is to live. We are no different than the money changers if we think that the business of the church is to lead people to salvation. The business of the church is to be the place where people find out that God loves them so that they can begin to love God and each other and, thus, live.

Period. Thank you very much. JL

Fourth Sunday in Lent March 13, 1994

Psalm 27:1-9 (10-18)
Numbers 21:4-9
Ephesians 2:4-10
John 3:14-21

FIRST READING

At Mt. Hor, on the way from Egypt to Palestine, the Israelites carried out their religious vow of obliteration warfare against some Canaanites and their towns (Num 21:1-3). Moving on, the people turned to scapegoating and faultfinding against God and Moses, "Why have you...?" Then came the snakes (fiery, poisonous ones, *seraphim*), and "many" of the complainers died. Upon confession of sins and intercession by Moses, God ordered the leader to make a snake figure and to elevate it on a pole for victims of snakebite to look at and "live" (vv. 4-9).

The Gospel for today opens with a succinct comparison between the snake of Moses and the Son of Man (vv. 14-15). Succinct though it is, the "just as... so also" formula has at least eight specifics for us to note. To begin, the three grammatical subjects, predicates, and direct objects balance each other: 1. The subjects are Moses and God (the passive "be lifted up" makes God the ultimate actor). 2. The predicates are the identical "lifted up." 3. The direct objects are "snake" and "Son of Man."

Four additional elements are within John's comparison but are not strictly parallel. 4. The Moses story took place "in the wilderness;" in John the setting is Jerusalem for a nighttime conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus, leading into the symbolism of light and dark (vv. 19-21). 5. In the Moses story the response was to "look at" the elevated serpent (omitted here); in John the hoped-for response is to "believe in" the raised up Son of Man. 6. The outcome in the Moses story was to "live;" in John it is to "have eternal life." 7. As crucial as any of the eight points is John's use of the tiny Greek word *dei* (not in the Moses account): "It has to be, it is necessary." What happened to the Son of Man in 3:14 "had to be." (Compare next Sunday, John 12:32.) The final point lies outside the immediate comparison but belongs to the larger picture. 8. It's the fact of "being sent." The snakes in the wilderness account were "sent" by God before the snake figure could be raised. The Son had to be "sent" by God before he could be lifted up as savior (3:17). Snake/serpent symbolism is not an isolated phenomenon. It comes as close to being universal as anything we have. The Bible has no monopoly on it, and within the Bible it starts earlier than Numbers 21 and continues later than John 3. Between the two we read the startling story of 2 Kgs 18:1-12. Hezekiah, King of Judah and noted religious reformer, shattered the snake figure of Moses because "until those days" the Israelites "made offerings to it" (NRSV).

Summary:

1. The "just as... so also" formula in John 3:14-15 does not equate snake and Son of Man but pinpoints their common feature of being "lifted up." The movement is upward; something transcendent is under way.

2. King Hezekiah demolished the holy object of Moses because its transcendence had been trivialized. What is to keep the cross from being trivialized?

3. "Believing in" is a constant of the Gospel text (five times). Not-to-be-missed is the ethical dimension. If "truth" is something to be believed, then for John it is also something that needs to be "done" (v. 21).

4. That the lifting up of the Son on the cross was "necessary" to show the extent of God's love is enough to give pause to any exegete and preacher. EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Again the children of Israel complain, "Not cardamom cake again!" So God sends snakes, "fiery snakes." When you get bitten, you get two choices: 1) immediate amputation of the infected limb or 2) death. Moses intercedes, and God sends exactly what is needed: faith.

No need to understand or make an oath or perform good deeds or repent. Just look. If you don't believe, you don't look.

What a sight. To survive, you get to behold the very thing that is killing you.

In the Gospel According to John, Jesus draws the parallel between the bronze serpent and himself, "Just as the serpent was lifted up, so must the Son of Man be lifted up... so that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life."

Now, Jesus is God incarnate, God in humanness. So what is killing us? Our humanness?

Mark Twain once said, "There's an awful lot of human nature in people." And, indeed, the leading cause of death is birth!

However, there is more. Jesus is God in humanness. Is it God in us, being saved and sinner, that is killing us?

We hide in the shadows, in pain, in loneliness, in fear, because we are ashamed of who we are as sinners in the light of God's grace. "I hid because I was naked." "I woke up this morning, and I can't do a thing with my sin." Being human, when put into God's light, can feel like being second rate. I wonder if a person could never, never be exposed to God's grace and if they would so loathe their nature.

