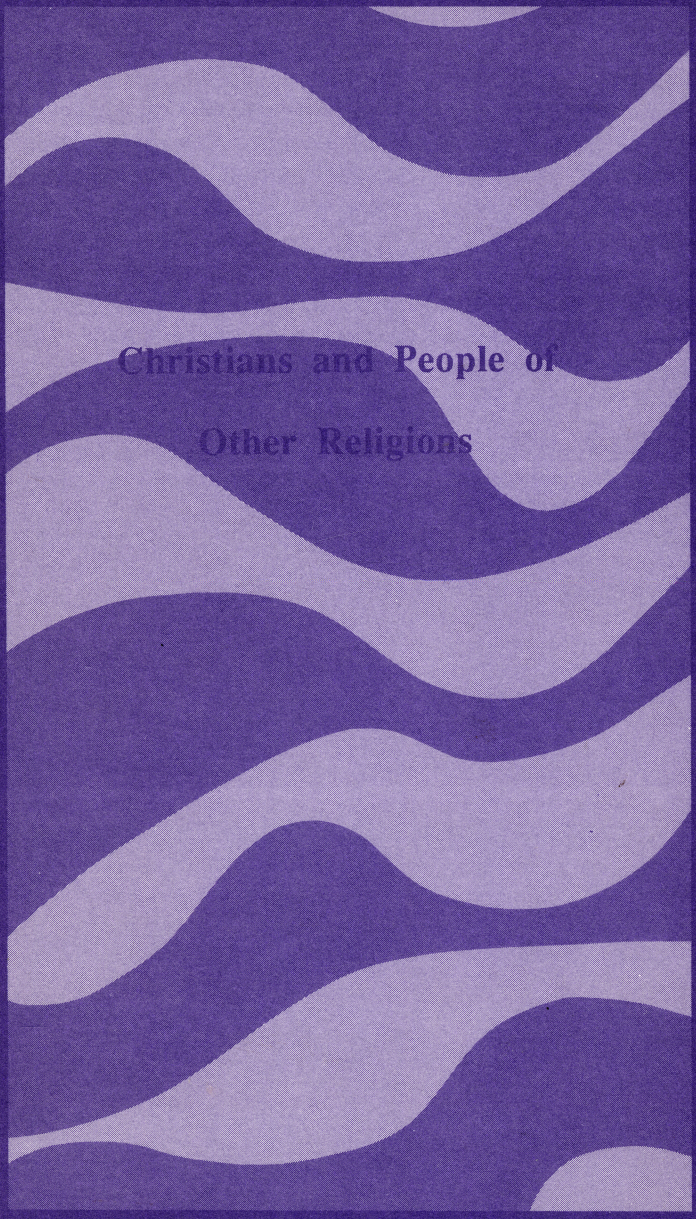
February 1992 Volume 19 Number 1



CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

in cooperation with
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

Editor: **Ralph W. Klein**
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Editor of Book Reviews: **Jay C. Rochelle**
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

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

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

Assistant Editor & Circulation Manager: **Peggy B. Eldredge**

Editorial Board: **Karen Battle, Mary R. Bischoff, Marcus Hess, Robert Klonowski, Dennis Laskey, Randall R. Lee, Ruth Manz, Walter May, Richard L. Ramirez, Mark Reshan, Mary Vance-Welsh.**

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

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

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

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615.

Contents

Christians and People of Other Religions 2
Ralph W. Klein

Christian Theology and the History of Religions 5
Carl E. Braaten

Christianity and Teaching about Other Faiths 14
Theodore Ludwig

Relations between People of Different Faith Commitments (Toward a Christian Paradigm) 21
Kyaw Than

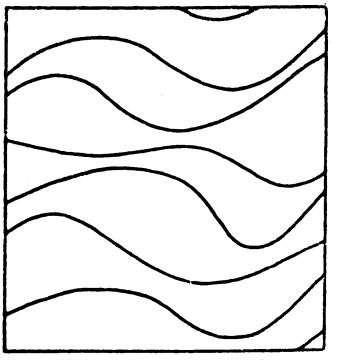
A Lutheran College Approach to the Study and Teaching of Religion 29
Roland E. Miller

The Case for a Worldly Christianity 42
Paul P. Kuenning

Book Reviews 52

In Defense of Dialogue
William E. Lesher
Inside back cover

Drawings by Michael Murschel



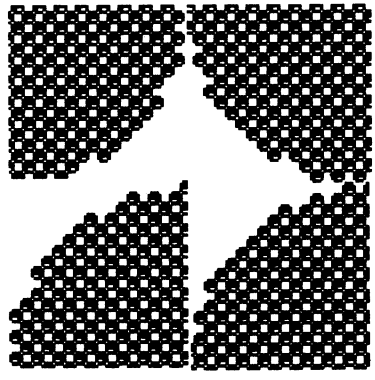
Preaching Helps 69
Series C
The Resurrection of Our Lord—Seventh Sunday of Easter

Christians and People of Other Religions

What do we share with people of other religions? What might we learn from them? How do we describe them? For what should we hope about them?

These questions face not only the Division for Global Mission, but also each one of us as we ponder the mystery and the reality of other faiths. Increasingly, Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim neighbors may be across the corner as well as across the sea. Witness, respect, mission, dialogue, relations, humility—which will it be? The first four essays in this issue address these questions; they were originally delivered at a 1990 ELCA consultation on religious pluralism.

Carl E. Braaten maintains that there is no such thing as a generic salvation to which the various religions merely provide different labels. The idea of the "anonymous Christ" at work to reveal and save in all the religions is a projection of arrogance and a reduction of the significance that attaches to the person and work of Christ. There is no generic salvation to which the various religions merely provide different labels. One aim of the Christian mission is to create space in the other religions for a future that will not negate them, but will fulfill them in accordance with the revelation of the divine love and mercy revealed in the ministry of Jesus and the apostolic mission. The Christian attitude toward people of other religions is one of engaged interest in how God is at work preparing people to encounter the finality of the eschatological kingdom that was announced by Jesus and that is sacramentally experienced within the community of believers.



Theodore Ludwig urges Christians to recover a sense of the mystery of God's presence among all the peoples of the world and to see our lives as pilgrimages within that mystery. What we Christians have traditionally said about other religions, drawing from the inner logic of our theological heritage, does not completely ring true with their experience. We need to develop a way of affirming the Christian vision completely and finally, and at the same time affirming God's mystery and truth present in the other religions. Studying the other religions reminds us of the variety of meanings of "salvation" also within the Christian tradition. We cannot witness without at the same time loving, serving, and being truly present to people of other religions as fellow humans, and that means sharing what we are and receiving from them their sharing of what they are, including their religious beliefs, hopes and dreams.

Kyaw Than proposes that we speak about relations with people of different faith commitments, not of encounters with them. Inter-religious relations today are characterized by an emphasis on persons, neighbors, or partners rather than on doctrines and religion. Many early missionaries knew nothing of the faith of those whom they tried to convert. As a paradigm of relations with people of other faiths, he describes a Christian ashram in India, where people attempt to express Christian obedience in the midst of Hindu culture. He also recalls a meditation on the crucified Christ in Thailand, in which the speaker linked the incarnation, death, and emptying of Christ to the ideas of impermanence, suffering, and non-entity that characterize all beings according to Theravada Buddhism. Dialogue must involve daily life, with the paradigm of the cross determining its manner and content.

Roland E. Miller explores the challenge of teaching religion in a Lutheran college. He distinguishes between the goals of a Christian college and a seminary. In a college, faculty and students are united in the scholarly task of creating a careful and accurate description of the

actual faith and practice of living religious people in a spirit of understanding love. We must view religions not in the first place as systems of thought, but as religious people with whom we have a relationship in the Friend of humanity.

Paul P. Kuenning moves beyond the central theme of this issue and finds a correlation between Bonhoeffer's worldly Christianity and the ethical theology of Lutheran pietism. True Christianity never allows the worldly to be torn from its essential unity with ultimate and eternal realities. He believes that the doctrine of the two kingdoms has dulled the prophetic edge of the gospel's call for ethical and social reform. Pietism ignored the two kingdom doctrine, while resolutely applying the moral mandates of the Scriptures to every aspect of human existence. The refusal of the church to speak out on behalf of human justice or against political corruption allows it to slide into an existence where it remains mute in the face of barbarous acts by the state, such as the wars in Vietnam, Grenada, and Iraq. Bonhoeffer once asked, "Does the church merely gather up those whom the wheel has crushed, or does it prevent the wheel from crushing people?"

We live in an era when words have explosive power. Should we speak of the "uniqueness" of Christ or of his "finality"? Should we seek "encounters" with people of other faith or "relations" with them? Should we "witness" or "evangelize"?