Recently I asked a group of faithful, active, Lutheran women to make a list of things about themselves that they feel good about. It stumped the group. Only a few could think of anything. (They could all think of things they should do.)

The gospel, the good news, tells us that God loves us as we are. We're good enough! God loves us with incredible, unconditional, wide-open love, and all God wants is that we love ourselves too, so we can be freed to love others.

Come on! Hurry! You're dying! Look at Jesus. Look at God in you. JL

Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 20, 1994

Psalm 51:11-16
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33

FIRST READING

The first lesson is the oft-quoted prophecy of the new covenant, to be heard also on Maundy Thursday C and Reformation A, B, C. What "special" connection it may have with 5 Lent B is not obvious to me.

The second lesson will be read again on Good Friday. Bringing to mind Jesus' Gethsemane experience (without the name), the lesson connects with the "troubled" prayer of Jesus in the Gospel. Missing however is the priestly emphasis so basic in the Letter to the Hebrews. The double immediate context of Heb 5:6 and 10 has been lopped off. In spite of this unfortunate short-circuiting by the lectionary-makers, the second lesson is an important entree into the humanness of Jesus. Though a Son he had to learn obedience like the rest of us.

The "Greeks" of the Gospel are otherwise unknown. Responding to their request to see "Jesus," Jesus chooses not talk about "Jesus" but about "the Son of Man" for whom the hour to be glorified has arrived. Three words come together in the discussion: "glorify" four times, and "hour" and "now" three times each. "Glorified?" To become fruitful a seed must die in its germination. To preserve life is to give it up. How one gets from the request of the Greeks to the reply of Jesus is not easy for the modern reader to see.

Outwardly the scene appears peaceful. For Jesus and "the ruler of this world" it is however time in a pressure cooker. "The hour has come... now my soul is troubled... now is the judgment of this world." First, the personal level: "Now my soul (psyche) is troubled" (v. 27) or more candidly, "I am afraid" (Bultmann). How can Jesus plead with the Father to rescue him from this hour when this is the very hour for which he has come

in the first place? No wonder there came a resounding voice from heaven.

Second, we enter a cosmic dimension. "Now is the judgment (*krisis*) of this world (*kosmos*). Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out" (v. 31). "Out" gets a double emphasis in the Greek text. "The ruler of this world" or "of the world" is an expression found only these three times in the NT (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The demonic world ruler, Satan himself, has been judged and will now be expelled, thrown out, dethroned.

To quote this far-reaching declaration is easy. To say something substantive about it comes hard. They are words of the first century, and we have to do our speaking at the end of the twentieth. The long centuries between the two times has proved that whatever the expulsion at the first-century "now" may have been, the loss of devilish throne did *not* bring the end of demonic power. Demonic powers were monstrous then and have continued so, not least in our time. In our Western strait jacket of linear time and calendar dates we can find this to be a mountain-sized difficulty. Linear time is however not the whole story. Time is also existential, an ever-present "now" of responsible decision, then and now. The cautious words of Raymond E. Brown are in order: with Jesus having gained the victory over Satan "in principle," ours becomes the task of working it out in "time and place" (*The Gospel According to John, I-XII*, 1966, p. 477). EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In the din of the Gospel reading, everyone speaks and nobody gets listened to. Gentiles at the Jewish feast speak up. Philip talks to Andrew; Philip and Andrew talk to Jesus; Jesus talks and talks; God chimes in from heaven; the crowd starts debating. We need E. F. Hutton here! We need a silence to take it all in.

I heard a story once about a man who had been in a car crash. His girlfriend or wife (I can't remember) was screaming; the paramedics were diagnosing; the radio was scratching. Finally the man called out for quiet. He said, "I'm dying, and I want to be able to pay attention to what it's like."

Jesus' public ministry is dying here. His time to be with us on earth, to teach us and touch us and heal us, to be real fact in real history, is coming to a close. Yes, it is for our sake, but can't we put ourselves aside even for a moment? Everyone is clawing and clamoring to get to Jesus for their own purposes. The only person in the whole 12th chapter of John's Gospel who hasn't spoken is Mary, who is also the only one who has done anything for Jesus.

There is a lot in all of these texts about getting a new heart and submitting to God's good will. Maybe this Sunday we need to stop praying and stop trying to convince ourselves and others and stop debating and defending and give our hearts a chance to take it all in. While we have the light, let us believe in the light, that we may become children of light.

I am trying to get around and visit the members of my congregation, to begin to hear their story and begin to fall in love with them as their pastor. A few times, when I have called to set a date, people have put me off because, right now, they are too busy. There's too much din in their lives for them to let a pastor come over and care for them.

How many of us have allowed the din of living to take over and have crowded out God's presence? JL

Sunday of the Passion
March 27, 1994

Psalm 31:1-5, 9-16
Zechariah 9:9-10
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 14:1–15:47
or Mark 15:1-39

FIRST READING

We have a choice. As the Gospel for Passion Sunday we can read the whole of Mark's account of the crucifixion, beginning "two days before" (14:1) and ending with the two Marys at the burial site (15:47). Choosing this route we face the question (if not in the study then certainly by the

pew), "Sermon too?" Or we can read almost all of Mark 15, beginning early on Good Friday (v. 1) and ending with the centurion's exclamation at the moment of Jesus' death (v. 39). This shorter reading still doesn't answer the question of sermon or homily. *LBW* decided that this is Passion Sunday in preference to Palm Sunday but also provided for a "Procession with Palms," with Mk 11:1-10 as the "Procession Gospel" in Series B (*Desk Edition*). So we have a choice.

The first lesson is Zechariah's "Palm Sunday" prophecy of the humble and peaceful king riding into Jerusalem, quoted by Matthew and John but not by Mark.

The second lesson (in all three series) is Paul's stirring appeal to the Philippians to have the self-humbling mind of Christ.

My choice is the limited one of concentrating on Mk 14:1-11, a masterful prologue to the passion narrative. It consists of three texts presenting the common theme of *the opportune moment*. Standing in the wings, the priests and scribes (vv. 1-2) and Judas (vv. 10-11) are waiting for their favorable moments. Center stage (vv. 3-9) is the woman without a name making use of the only opportunity she had for doing a beautiful deed. Literally, "She worked a beautiful work" (v. 6). The words of Jesus could even be an exclamation, "What a beautiful thing she did for me!" She seized her only opportunity: "She did what she could" (v. 8, TEV).

There is an almost kaleidoscopic energy in the material of 14:6-9. (a) Jesus comes to the defense of the woman, (b) because she has done something nice to him, (c) who unlike the poor would not always be with them, but (d) whose imminent departure makes the anointing an anticipation of his burial, and thus (e) her deed will be given a permanent place in the gospel to be preached in the whole world. What certainty did the woman have about Jesus' reaction? What if he were to align himself against her on the side of those incensed over the waste (v. 4)? She had no alternative but to receive the evaluation *from* Jesus. The two hostile parties also knew about the limitations of the time line. To get from here to there the priests had to proceed "by stealth" (v. 1). Judas had to look for his propitious moment (v. 11) because not all moments were propitious for what he had in mind.

The difference in the case of the woman is the reversal of roles. Unidirectional time becomes multidirectional. The one line from her to Jesus is met by the other line from him to her. The roles of giver and receiver are reversed. The woman who gives receives an honored place in the world-wide gospel at the hands of Jesus the giver who has been the receiver. Her act is a beautiful deed not on the basis of the monetary value of the ointment, or for any other consideration, but solely on the basis of Jesus' acceptance of it for what it is. It is to be told in memory of her "all over the world" (TEV). That was and is an existential moment. EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The world is going crazy.

Upstanding Jewish leaders are obsessed with killing during their celebration of an historic escape from death.

Jesus' followers make a mountain out of a flask of oil. Then, in the midst of all this talk about wasting money, one of them trades Jesus for money.

Jesus prearranges for two of his disciples to inconspicuously follow a highly conspicuous water-toting man. And it works!

All twelve slip into denial and fear and weariness and counting sheep. "One Lamb of God—zzzzzzzzzz."

A kiss becomes betrayal.

At the "trial," no one blinks an eye when the chief priests, who couldn't find one not-false witness in their assembly, now bring many accusations before Pilate.

The crowd, the jury, are uselessly susceptible, like any crowd in a farce.

Soldiers are so powerless they come in full force against one man; they are reduced to mockery, like little boys teasing a puppy.

Even our narrator lets us down: who, at this point in the Passion, cares about the whereabouts and lineage of a passer-by?