Words count. So do people. So do God's presence and promises. So does today, more than ever, religious pluralism.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

In editing the October, 1991, issue, written by our partners from Wartburg Theological Seminary, a number of changes and abbreviations were made without appropriate consultation with the authors. We deeply regret any unclarities or misrepresentations this may have caused.

Christian Theology and the History of Religions

Carl E. Braaten
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
and Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology
Northfield, Minnesota

Adolph von Harnack said, "Whoever does not know this religion (Christianity), knows none, and whoever knows this one with its history, knows all." In sharp contrast Max Müller stated, "Whoever knows one religion, knows none."

Recently Christian theology and the scientific study of the religions have met as long lost relatives. At the beginning the meeting feels somewhat awkward. They don't know just what to say to each other. They have learned to speak such different languages, and they function in very different contexts. Some of us have spent the major part of our lives trying to understand one religion faithfully, and we do this as a matter of personal conviction. Others have crossed over to the study of another religion or two and have learned to enter into them by means of scholarly methods of inquiry, but we do so more as a matter of academic vocation than existential commitment.

The watershed date is the end of World War II. Just prior to World War II Hendrik Kraemer had published his book, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, in preparation for the World Missionary Conference, meeting in Tambaran, India, in 1938. It bore the spirit of radical discontinuity that Karl Barth had first enunciated in his *Romans Commentary*. Barth's negative judgment on religion gave no reason to wrestle theologically with the religions. He said that all religion was sacrificed on Golgotha. The religious gods died on Good Friday. Religion is the affair of the godless person. Religion is a vain human attempt at self-salvation. But after World War II the climate began to change in favor of a more positive evaluation of religion and the religions, inspiring new attempts to forge some links between Christian theology and the scientific study of the religions. At the end of his career Paul Tillich signaled the shift that was beginning to take place in his essay, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian." He called for a long term intensive period of interpenetration of systematic theological study and religious historical studies, and

expressed this as his hope for the future of theology. That was twenty-five years ago. A lot has happened in the meantime. New hypotheses concerning the relation between Christianity and the other major world religions have been conceived, older ones have been revised, but none has gained a monopoly. The World Council of Churches has been promoting inter-religious dialogue, but it operates with no coherent Christian theology of the religions. Recently the Lutheran World Federation has also begun to explore relations with religions other than Christian, and as is customary among Lutherans, its first efforts have focused on theological issues, inquiring specifically into the resources of the Lutheran theological heritage that bear on this topic.

In this paper I have been asked to deal with the most sensitive issues that come into play in a correlation of Christian theology and the world religions.

Methodological issues

The phrase "a theology of the religions" is quite new. In the university catalogues of divinity schools and schools of religion we will find oodles of courses with such titles as philosophy of religion, psychology of religion, phenomenology of religion, the history of religions, but only very rarely will we find this newcomer, "a theology of the religions," or some variant of it. A Christian theology of the religions is the name given to that discipline which aims to think about the world religions in light of the Christian faith. Heretofore, the religions were relegated to a marginal place in the scheme of Christian dogmatics, somewhere near the end as a kind of missiological postscript.

A Christian theology of the religions calls upon theology to go beyond merely reflecting on the symbols and stories of the Christian tradition. Not only Christianity but also other religions become the object of critical theological inquiry. This is a new challenge to which most theologians are not yet accustomed. Since the Enlightenment Christian theology has met one challenge after the other. There was first the challenge of history to think about Christian origins in a fully critical manner. Then there was the challenge of critical epistemology with its turn to the subject. Later there was the challenge of science with its evolutionary hypothesis. Today the challenge is the plurality of religions.

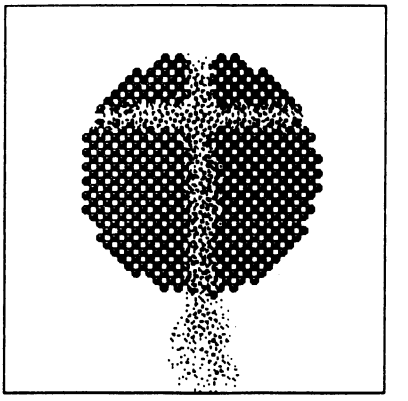
Religious pluralism, of course, is not new. Christianity was born in the maelstrom of a variety of Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Oriental religious and philosophical currents. From the beginning the tiny Christian movement had a great struggle to establish its own identity and viability in the ancient world. At first Christianity was attacked by the Jews as a heresy, persecuted by the Romans as a seditious movement, ridiculed as a contemptible myth by the Hellenistic philosophers, and given a run for its money by the popular cults and mystery religions. In three centuries the status of Christianity was changed from being an illegal and ridiculous sect to that of being the official religion of the Roman Empire. Then religious pluralism became drastically diminished during the age of Christendom. What is new today is the increasing awareness that Christianity is just one among many religions in the global community. Religions are no longer confined to particular boundaries. The flow and speed of inter-religious traffic have increased tremendously. A wealth of knowledge about other religions has been accumulated over the past two centuries. And Christianity is now confronted by a counter-missionary thrust on the part of some other

religions like Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Somehow the old ways of pigeon-holing the religions do not seem to work anymore. They have been seen sometimes as preparations for the gospel, sometimes as the wiles and ways of the devil, sometimes as alternative intimations of the one true God. These dogmatic constructions have been broken down by the sheer gravity of the empirical and historical data that need to be dealt with in terms of their own cultural and linguistic contexts. But there is no new prevailing systematic theological paradigm to replace the older constructions. We face not only a plurality of religions but also a plurality of theologies. In addition we are mired down in a swamp land of relativism. All the religions are claimed to be equally endowed with powers of liberation and salvation. The dominant feeling today is that basically all religions say the same thing and lead to the same end, only they do so in terms of different ritual symbols and language systems.

In the face of religious relativism, Christian theology will look around for some way to secure the exclusive claim of the gospel to universal validity. The nitty gritty question is how to conceive of the act of God in Jesus Christ as having ultimate significance for all people at all times in every place. The force of a few biblical passages drives Christians to acknowledge and proclaim the universal validity of the gospel. Acts 4:12 states: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." And 1 Cor 3:11 says: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ."

Christian theologians have learned from experience that there is no way to try to make good this exclusive claim, no matter



how broadly they project the inclusivity of its content, without being accused of being so dogmatically prejudiced as to be unfit for inter-religious dialogue. It is at this point that methodological rigor is called for. Prejudice has now often shifted to the side of those who claim scientific objectivity in dealing with religion and the religions. It is a matter of methodological fairness that all religious scholars acknowledge the presuppositions with which they operate. There is no presuppositionless approach to any of the great human passions—whether sex, politics, and religions—or to any of the loftier visions of truth, beauty, and goodness. This calls for candor on the part of a Christian theology of the religions. It should acknowledge its presuppositions with a good conscience rather than sneak them in by the back door. Why should there not be a Christian theology of the world religions, as long as it plays by the rules of the game? For one thing, it can expose as a sham the make-believe objectivity of some practitioners of the various sciences of religion.

Christian theology bears a particular burden. Its presuppositions are burning convictions that are hard to hide. The Christian thinker is a whole person whose captiv-

ity to the gospel is freely and joyously articulated in every dimension of life. The Christian scholar is a slave of Jesus Christ in whom God is truly disclosed, full of grace and truth. There is no way to bracket out this commitment when dealing with religious and ethical matters. Scholars with presuppositions less clear and distinct may see the speck in a Christian theology of the religions, but fail to see the log in their own approaches. Scholars cannot measure things without some kind of ruler. For Christians the ruler is Jesus Christ and no other. Jesus Christ cannot be subsumed under some other category that is presumably more adequate to interpret the religions of the world.

Jesus Christ cannot be subsumed under some other category that is presumably more adequate to interpret the religions of the world.

Theological issues

The exclusive claim of the gospel continues to be a thorn in the flesh of those who would postulate the equality of the religions. The current pluralistic theory of religions that enjoys a high popularity in academic circles speaks of a Copernican revolution in the relation of Christianity to other religions. In advocating the deconstruction of the incarnational dogma this revolution looks upon the exclusivity claim as a myth, fiction, pretense, illusion, opium, crutch, or escape —or all of the above. I do not intend to address this approach here; in any case, it cuts the Gordian knot. Christian theology cannot relinquish the claim of eschatological finality in connection with the historical figure of Jesus, without surrendering the ground principle of Christian identity.

There are two other approaches that have a long history and continue to be the real competitors. One is along the line of the old Patristic doctrine of the Logos. This leads to a large Christ principle universally present and operative in the various religions, philosophies, and ideologies apart from the gospel proclamation about Jesus and the kingdom. Justin Martyr used the Stoic concept of the *logos spermatikos* to account for all the truth, beauty, and goodness to be found outside of Christianity. The pagans received all these splendid things through the Logos whose seeds have been spread throughout the world. This theory of the *logos spermatikos* found classical expression in the natural theology of the scholastics and in the rational religion of the Enlightenment, and it achieved contemporary expression in Tillich's notion of the latent church and in Rahner's concept of "Anonymous Christianity." This theory, in whatever particular rendition, is attractive for a number of reasons. It permits a generous estimate of what God is doing beyond the walls of the church. It offers a point of contact between biblical religion and the virtues and values of other religions. Particularly the missionary task of the church can use it as a bridge for its own work of translating the gospel into the language of other cultures. Theologians of younger churches today are attracted to this doctrine because it offers a basis for a positive atti-

tude towards the spiritual heritage of their ancestors and non-Christian neighbors.

The second line of approach in the Christian tradition is slender and intermittent. It does not enjoy classical status. It is most clearly represented by Luther and the reformers. It constitutes a break with the *logos asarkos* of the patristic-medieval synthesis. For Luther the *logos spermatikos* and the cross of Christ don't get along well together. One is philosophical speculation, the other is the Word of God. The Logos is a universal principle, Jesus is a concrete person, Jesus is the Logos. The subject is Jesus who gives to the predicate Logos its definitive content and meaning. The Logos idea of John is transformed by being filled with the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This incarnational current is non-reversible, as the Lutherans maintained against the Calvinists *(Numquam extra carnem)*.

The crucial significance of Christ is maintained in either of the two rival interpretations. For one the "Christ" is an ideal principle of religion and morality universally manifest, and is therefore certainly also present in Jesus to the degree of eminence directly proportionate to the intensity of one's personal piety. Pietists like Schleiermacher will elevate Jesus' status to the highest possible potency. Yet, in this pietistic approach Jesus is different from the rest of humanity only by degree. For the other approach Christ is a person of history in whom God is present in the moil and toil of Jesus' life and death. In one view the linkage between the Logos and Jesus is very loose, in the other it is very tight. The issue is rather eloquently formulated by Raimundo Panikkar: "When I call this link between the finite and the infinite by the name of Christ, I am not presupposing its identification with Jesus of Nazareth.... Though a Christian believes that 'Jesus is the Christ'... this sentence is not identical to 'the Christ is Jesus'" (Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?* (Orbis, 1985), 156.

There are those who are sympathetic with the intentions of the ancient Logos Christology but don't believe it can bear the heavy traffic that flows between the religions in their concrete histories. Ernst Benz, one of the pioneers in promoting a theology linked to the history of religions, said that despite its good intentions "the traditional Logos theology and its modern versions proves itself to be a theological ell which is too short to measure our modern consciousness of history" (Ernst Benz, "Ideas for a Theology of the History of Religion," *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. by Gerald H. Anderson [McGraw Hill Book Co., 1961], 136). But there are other objections. In the age of Christendom the Logos doctrine became the substitute for the expectation of the coming Messiah and contributed to the de-eschatologization of Christian faith. With the loss of eschatological hope the engine that propelled the global mission of the church began to idle. Another objection, one raised even by Paul Knitter and John Hick, is that it amounts to a pseudo-christocentrism. It aims to uphold the centrality of Christ, but in a way that is as artificial as upholding the old Ptolemaic view of the universe by adding a few epicycles to deal with the new scientific discoveries of astronomy.

The eschatological absolute

During the age of Christendom the speculative Logos Christology could be held in conjunction with the notion of Christianity as the true religion. With the rise of historical consciousness and the historical critical method the idea of Christianity as the absolute religion became increasingly difficult

to maintain. The very concept of an "absolute religion" becomes an oxymoron. Only God is absolute; everything else, including religion, is historical and therefore relative. As Hocking said, every religion must pay the price of existence. If it is relevant to its own time and place, then it cannot be so in every other time and place. Christianity is no exception. And that's where the rub comes, because somehow Christian faith counts on being able to retain continuity with its original identity through the discontinuities of ages and cultures.

Somehow Christian faith counts on being able to retain continuity with its original identity through the discontinuities of ages and cultures.

G. E. Lessing became keenly aware of the problem in speaking of an "ugly ditch" between historical facts and eternal truths. Fichte coined the dictum: "It is only the metaphysical and on no account the historical which makes blessed." Hegel seized upon the problem and proposed a daring dialectical maneuver to unite the absolute with history. The truth of the gospel (the *Vorstellung*) is by no means at odds with philosophy (the *Begriff*). The history that is so important to Christian faith can be reconciled with the absolute by becoming internal to its life, as something essential to its very being and self-manifestation. Hegel reformulated the doctrine of the living God in terms of culture. Troeltsch wrestled with the problem of historicism and its negative impact on the claim of Christianity to be the absolute religion, but he could never get theology out of that great ugly ditch, with an ahistorical absolute on the one side and historical relativity on the other. Barth himself rode into this breach and purchased a place for Christianity on the side of the absolute by selling out to history. The deep truths of vital concern to Christian faith—revelation, redemption, resurrection—are supposedly not events that happen on the historical plane, are not caught up in relativity within the context of history, and are therefore safely tucked away in an "invulnerable area" beyond the reach of historical critical research. Troeltsch put the bait on the hook and Barth swallowed it, agreeing with Troeltsch that "history has no place for absolutes." Thereby Barth only perpetuated a problem that later bedeviled virtually all the descendants of dialectical theology.

The stage was set for a new attempt to reconcile the essence of Christianity within the framework of history. With the publication of Wolfhart Pannenberg's "Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation" in *Revelation as History* (The Macmillan Co., 1968), it became once again possible to reconsider the legacy of Ernst Troeltsch, particularly the unresolved issue of the relationship of Christianity to the other religions. The Barthian claim that the Christian message is something so totally other in comparison with the religions, that Christian theology may legitimately operate in isolation from the general historical scientific study of religion, proved to be more and more unacceptable. Pannenberg urged a return to Troeltsch's problem. Pannen-

berg wrote: "Among the Christian theologians of this century who were concerned with preventing the Christian religion and Christian theology from wandering down sectarian byways, out of touch with the general development of culture, Ernst Troeltsch is today the outstanding figure.... His formulations of the problems and tasks with which he confronted Christian thought have not lost their validity and their capacity for clarifying issues" (Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Basis of Ethics in the Thought of Ernst Troeltsch," *Ethics* [Westminster/John Knox, 1981], 87).

Troeltsch's position can be summarized in his final verdict: "It is impossible to construct a theory of Christianity as the absolute religion on the basis of a historical way of thinking by the use of historical means" (Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions* [John Knox Press, 1971], 45). Christianity is a completely historical phenomenon radically conditioned by the historical situation in which it emerged as well as by the historical factors involved in its further development. There is nothing in the Christian religion that is not interwoven with the fabric of its ongoing historical environment. Historical reality shatters every attempt to interpret Christianity as the absolute religion.

Many of Troeltsch's readers became frightened, and to them he offered the assurance that it is still possible to combine a radically historical way of thinking with the idea of Christianity as the highest religious truth relevant to Western European culture. When Pannenberg urged a return to Troeltsch he had another side of Troeltsch in mind, quite different from the usual image of Troeltsch as the Heraclitus of historical relativism. This other side is the starting point for a different way to integrate systematic theology and the history of religions. A few words portraying his new way will have to suffice.

Troeltsch makes an interesting statement almost in passing: "In Jesus' preaching the Kingdom is the absolute" (Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity*, 145). There lies here a possible suggestion that the problem of the relation between history and the absolute can be reformulated by a theology conscious of eschatology as the problem of the relation between the kingdom of God and history. It was Johannes Weiss who demonstrated a futuristic eschatology in Jesus' message of the kingdom of God. Troeltsch saw that if we take as our clue Jesus' own view of the kingdom, the absolute belongs essentially to the eschatological future of history and does not belong to Christianity as a religion, nor to any of its doctrines or institutions. Even Jesus distinguished between the absolute future and his own person. So, in this sense it is true to say that history as such contains no absolute; the truth of historical relativism is not abrogated by the idea of the kingdom as the absolute future.

Pannenberg, however, is critical of the way in which Troeltsch connected the future to the present. For Troeltsch the connection is teleological, established by the category of purpose. For Pannenberg the teleological concept of purpose does not fit Jesus' message of the coming kingdom, because this is God's kingdom and not the extension of human values. For Troeltsch, then, the real futurity of the kingdom of God was emphasized at the expense of the presence of this future in the history of Jesus. Pannenberg believes that the history of theology would have been different but for Troeltsch's inability to relate the absolute future of the kingdom in a positive way to Jesus' own person and achievement. Troeltsch was only able to place the absolute in the future kingdom, whereas New

Testament Christianity transferred this absoluteness to the person of Jesus, endowing him with such titles as Messiah, Lord, and Savior. Thus, Troeltsch could not identify the true criterion of what is essentially Christian. Barth and company took a different route, and Troeltsch's promising initiative was systematically ignored until the reappropriation of the eschatological perspective.