The cheap wine of the poor mingles with bitterness fit for kings. "This cup is for all to drink." All the taunting jeers hurled at The Word, which now grasps for breath, are powerful statements of truth. The sun burns out. The Word cries

out, then is suffocated for good. The temple crumbles from the top down. A soldier breathes a solitary oath.

When the crowd had all gone home for something to drink, a bit of something to eat, only a few women, not even his mother, only women who had forsaken the expectations for women and a man who was looking for the kingdom of God (okay, okay, so our narrator also gives us some wonderful details), see the place where Jesus lay.

Everything rubble around our feet, we are left like the young man in Gethsemane, stripped of everything we thought we had and hoping to God things will be better in the morning. JL

Maundy Thursday
March 31, 1994

Psalm 116:10-17
Exodus 24:3-11
1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (18-21)
Mark 14:12-26

FIRST READING

An unusual feature of *LBW*'s Liturgy for Maundy Thursday is that the sermon comes first. The selections for the day form a rich and unified whole, but the question persists: "Why even try to cover it all?" Psalm 116 is one of several Hallel Psalms sung at Passover time. Note "the cup of salvation" in v. 13 and Mk 14:26. The first lesson takes us back to origins in the "book" and "blood of the covenant" at the time of Moses. Note "my blood of the covenant" in Mk 14:24. The second lesson is Paul's affirmation of the communion of the blood and body of Christ (in this order) and his stern warning to the Corinthians not to compromise the cup and table of the Lord with the cup and table of demons. Paul's reference to "new covenant in my blood" comes later (11:25).

Mark's account of the Last Supper/Lord's Supper moves in four steps: preparation (vv. 12-16), announcement of betrayal (vv. 17-21), meal (vv. 22-25), and finally, "out" to the Mount of Olives (v. 26). Noteworthy is the emphasis on painstaking preparations (some previously arranged and some yet to be made) for the eating of Passover. Key words are "make ready" (three times) and "furnished and ready" (once). Something extraordinary is about to take place. Careful [and secret?] plans need to be made and carried out. The calendar reference (v. 12) is not as precise as the writer must have thought, or if precise it is not as accurate as today's research historian would like. Was it a Passover meal? A Passover atmosphere dominates the scene, but the evidence is equally divided on the question itself. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1992 (4, 242), is right: "We simply cannot determine whether it was a Passover meal or not."

The shocking announcement of the betrayal gets almost as much space as was given to the preparation. There is a betrayer among us, "one who is eating with me." "Surely, not me?" How else could the disciples respond, one by one? It can't be me, can it? Or can it? The answer is allusive, no naming of a name. Rare in Mark and scary and sad is the *men... de* construction which follows (on the one hand this... on the other hand that): "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!" (v. 21, NRSV).

Now comes the special part of the meal which for all its importance gets less space than either the preparations for it or the intrusive betrayal announcement. In the course of their eating, Jesus takes a loaf, says a blessing, breaks and gives to them and says, "Take, this is my body." Then he takes a cup [after the meal?], gives thanks [*eucharisteo*], gives to them, all of them drink from it, and he says, "This is my blood of the covenant being poured out for many." Jesus presides at the meal. It is therefore the "Lord's Supper," though Mark doesn't call it that. Paul does in 1 Cor 11:20. The meal concludes on a note of finality: "Never again" (v. 25). The Lord's Supper has thus become "The Last Supper," a farewell meal "until that day." Immediately ahead, however, is the going "out" to the Mount of Olives.

Mark is as simple, as direct, and as brief as that. There is no diagram, no blueprint, no time table for locating "that day" (not even for C.E.

2000 millennial fever). We have no more than a personal word. It's the promise of the Lord that, on the basis of what has been (all the way back to the covenant of Moses) and especially of the critical events yet to come (as they leave their upstairs room), there will again be a drinking "new" in the kingdom of God. We have only the promise, and maybe that's enough. EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

These texts, broad, sweeping strokes, are an intense attempt to give the hearers a sense of the huge story of salvation.

With the Egyptian Hallel sounding in the background, we zero in on a single room in which is being played out the new Passover: a new Lamb, a new rescue, a new commandment, a new freedom (for us to whine about).

And then there's that statement Jesus makes: "It would have been better if this man had not been born." Uttered just before he breaks out the bread and wine, and we don't hear Jesus say, "Given for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin," this statement stabs and stings.