Religions as ways of salvation?

The classical way of constructing the relationship between special revelation in the gospel and general revelation in other religions hinged, as we have said, on the distinction between the concrete Logos in the flesh (*ensarkos*) and the universal Logos outside the flesh (*asarkos*). Only in modern theology has the *Logos spermatikos* been granted a soteriological function. In traditional Lutheran terminology, this means that a number of distinctions have collapsed, such as the distinction between God hidden and revealed, between law and gospel, between the two kingdoms, and so forth. Some Catholic and Protestant theologians speak of the religions as "ways of salvation." This ups the ante considerably in working out a theological theory of the relation of Christianity to other religions.

Phenomenologically, of course, all religions are by definition ways of salvation. It is the proper business of religion to save. But not all salvation is the same. A person who seeks salvation in mind-altering drugs gets a different salvation than a person who seeks salvation in transcendental meditation. There is no such thing as a generic salvation to which the various religions merely provide different labels. Those who have converted from one religion to another are the first to provide the conclusive testimonies. The history of religions provides us with different models of salvation and different ways which the models are supposed to work. When the slaves in Egypt cried out for salvation, to be released from their oppression, Moses led the exodus out of Egypt. Similarly, if salvation is the experience of illumination, those who follow the way of the Buddha find it. Each religion advertises the particular salvation it promises those who are willing to follow its way.

The dialogue between the religions leads finally to a disclosure of the sacred and saving mystery that lies within the horizon of each religious tradition. Participants in dialogue meet and challenge each other by witnessing to the deepest mystery of life that defines their being and future. I do not think it should be so readily assumed that some current variant of the Logos principle is the most useful presupposition of inter-religious dialogue. This concept of the larger Christ manifest in all the religions is a way of co-opting them, and makes them mere echoes of what we know already—seeds of the same stalk that grows in our garden. The idea of the "anonymous Christ" at work to reveal and save in all the religions is not only a projection of arrogance *ad extra*, but also a reduction of significance *ad intra* that attaches to the person and work of Jesus as the Christ.

A Christian theology of the world religions has scarcely matured beyond the embryonic stage. In conclusion, I would only provide a few clues about the direction I am exploring. The *leitmotiv* is God's eschatological self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. The eschatological kingdom effectively present in Jesus' message and ministry, and revealed most profoundly in his cross and resurrection according to the apostolic witnesses, embraces the future

The Christian tradition is not a fixed entity, closed to its own transformation. It exists to be a servant and sign of the still outstanding eschatological future of all the religions.

of the whole of God's creation, including the entire sweep of the history of humanity, its cultures and religions. The presence of the eschatological kingdom in Jesus and in the apostolic mission can be viewed as the anticipation of the future, not only of all believers, but of all the nations. Christians may believe that the divine mystery to which all religions are pointing in their own provisional ways has been revealed by the gospel in the name of Jesus. However, that proposition of belief is not an abstract *a priori* but is an *a posteriori* reflection of the ongoing interaction with people of other faiths. The basic presupposition of the Christian missionary faith is that all persons are in principle candidates open to a transformation toward a future that they do not yet fully possess, but which may become known to them through a declaration of the promises of God culminating in the gospel of the eschatological kingdom. The Christian tradition itself is not a fixed entity, closed to its own transformation. It exists to be a servant and sign of the still outstanding eschatological future of all the religions. The history of religions is not a body of objective data to be studied as though they were dead. They are living traditions still underway. Their final meaning, like with everything else, is related to the end toward which they are historically moving through forces beyond their control. One aim of the Christian mission is to create space in the other religions for a future that will not negate but fulfill them in accordance with the revelation of the divine love and mercy revealed in the ministry of Jesus and the apostolic mission.

The Christian attitude toward people of other religions, or of no religion at all, is neither one of intolerance nor one of indifference. It is one of engaged interest in how God is providentially at work preparing people to encounter the finality of the eschatological kingdom announced by Jesus and the gospel and sacramentally experienced within the community of believers.

Christianity and Teaching about Other Faiths

Theodore Ludwig
Valparaiso University

Can we teach the Christian faith today without also teaching about other faiths? Now we are gathered here because we all, I think, do something not too many Lutherans do: teach about the other religions—or at least we're interested in teaching about other religions. We can take it for granted that there are many good practical reasons why we should teach about the other religions: understanding the world we live in, learning to live together with peoples of other cultures, interfaith marriages, etc. But the issue of this consultation goes deeper than that. It is important, within our task of teaching the Christian faith today, not just to inform students *about* the other religions but in some sense to *teach* them, to teach Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the others. Is not deep personal encounter with the other faiths an essential experience for Christians today as we grow—so that we grow—in our faith and understanding?

My assignment in this dialogue session is to pose basic questions for Christian theology arising out of the scholarly study and teaching of world religions. I have many questions that come up as I teach other religions in the context of a Lutheran university, and I'll try to put a few of them on the table. I also have a few answers, but we need to start with the questions.

1. The first question is very general and basic to all the others and has to do with our Christian attitudes toward those of other religions. We know from our own experience that to study and teach the religions of the world means we have to view each sympathetically and respectfully, as a vision of life that makes sense in an ultimate way. It certainly would be hard to teach Buddhism in an academically respectable way starting with the basic conviction that it is a wrongheaded and harmful cult. We have to be able to show our students (and ourselves) that each of these religions is precious enough to live for and die for, to commit one's children to, to present before all the world as one's own identity. That calls forth an attitude of respect and appreciation and humility.

But the problem is that the whole weight of the Christian tradition tells us that we are ultimately right and they are ultimately wrong, that outside the church there is no salvation, and that therefore they aren't worthy of our attention; their experiences are false, even condemnatory. So the challenge is: How can we be faithful to our ultimate commitment to Christ and to the creeds of the church, and still develop a theology that nurtures and promotes motivations and attitudes of love, respect, tolerance, neighborliness, empathy, and even gratitude for the beliefs and hopes of these others, their saints and models, their holy books, rituals, and art? This means, at the very least, recovering the sense of the mystery of God's presence and dealings among all the peoples of the world and our Christian life as a pilgrimage within that mystery.

2. Let me get more specific with the next question. How have we reached our theological judgments about the other religions? Based on tradition and its own inner logic, Christian theology has an *a priori* way of understanding non-Christian religious claims. I suppose it would be possible to construct a theological understanding and evaluation of other religions purely from Christian principles, without even the slightest knowledge of or contact with people of other religions. The Barthian approach was to define all religions, including Christianity insofar as it is a religion, as human attempts at self-salvation. Modern theologians in the Lutheran tradition generally have allowed for true revelation in the religions under the rubric of general revelation or of a theology of creation. But the inner logic of Lutheran theology apparently has demanded that grace and salvation must *a priori* be excluded from the experience of people in other religions. Lutheran theologians are long accustomed to placing all other religions on the *other* side of the polarity: on the works side of the works/grace dichotomy, on the law side of law/gospel, on the creation side of creation/redemption, etc. My point here is that all of this theological understanding of the religions is reached *a priori*, without investigating the other religions from within their standpoint; we can just fit them into the right slots. Today some of our theologians do affirm the importance of knowing other religions, and my colleague Carl Braaten here is certainly one who leads in that regard. I see some hints of promising developments.

Probably most of you have experienced, as you study and listen closely to those of other religions, that sometimes what we Christians have traditionally said about them, drawing from the inner logic of our theological heritage, does not completely ring true with their experience insofar as we can understand it from the inside of their symbolic universe. Without getting into a lengthy discussion here, let me give a couple of examples. I would first refer to the question of grace, the use of the *sola gratia* principle to criticize all religion as human striving to justify oneself before God. Now, grace-alone is a Christian-Lutheran doctrinal rule designed to preserve the gospel for us; it makes sense within our Christian language system, but how can we use it as a rule to evaluate other systems? In studying them, can we really establish such a clear dichotomy between grace and works, between the Godward and the humanward directions of religious movement? Such a view assumes that God is limited like humans, to be either subject or object. Can we really distinguish on any empirical grounds, within a sacred belief, practice, or ritual, what comes from God and what comes from humans? Think of the Jewish emphasis on keeping Torah—this is often judged by Christians as a form of salvation by

human works. But Jews talk about observing the Torah in terms of gift and thanksgiving, not in terms of merit gained by works. The flood of illumination experienced by the Hindu or Buddhist meditator—is that works or is it gift? The prophet Muhammad's lyric passages about the greatness and mercy of God the creator—are these his human fabrications or somehow given in divine inspiration?

I think Lutherans have some resources to avoid the Barthian misunderstanding of religion as always something human-made and thus sinful. As we affirm *sola gratia*, we Lutherans also affirm *finitum capax est infiniti*, that is, the creaturely form is capable of receiving the divine reality. And we know that God's gracious power and presence need to be embodied in the concrete historical, social, psychological, intellectual, and ritual experiences of a people. It cannot dangle as some kind of disembodied faith or grace. So we as Lutherans anyway do not necessarily have to say that humans are trying to save themselves through works as they respond to God or seek God through belief, practice, and ritual—and that could leave the door open just a little for understanding.

Another example: Our Christian—and Jewish and Muslim—monotheistic principles lead us to evaluate theistic Hindus, Shintoists, and peoples of many tribal religions as polytheists who engage in idol worship. Is that really what's going on inside those religions? Starting with Hinduism's elaborate theory of *murti* or image as the seat of the divine presence, most of these religions have some way of explaining that the form is not worshipped as the god but as that through which the god is manifested and experienced. Christians know something about that—experiencing God's presence through different forms. Certainly there are legitimate questions here—but my point is that often our theological evaluations have come first, and they hinder our actual understanding of these other religions.

3. The next question then is, how do we really get to understand these religions? Here we run into the real problem of religious language. To understand the meaning of a religion, we have to rely heavily on its teachings, its truth claims, and its statements of faith, as expressed by the adherents of that religion. But religious language is always part of a cultural-linguistic system, with its own grammar, vocabulary, and syntax that cannot simply be understood across cultural and religious lines without further ado. There is further difficulty in understanding how it is that truth-claims are inherent in religious language. Religious statements and symbols are not, as we sometimes seem to suppose, simply propositions making universal, verifiable claims to truth. But neither, on the other hand, are they merely personal, subjective statements of feeling and sentiment. Religious language is not publicly verifiable, yet it is objective in the sense that it is verified by the community that participates in that religious praxis.

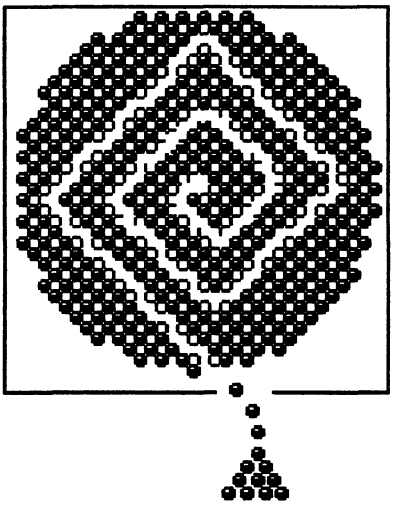
Thomas Kasulis suggests that the core, most central form of religious language is intimation, language almost intuitively understood by the initiates and practitioners of the religion, but strange and nonsensical to outsiders. It is something like humor. When you hear a joke, if you're not a part of the cultural–linguistic circle that the humor grows out of, you don't get the joke—and no amount of explaining will make it funny to you. Yet it is verified as funny by the group of "in" people.

Now as we study and teach other religions, how do we get to be "in" people? Not by conversion, except in rare cases. But we can learn to understand and appreciate that

language to a certain extent. Kasulis suggests that interpreting the religious language of intimation is similar to the work of an art critic, a music critic, or a gymnastics judge. One learns the language, and learns to recognize excellence, by being a practicing member of that art or discipline. One can stand on the boundary, as it were, and interpret the knowledge of the inner circle of language and practice to those outside the circle. So understanding another religious tradition means that we have to pass over and get onto that boundary, become sensitized to that praxis, share that tradition—so that the intimations, the humor, the music and the art, the statements of faith, begin to make sense to us on their own terms.

How can we do that—how can we as faithful Christians pass over and become sensitized in that tradition and praxis, become bilingual, so that we can understand the intimations of their religious language? One important way of beginning to do that, I would suggest, is dialogue in the broad sense—that is, finding those art critics, music critics, religion critics, on the other side and having them share with us, introducing us into the language of intimation so that we begin to understand the humor, the art, the deep religious meanings. Occasionally we can do that in the classroom, with the scriptures and the texts speaking to us, or even representatives of the other religions.

4. This dialogue business is risky, of course, because it can lead to change in ourselves and in our theology. And that brings me to my next point: why should we? What is to be gained by learning to understand the intimations of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and the rest? Can we learn anything from them that really affects our faith, our theology? One could argue, I suppose, that there is nothing intrinsic to the Christian faith that would require



us to study and learn about other religions. Certainly there have been countless Christians who lived saintly lives and passed on to glory without venturing far outside the Christian home. Yet in our particular time, in our global society, I believe that we cannot *responsibly* teach and develop Christian faith in isolation from the other religious traditions.

The continued existence of the world religions still today is a big puzzle to Christian theology, as Karl Rahner pointed out in his path-breaking essay on rethinking the role of the religions in God's plan of salvation. For many centuries Christians have lived with the vision of the cross of Christ conquering all land and climes, the whole world harvested into the kingdom of Christ. What if that had happened, and all the world were Christian today? There would be no Jews in the world and therefore no Hanukkah over the holidays; no Muslims testifying to the unity of God or performing the Ramadan fast this year; no Buddhists to interpret the arts and culture of the East; no Hindus to speculate on the one Brahman beyond all *samsara* or to go on pilgrimages

to the River Ganga. Our work would certainly be less interesting, teaching about religions as relics of the past. And I believe our Christian theology and our Christian faith and life would be impoverished. One of my theological mentors, rather thoroughly orthodox, taught me that the question we should be asking is not, "Why are there still all these religions?" Rather, we should ask, "What is God doing in the religions?"

Now there are many ways to approach what God is doing in the religions. Lutheran theologians have generally said that it may be the work of creation, it may be law, it may be judgment and condemnation. Even if we restrict God's work to the dimension of creation and law, there is plenty to listen to, challenges to our accepted theological ideas and practices related to ecology, nature, human society, sexuality, human community, etc.—even our inadequate conception of the gospel would be challenged by hearing God's law from the other religions. I would go further: my perspective is that the complete God, the triune God—God the creator and God the redeemer and God the sanctifier—is at work in the religions, and we have all that to listen to.

So the main question I want to pose here is: in what sense do the other religions become a *source* for our Christian theology and faith? Sola scriptura, yes. But if God in God's totality is at work in the world today, in the other religions today, then it would seem that we also can learn, should learn something about God from those of other religions, from their traditions and scriptures, from their faith and experience.

We need to work on ways of dealing with this source for theology and faith, how to understand and interpret and appropriate these materials. The challenge is to hear and discover; it is also to evaluate, sort out, appropriate, and integrate into our faith and confession. We need to learn how to use our theological keys—grace alone, Christ alone, faith alone, etc.—not just to exclude and reject but to receive and allow ourselves to be transformed. Certainly the early church, especially in pre-Nicean times, was in dialogue and appropriated from other cultures and religions.

5. Talking about the other religions as a source for our faith and theology brings up another central question, the question of truth; if we recognize other religions as important ways of faith and even as theological sources for us, what does this do to our concept of Christian faith as the ultimate truth? We're familiar with some of the options that have been put forth: the exclusive view of truth, the inclusive or relativistic view, the view that all are equally true like the planets revolve around the sun, even the popular view that one can pick and choose and construct a religion suited for our age, a coming world theology, or whatever. I don't find any of the usual options particularly helpful, from the point of view of studying and teaching the actual religions. It certainly is characteristic for adherents of each religion to feel theirs is the ultimate truth of life and existence; if they did not feel that way, it would not be their religion. And adherents of each can be fairly inclusive—even Muslims—so long as their truth is the highest and therefore the only one that really counts.

Certainly we should not water down the distinctiveness of these affirmations in favor of some unified synthesis. The Buddhist vision of dependent origination, for example, poses quite a radical alternative to the Christian vision of God; again, the Hindu sense of world ages is dramatically different from the Christian view of creation and history—and they're not just variants in some grander synthesis. Are these mutually exclusive truths? Does the acceptance of one necessitate the rejection of the other?

Or is there some way that it is possible for us to affirm the ultimate nature of the Christian truth, and still not pass judgment on the truth of others, still appreciate and learn from them?

I believe Lutherans have something to contribute in the debate here. Others tend to go toward either/or solutions in matters of truth; either our truth is right and all others false, or all truths are relatively right. But Lutherans have a *simul* mentality, a knack of saying both/and in the dialectic of law and gospel, the hidden and revealed God, left hand and right hand kingdoms, etc. We need to develop a way of affirming the Christian vision completely and finally, and at the same time affirming God's mystery and truth present in the other religions.

Within this overall question about truth I want to bring up a couple of specifics. One question that the study of other religions makes particularly pressing is this: is the question of truth the same as the question of salvation? In talking about whether a religion is true or not, we often move immediately into soteriology—can it bring people to eternal salvation? There is here an impulse common to all religions: truth in a religious sense is judged by the community of believers on whether it works—that is, whether it brings healing, transformation, salvation. A problem arises when we use our Christian ideas of salvation as the standard by which to judge the truth of the other religions.