Better for whom? For Judas? Better to never live? And how would Judas know that then? Was Judas nothing other than a pawn in the game or was he making his own choices, and is not existing at all better than making bad choices? Why would God do so much to let us retain free will then? (whine, whine, whine)

Better for Jesus? Would it have been better for him to hang on the cross having been betrayed by someone other than one of his Twelve? If there had been no Judas, would there have been no betrayal? Would there have been no crucifixion? And no resurrection (the first fruits of our resurrection)? Would that be better for us?

Can we look at this big picture and lay all the blame—and, then, maybe all the credit—on Judas?

The Greek word is *kalos*. Jesus used it in the scene just previous to the Upper Room scene, as the description of the act of the woman who had anointed his head, "She has done a *kalos* thing to me.... And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Truly, though, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, Judas is always remembered, too—for the not-so-*kalos* thing he did!

The terrifying thing is that Judas goes ahead with the betrayal anyway, caught in the web of pride and fear, his heart as hard as Pharaoh's. And God goes ahead with things too. So resourceful—you work with what you have.

We get the sense tonight that there's a yet even bigger picture than the story of our salvation. JL

Good Friday
April 1, 1994

Psalm 22:1-23
Isaiah 52:13–53:12
or Hosea 6:1-6
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1–19:42
or John 19:17-30

FIRST READING

"We have a great high priest" (Heb 4:14). Only Hebrews interprets Jesus Christ like this. Specifically, he is the High Priest of the Christian Day of Atonement. Having been thoroughly tested, this priest knows what it's like to be human. Consequently we need have no reservations about coming into his exalted presence. On the contrary, we are encouraged to draw near to the "throne of grace" in total confidence. Being called to account before a throne of power and justice, this we can understand. (See Ps 89:14.) But "throne of grace?" The words sound like a misfit, though the unknown writer doesn't think so. The two words are paired only here in the entire Bible. Unique are also two other pairs, "receive mercy" and "timely help"—all this in just one verse (4:16).

Tested and perfected, the high priest has become the cause/source of "eternal salvation." Common though the words "eternal salvation" may be when used separately, they are most rarely

used together, found in Isa 45:17 but only in Heb 5:9 in the NT. "Throne of grace" and "eternal salvation," how did this come about?

To get the picture, we need to turn to the second lesson for Monday of Holy Week (Heb 9:11-15). On the Day of Atonement (as formerly the Levitical high priest), Christ the new high priest, "not through the blood of goats and calves but through his own blood entered once-for-all into the 'Holy of Holies,' securing an eternal redemption" (9:12).

We note four elements of this breath-taking statement:

1. "Eternal redemption" (or "freedom forever"): we have to credit the author of Hebrews for this great expression, found only here in the entire NT.

2. "Into the Holy of Holies": this is not an entrance into the inner sanctum of the temple, dark and mysterious. On atonement day the new High Priest went not inside but "outside the gate" (13:12) to Calvary, the ghastly place of public execution.

3. "Through his own blood": Hebrews is not the least squeamish about blood. Among the twenty-one usages, see also 9:14; 9:22; and especially the shocker to the Levitical system in 10:4.

4. "Once-for-all": this adverb of time is assigned a powerful role in Hebrews. Among the nineteen related references see also 7:27; 10:10; 10:14. "Once-a-year" but *only* once a year was the rule for the Levitical *yom kippur*. *Only* once and once-*only*-for-all-time-and-eternity—this is the rule for the Christian Day of Atonement. What audacity! Only Hebrews says it so emphatically. Can a particular event be this far-reaching? Who says it can't?

We may have something to say on Good Friday after all. EAS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

During Holy Week, on T.V., one can watch Jesus' Passion story practically every night. There are grand Hollywood versions, hippie versions, Spanish versions, Italian versions, satirical versions; there's probably an animated version. Maybe this year there will be a dinosaur version.

It is an utterly amazing story, with all the stuff of compelling entertainment—where you can take all the bad stuff because you know that the star of the show is not going to be destroyed.

The lines of distinction get blurred. Is it myth or history? Is God suffering or calling all the shots? Is Jesus a role model or a hero (kids, don't try this at home)?

Pilate asks the best question, "What is truth?" but then he walks away before Jesus can answer!

No matter what we do to pretty it up, make it user-friendly, or put it into terms so that we can academically esteem it, the reality is that Good Friday compels us to worship and adore the offensive: almighty God playing the game on our terms, and we come off looking like something no decent-minded deity would bother saving, let alone dying for.