It is significant that the Lutheran Confessions have no explicit doctrine of salvation—perhaps we all know instinctively what we mean by that term. We tend to put strong emphasis on the eschatological dimension of salvation—eternal life with Christ—and that leads us sometimes to disregard the present soteric reality. However, the eschaton does not negate but fulfills the present reality of God working in the world, and that would mean God working not only among Christians but also among peoples of other religions. Each religion has its own sense of transformation of the human condition, that is, "salvation." And while some of those seem very different from Christian ideas—e.g., *moksha*, *nirvana*—there are also many meeting points. Studying the other religions reminds us of the variety of meanings of "salvation" also within the Christian tradition: wholeness, healing, reconciliation with God, experiencing forgiveness of sins and peace, eternal life now and hereafter.

Can we find resources in our theology to respond to experiences of salvation among people of other religions?

So an important theological question is this: can we find resources in our theology to respond to experiences of salvation—grace, peace, healing, reconciliation, wholeness, transformation—among people of other religions? What do we make of that? How do we evaluate these experiences? Does it diminish our sense of salvation in Christ? Does it possibly deepen our soteriology and call for new insights?

The christological question—finally it is Christ that is the unique center-point for Christians—how do we deal with this in

teaching the religions and teaching Christian faith? It is tempting to follow some proposals and understand Christ as representing the divine pattern in the world, a saving presence or pattern that can also be found in the other religions. Some Christian theologians have made much of this approach, from Pannikar's "Unknown Christ of Hinduism" to Donald Dawe's "new being that fulfills human nature." Lutherans have big theological questions of that approach. But let me talk from the point of view of studying the various religions. It seems to me that the project that finds the Christ paradigm in all the religions not only flattens out the distinct Christian vision, but it once again imposes Christian vocabulary and symbol on those religions rather than discovering that which is really essential to each of them. The challenge, it seems to me, is really to hear the ontological-soteriological vision of each religion and see how our christological vision responds to that. Perhaps the visions are mutually incompatible and incomprehensible; perhaps (and I am convinced of this) our christological vision will grow and deepen as we discover new paradigms and testimonies to God's presence among humans.

6. A final area of questions has to do with our mission as Christians in relation to understanding human nature and purpose. As we listen to people of other religions, there is a challenge to Christian theology to recognize human solidarity, the common aspirations we share. We are challenged to develop theological resources for cooperation in building human community, solving the urgent problems of human society, making common cause with people of other religions in the face of war, famine, and secular ideologies. In particular, we are called to serve the poor—and most of the world's poor have their life and community, find their meaning and identity within the other religions of the world. Can our theology of mission be pushed so far that we assist these others to become more whole in their own culture, community, and religion? We academics, I think, try to bring that objective into our classroom when we have Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish students. Can we support this as part of our *Christian* mission, not only as academics but also as pastors, fellow students, and friends?

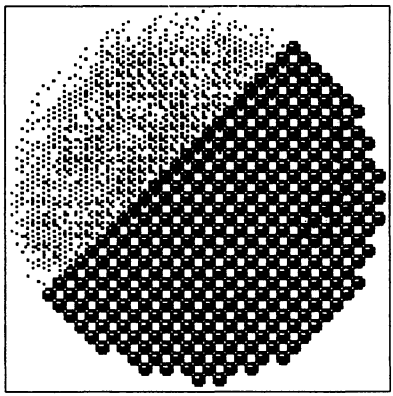
What about evangelizing, converting those of other religions to share in the Christian community? Isn't this all called into question, some say, if we respect other religions and expect to find God at work within them and even perhaps promote them for their adherents? I've left this question to the end even though it's often the first question that gets raised in classes. I explain it to students very simply: certainly, we as Christians must always witness, share what we are. But we cannot witness without at the same time loving, serving, and being truly present to them as fellow humans, and that means sharing what we are and receiving from them their sharing of what they are, including their religious beliefs, hopes, and dreams.

The first challenge is really to hear and understand our neighbors of other religions. Then we can respond. We can't tell where it will lead. But we have the promise of the gospel, and we can move into this new era of theology with excitement and anticipation.

Relations between People of Different Faith Commitments

(Toward a Christian Paradigm)

Kyaw Than
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



The signs of our time

The explosion of communication nowadays has brought even the remotest parts of the world to our doorstep. News, events, and developments in far away lands can be followed in one's own living room. Pluralism is the setting in which contemporary societies exist. Accordingly, not only scholars and explorers but also common persons in the street in many nations are becoming increasingly aware of religious traditions other than their own.

At the beginning of the present century there were Christian voices from the west calling for evangelization of the world in their generation. In my own Asian context and elsewhere, however, national movements for liberation from western colonialism often seized on the theme of defending their own nation, religion, and culture to rally popular support. With the regaining of national independence, major non-Christian religious traditions, which had undergirded culture in these nations, became resurgent and even missionary. New confidence grew about the superiority of these age-old religious systems in relation to Christianity brought in from the west. "After all," some Buddhists asserted, "the Christian west had plunged the world into conflict and war not just once but even twice. It will only be the message of *metta*

and *karuna* (love and compassion), as taught by the Buddha, which will bring peace for humanity." Such sentiments were associated with the holding of the Sixth Buddhist Council at Rangoon, convened in an artificial cave simulating the original natural one which was the venue of the first council in the sixth century before Christ. Some 2500 Buddhist ecclesiastical leaders attended that council from 1954 to 1956 in a series of sessions to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the attainment of *Nibban* by the Buddha.

Others pointed out that the western influence, with its emphasis on material development arising out of application of science, encourages people to think of "having more" while the eastern religious emphasis is on detachment and an ascetic approach to life, encouraging people to realize the value of "being more" rather than "having more."

While the western imperial nations were much concerned about the revolutions for independence by Asian peoples soon after World War II, Dr. Nambara, then President of Tokyo University and a leading educationist and a Christian leader in Japan, warned the west about its preoccupation with *revolutionary* Asia while not paying enough attention to the *renaissance* in Asia. In my view, he was emphasizing the necessity of taking seriously the resurgence of traditional value systems, which had undergirded culture and society in Asian lands.

The resulting inter-religious encounter is not between a dominant Christianity and other religious traditions which are insecure and on the verge of disappearing. The colonial conquest did not make the committed Buddhist succumb to the onslaught of the "Christian" west on his traditional thought and practice. On the contrary, the often unspoken feeling of a well-versed Buddhist in his encounter with a newly arrived and comparatively young Christian missionary was communicated in the form of a question:

> Does he know anything about the wisdom of the Buddha? Has he studied the canonical scriptures and know that for each of the canonical books there are yet eight types of exegetical works? Will he have the audacity to come and tell our people what the truth is if he had understood the *Dhamma* contained in these scriptures?

As far as the Buddhist partner is concerned, the dialogue would be based more on an amused tolerance rather than in terms of a serious exchange. The Buddhist would also feel that his religion has to be propagated as an antidote to the secularism and materialism of the modernization process being brought from the west.

As many members of western societies came into direct and personal contact with the exotic and inscrutable east, they became disillusioned about the need for missionary outreach by the church across the continents and oceans. Being "Christian" due to tradition, these members of western societies were quite ignorant about the content of the Christian life and message, and had serious questions about it. If they had the opportunity or the means to travel abroad, it was to get to know and learn about these exotic oriental systems rather than entertaining any thoughts about sharing or proclaiming the Christian message among these distant nations. Some responsible Christian leaders challenged the members of the younger generations by asking if the Christian mission was for them already a lost cause! It was also suggested that members of congregations and parishes who traditionally had contributed toward the missionary enterprise and even some mission executives had lost their nerve about the continuing validity of cross-continental

missionary expansion of the church. After all, there are now churches established in these nations across the world, and weren't there also some leaders from these churches who were calling for a radical reappraisal of the traditional system of mission?

Further, in terms of numbers, it is becoming increasingly true that there are more Christians in the regions of the world outside the traditional Christian areas.

Hence the uncertainly about the validity of the Christian mission, a new awareness about the life and practices of other religious communities, and the impact of the reverse mission thrust of these religious systems on the younger generations in the west reinforced the signs of the times we have made reference to from the outset of this essay. These should give us telling hints about the setting of inter-religious encounter or relations we want to consider.

Ambiguity of inter-religious relations

Religion itself is ambiguous. There are a multiplicity of religious traditions and a diversity within each tradition. Each tradition is going through stages of change, evolution, or development. Religion comprises beliefs, practices, and values, but religion is also a historical and sociological phenomenon. We need to recognize the gap between classical formulations of these systems and the actual ways in which convictions are held and lives are lived.

Francis Wayland, the president of Brown University who compiled the memoirs of Adoniram Judson, alumnus of the institution and famous missionary to Burma, noted that (Theravada) Buddhism "in its moral precepts is remarkable for purity. So far, as relations between man and man are concerned it is in many respects similar to the mosaic law.... The scheme is sustained by a system of morals of the most exemplary kind, such as may cause a blush of shame in many a Christian who feels his higher privileges while he considers the inferiority of his practice.... Travellers assure us that the Buddhist priests are never seen to turn their heads or even look upon the offering made to them. It were well if the ecclesiastics of many other countries derived instruction from their example." Yet Burma at one time ranked quite high among the nations as one having a very high rate of homicide.

Religion can only be understood from within. The sacred, transcendent, and infinite cannot be subjected to rational analysis.

Religion can only be understood from within. The sacred, transcendent, and infinite cannot be subjected to rational analysis. Such an attempt may be looked upon as not only impious but vain.

The late D. T. Niles referred to religion as the human approach to God's mystery. Each goes his or her own way to God and tries to find God without finding one's brother or sister (the fellow human being). But because God loves the world he has provided for one center and one act of acknowledgement. He has involved the seekers in a common finding rather than in a common search.

But people can be farthest from God at the peak of their religious life. Religion can also be the sphere of 'irreligion.' Consider the wars, conflicts, and riots for 'religious' reasons. Karl Barth described religion as the concern of godless people seeking the way of self-redemption. As such, religion is unbelief itself!

Some Asian concerns

Three decades ago when the East Asian Christian Conference (EACC) was inaugurated during an assembly convened at Kuala Lumpur for some 37.5 million Christians in sixteen countries, one of the concerns arising out of that gathering was about witnessing Christ to people of living religious traditions in Asia. It was suggested that there should be a departure from the type of approach the world missionary conference at Tambaram enunciated in 1938 regarding non-Christian religious systems. The Assembly at Kuala Lumpur emphasized that the approach should be in terms of *people* of other religious traditions rather than these traditions or systems as such. Religion cannot be pinned down to one interpretation of what it is. It is more than concepts and rituals. It involves symbols, music, art, meditation, and silence. Above all we have to be concerned with *people* as they seek to live by their faith-understanding.

The later statement from the inter-faith dialogue secretariat of EACC contains opinions which apply not only to members of Asian churches but also to all Christians everywhere.

"The pressures of our pluralistic societies make necessary a deeper understanding of our relationship to these other persons and of how that relationship may truly be understood in the purpose of God. A purely negative assessment of these traditions is not true to our growing experience of these systems and ideologies.

"1. The contemporary situation in [our relations] with them confronts us Christians with many fundamental questions which go to the very roots of our response to God in Christ and how we are to understand biblically God's purpose of love for the world and the mission of the church. It is our opinion that our varied church bodies and theological institutions need seriously to struggle with these problems before our fellow Christians are engulfed in [relations] for which they are not prepared either intellectually or spiritually.

"2. This is largely a matter of human relations, of openness on our part toward others, their lives, their joys, and sufferings. Such meeting in depth between persons, as all subjects of common concern and responsibility (e.g. development, justice, peace, integrity of creation) is an integral part of our [inter-action] with such persons, even when, as is often the case, it is not explicitly concerned with 'religious' matters.

"3. Jesus Christ, Lord and man of history as of the cosmos, can never be brought in or added to human cultural and spiritual life. It need therefore cause no surprise that we may discern his presence everywhere, prior to that moment towards which we look forward eagerly when people will recognize His presence. This discernment of Christ's work since history began in all our societies and spiritual 'worlds' awaits a sensitiveness to the Spirit for which we need to give more serious attention in our churches and Christian communities.

"4. We recognize that this coming of age causes anxiety among many Christians, not excluding ourselves, lest we should deny our loyalty to Christ and undermine the unique character of the gospel. This very uneasiness underlines for us the urgency for Christian thinkers and persons of

prayer to tackle the central question related to Christ's work in the human world, the place of the church in relation to the fulfillment of God's purpose for humankind, and the duty and joy of the mission of the church in a pluralistic world.

"Serious dialogue and relations with persons of other religious traditions, far from being an invitation to betray Christ and his lordship demands a radical conversion to Christ and life in Christ which we as Christians have hardly yet begun to experience. Such openness is a challenge to live a deeper life of relationship with our cosmic yet personal Lord.

"We are all agreed that the scandal of the cross will always be with us. While we do seek wider community with people of other religious traditions, we do not think there will ever be a time in history when the tension will be resolved between belief in Jesus Christ and unbelief. It is a tension that divides the church from the world and it also goes through each Christian as each is unable to say that his or her faith in Jesus Christ is perfect."

Inter-religious relations

In the setting of Asia where the majority of the population adheres to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc., the term 'encounter' carries images of contest and confrontation. Hence I have substituted the word *relations* for *encounter*. At the risk of oversimplification and recapitulation of what is generally known, we may say that for some Asian churches inter-religious relations have gone through three stages. In the early stages of Christian missionary expansion, some adherents of traditional religious traditions became convicted of the good news and came forward to accept Christ in the face of opposition and ostracism by their own families, relatives, and community. Those who knew their previous religion thoroughly began to testify of the weaknesses or falsity in the religion they had left, and to give scholarly testimonies in a language verging on polemics. This inflamed the leaders and scholars of the religious traditions concerned, and the literary or personal encounters that resulted were primarily polemical.

As the churches of the converts become more established and gained more self-confidence, and as they sought to relate intelligibly to their compatriots of another persuasion, some indigenous Christian thinkers began to select possible points of contact between Christianity and the dominant religious traditions. There was also concern to discard the foreignness of Christianity and to express their faith in terms which might carry meaning in their non-Christian societies. But the emphasis on "discontinuity" between the Christian faith and the nationally dominant religious systems could still be heard about that time. Presentation of Christianity as the crown or fulfillment of the varieties of religious search by the peoples of India or Burma was looked upon as being fraught with dangers of syncretism and compromise 'theologically speaking.' But Asian Christians felt that a purely negative assessment of these traditions was not true to their growing experience of these systems.

In the third and more recent stage, the inter-religious relations have been characterized by emphasis on persons, neighbors, or partners in such relations rather than on doctrines and religion. When doctrines and teachings have to be analyzed, the creative interpersonal relations contribute toward interchange and dialogue with openness and conscious attempts toward objectivity.

There is also an emphasis in inter-religious relations in pursuit of a common practical project or concern. Instead of one

adherent just looking at the system of the other and vice versa, amounting to something like a beauty contest involving mutual scrutiny of each other's religion, the two partners look together at a common task to be fulfilled. As they tackle the common challenge together, whether it has to do with practical issues of justice, peace, or community service, such often leads them to the sharing of the basis of each partner's concern as each digs into the depth of his or her spiritual resources to respond to the common challenge they face together.

In the villages inter-religious relations usually take place at ceremonies connected with the birth of a child, monastic novitiation, weddings, and funerals. As neighbors belonging to different religious traditions congregate, inter-faith dialogue and sharing take place quite naturally on these occasions. Inter-religious relations contribute in such situations toward an understanding of what separates or unites them at the deepest possible level. Meaningful relations take place when partners are committed to their traditions and when what they believe to be true has meaning to them and provides the motivation for their life.

Some paradigms

An ashram and a sadhu. Traveling by bus on long laps continuously in Travancore, South India, I became quite exhausted and ill. It was arranged for me to rest at an *ashram* under the care of a respected Christian *sadhu.* I had heard about Sadhu Sundar Singh, who lived at the turn of the century. He knew the *Bhagavad Gita* by heart and was influenced much by his Hindu mother to respect all religious traditions. Attending a mission school, he fiercely rejected Christianity. His struggle to find the true God led him to the verge of committing suicide. As stated in his life story, he became a Christian after having a vision of Christ. He lived the life of a *sadhu,* and Christian *ashrams* came to be set up as places where people can go for rest and reflection for meditation and community service. Until one has set foot in the *ashram* compound and talked at length with the *sadhu* in saffron clothes, a wanderer may not realize that the place is part of a Christian attempt to express Christian obedience in the midst of Hindu culture and to provide open opportunities for inter-religious relations. The few days I spent at that *ashram* in Travancore remain in my memory as an enrichment of my Christian life. For me it was an introduction to an adventure of faith involving informed and imaginative commitment to explore forms and channels of Christian obedience and witness in a Hindu environment. There was the Christian witness, and there was space for exploration by the visitor or partner who then might not see the Christian as an aggressive go-getter, seeking to impose on the thought and experience of the partner in inter-religious relationship.