But our offense melts into tears and gratitude. It is precisely when we cannot love ourselves that we despair, and then this beautiful Passion story intercedes and reminds us that when we were most unlovable, God worked the hardest to love us. When we cannot love ourselves and lose hope, the only thing we need is to hear that somebody loves us. That news shatters the despair. If someone loves you, you can't be all bad.

We have a great high priest who is not only able to sympathize with our weaknesses, he loves us, weaknesses and all, so that we can love ourselves and find the confidence to let ourselves love others.

Truly, there's nothing better than a good love story. JL

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Northern Christmas

By Margaret Sprowl
as told to Maria Wette

It was time for Joseph, a trapper of the Cree people, to check his trap line. And he took with him Mary, his wife, who was with child. "The beauty of the bush, trees heavily laden with snow, white, glistening snow, the quiet harmony of the universe, the nearness of animal life will bring her joy," he thought. The Cree people have a very special sense to hear the heartbeat of nature and to take strength from it.

And as Mary and Joseph made their way to their destination, snow began to fall, the stars in the sky were covered by heavy clouds, and soon a full blizzard enveloped them. There was no way to continue, nor to turn back. That was when Mary felt the first pangs of birth. And she gave birth to her first born son in the soft snow. And she wrapped him in pelts and furs, lynx and fox, rabbit and even wolverine. And she tied him into a papoose* which she placed in an ice bound trapper's canoe they found. And as they marveled their son, behold, the snow had stopped, the sky cleared, and the most wonderful Northern lights danced over the firmament, like a giant curtain being drawn open to a great drama unfolding.

There were fishermen in the vicinity, tending their ice fishing. And they became aware of the Northern lights. They felt the Great Creator Spirit being at work, bringing once again the harmony of the universe to perfection. And behold, the angel of the Creator appeared to them, white as snow, lighter than the Northern lights, singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." Despite the night hour it was so light, and the fishermen, rough fellows, accustomed to beat the dangers of nature, were full of fear. Was the Creator Spirit calling them to responsibility? And again the angel sang: "Fear not, behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will come to all people. For to you is born today, in the Northern winter, a savior who is Christ the Lord."

"What is that?" they asked one another, after the angel had left. "Let's go and see!" And they walked towards the light. And they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe in the papoose, and their hearts filled with joy and gladness because they had come to understand that the Great Creator Spirit is good and benevolent without end, towards them and all. And they fell on their knees and worshipped the child.

Far away, far beyond the trap line, far away from where the child was born, beyond the land of the Cree people, even beyond the tree line, Inuit (Eskimo) hunters were in the tundra, searching the skyline in the semi dark for caribou. They were wise elders. And they saw a star they had never

---

*A papoose is a frame to carry a baby on the back. It is made of leather with beads, and the baby is tied in with straps. Paooses are used by the Cree, in conctrast to the Inuit, who carry their babies in amoutiks, hoods on their coats.

before observed. It was not their well known North Star which gave them direction in the dark. The star was unusual and pointed South. And they knew that the Great Creator Spirit had set the star into the sky to guide them to a very special newborn child, a great good shaman not of Inuit blood, but great enough to be acknowledged by all peoples: a shaman endowed with the power of the Great Spirit, a shaman being part of the Great Spirit.

And they set out with choice gifts for the child, fur from the strong Polar bear, ivory from the whale, and blubber. They followed the star to the tree line. But the star led them still farther south, into the bush country where they had never been before, nor desired to go. But the star was so strong, it seemed to have a life of its own, and it motioned the Inuit hunters to follow into the land of people foreign to them.

They stopped at the first Indian band, and those were not of the Cree nation. The hunters sought out the chief to inquire about the child. But he did not know. So he consulted the shaman, and they assumed the child to be born of Cree parents. And they were afraid. Could it be that a great competitor was born, great enough to drive them away from their land? So they sent the hunters on their way, asking them to stop again on their return route to report, that the chief might go and pay homage too.

But the wise hunters from the North had a dream, warning them to return by another way, because the chief, being afraid, had nothing good in mind. And so they continued, pushing their way again through unfamiliar terrain. High forests blocked their view; only the star in the sky was visible and went with them.

And they found the child, and the cosmic event of his birth the revelation of the Great Creator Spirit, penetrated the place where the child was with his parents.

And they paid homage to him whom they sensed to be the child of that Creator, born not only to his Cree people, but to all the world, born to grow up and to proclaim peace to all people, holiness of the earth, the handiwork of the Creator, and love to all creatures of that earth.

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