Solidarity in service. Reflection on the life and labors of Dr. Kagawa in Japan underlines for me the image of one who in his time sat in solidarity and service among the marginalized people of Japan. He brought the good news of the *agape* of God descending to be among the prostitutes and the publicans so that their loyalties to false value systems might be transformed according to the redemptive purpose of God in Christ. In the mind and feelings of adherents of dominant Asian religious traditions, Christianity is associated with western expansionism and triumphalism. As Kosuke Koyama indicated in his theological reflections in northern Thailand, the image of the outreach of the church vis-a-vis people of other religious commitment is that of marching forces

acting out of a *crusading spirit* and not of a community having the *crucified mind.* For these people the cross is associated with a banner of conquest rather than that which depicts the self-emptying love of God, who became a suffering servant to be crucified for the redemption of the world. For those at the receiving end of the church's outreach, there is sometimes an impression that the church has connections with power, wealth, and influence. In a presentation many years ago a Christian student worker asked a question which still rings in my ears: "Are we proclaiming in the world a Christ, risen no doubt, but on whose palms and feet there are no more nail prints and on whose side there is no more the spear mark?"

Paradigm of the cross: "Ti-lakhana" of the Buddhists and the Kenosis of Christ. At a consultation held at Holy Cross College, Rangoon, some years ago, the late Lynn de Silva of Sri Lanka shared his meditation on the crucified Christ, which struck me as particularly meaningful in a culture influenced so much by Theravada Buddhism. *Ti-lakhana*, one of the basic Buddhist teachings about life, is readily acknowledged by all in countries where Buddhism and its values form common terms of reference even for topics of daily conversation. According to this doctrine all beings in this world are characterized by three signs, viz. *anicca, dukkha,* and *anatta* (impermanence, suffering, and non-entity). All beings are transient or *impermanent.* They are born and they pass away. Secondly, the characteristic of all beings is *suffering.* All beings are born in pain, and subsequently aging, disease, and death take hold of their life. Thirdly, all beings are fleeting embodiments of aggregates which in the last analysis cannot claim to have any entity. All beings are basically *non-entities.* There is no place for pride or egoism. Lynn de Silva, in his remarkable exegesis of the christological hymn in Philippians 2, reflected on how Christ, even though he was equal with God and eternal, entered time and took upon himself the transitory human nature, the characteristic of impermanence. Further, he who enjoyed perfection, peace, joy, and glory underwent the ultimate suffering, suffering unto death on the cross, and became the embodiment of *dukkha* itself. Thirdly, he who fills all in all and in whom all fullness dwells, emptied himself and became *anatta*, a non-entity reaching the depth of *Kenosis.* When I heard that exposition I was struck by the freshness and intelligibility of the message as well as by the depth of communication toward those of Theravada Buddhist tradition.

Emillio Castro, reporting as general secretary to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, earlier last year said: "The outstretched arms of the cross are perhaps the best symbol of God's attitude towards all humankind, the offering of God's self in an attitude of total powerlessness and from there... appealing, inviting to a free decision.... The witness we owe to the other is the witness to God's love made manifest in Jesus Christ... to which I can testify only in a loving relationship which implies acceptance of my neighbor and co-responsibility for the whole human predicament...."

In this sense the paradigm of the cross, after being initially an offense and a shock, can, in God's purpose, often lead to in-depth inter-religious relations.

Concluding points to ponder

It was said that the International Missionary Conference meeting of 1947 at Whitby, instead of asking whether *pre-conditions for mission* and *points of contact* were

present in the world, asked whether they were present in the church. The important point that needs underlining in relations between Christians and persons of different religious systems has more to do with the cultivation of a correct attitude on the part of the Christians than with the search for points of contact in their systems and setting. We need to repent for our past attitudes of arrogance, disrespect, unconcern, ignorance, and even hostility.

As the San Antonio statement of the 1990 meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism testified: "We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ. At the same time we cannot set limits to the saving power of God. We need the courage to follow wherever [God] may lead us, even beyond the truth-boundaries we can presently recognize. God has created all things, and though God has suffered all nations in times past to walk in their own ways, he has not left himself without witness. Where there are traces of truth and light, these inevitably must have as their source the true light which lightens every one that comes into the world. In God everything in heaven and on earth was created... the whole universe has been created through him and for him... and all things are held together in God... and in the dispensation of the fullness of times God will gather together in one all things in Christ."

The church has often spoken of the uniqueness of Christ. More recently reference has been made to the finality in Christ. God will sum up all things in Christ. There is nothing outside God's rule, for all things cohere in God. We cannot claim to exhaust the implications of these affirmations and our understanding of the nature of Christ in whom God will sum up all things. Paul speaks of his strivings, and he counts not himself to have apprehended or attained. But he said he followed after, if that he may apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus. By God's grace we may be granted to declare him to whom others relate as the yet unknown, and we ourselves come to catch new visions of his manifold providence and presence in the rich heritage of our neighbors. In our zeal to define the uniqueness of Christ others may conclude and we ourselves come to realize that "our" Christ had been too small! Scottish theologian John Baillie translated the formula of Cyprian, *Extra ecclesium nulla salus*, as "the man who keeps to himself cannot be made whole." The message I get from this is not that of a closed circle but of relationships and outgoing fellowship.

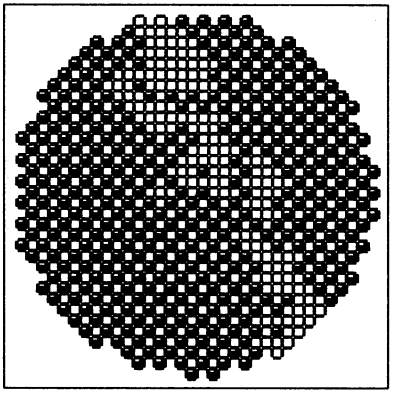
It is edifying to listen to Paul Tillich and Alan Richardson, with our theme in mind. The former said, "no one, not even one who believes and not even the church, can boast of the truth, just as no one can boast of love. Orthodoxy is intellectual Pharisaism." The latter says: "Pride of intellect is as blinding in the pursuit of truth as pride of virtue is deadly in the pursuit of righteousness... one's knowledge of God is a mediated knowledge and the Mediator is Christ the Word" (who became flesh!). If inter-religious relations are to be considered with *dialogue* in mind, we need to remember also that it has to be in terms of the Word made flesh. Dialogue must be the dialogue of life, with the paradigm of the cross determining its manner and content.

A Lutheran College Approach to the Study and Teaching of Religion

Roland E. Miller
Regina, Saskatchewan

All of us live in different circles, and our possible contribution to a conference of this nature depends on which circle we use as a base for reflection. One of my own circles is the Islamic world, and perhaps it would be interesting to talk about the Muslim theology of religion, or to discuss the question of Muhammad's claim to prophecy. Another personal circle is India, and a discussion of inter-religious relations in that nation where the practical experience, including that of the Christian church, stretches over 19 centuries, might prove enlightening. Another circle for me is the world of mission, and it would not be out of place to document the fact that much of the best that has taken place in the academic study of religion, as well as the examination of the relation between the gospel and the religions, has been carried on by missionary scholars. I have chosen, however, to address the question of the study and teaching of religion from within my fourth circle, which is that of a Lutheran college educator.

One suggested phrasing of a topic I might present was: "teaching other religions as a Lutheran theological educator." I prefer, however, to speak from my experience over the last twelve years as a Lutheran college teacher of religion, combined as it has been with my role as head of my host university's program of religious studies. What I have to share from within that circle may have some relevance for our discussions. One way of looking at what we are doing is to see Lutheran divinity school teachers and Lutheran college teachers in concert speaking to the church and helping it to deal with a large spectrum of issues. Another, and perhaps the necessary penultimate step, is for Lutheran theologians and Lutheran college teachers of religion to understand their distinctive roles, perspec-



tives and approaches, and how we can be of assistance to each other in what looms as an increasingly important and formidable task.

Let us look at the question, "How to teach religion in a Lutheran college?"[1] The question puts everything on the table. It might be saved, however, from a kind of suffocating blandness by a slight re-phrasing: "How to teach the life of Buddha in a Lutheran college?" or "How to teach the Hindu concept of grace in a Lutheran college?" We are talking about real things that press upon us mightily. Some of you may have been engaged in the task of teaching religion at a Lutheran college for a long time, and you can respond to the question expertly. All of you will have well-grounded opinion on the appropriate answer to the "how," whether taken as a pedagogical query or as theological concern, or both.

I will approach the question in three parts: the informing context, the collegium approach, and the implication of Lutheran.

The informing context

The question of how to teach religion in a Lutheran college is set within a context—it cannot be considered in pure abstraction. *Con-textere* means to interweave, and there is indeed a complex of factors interwoven about this issue. In another analogy, the context channels the answer we will give to the question. Our teaching of religion is like a river that has banks; the river has its own life, but the banks determine the direction and pace of the flow. There are four contextual elements that I have chosen to remark upon:

1. The stated goal of the teaching institution
2. The importance of the subject matter
3. The academic approach to the study of religion
4. The atmosphere of the contemporary thought world vis-a-vis religion.

I will begin with some comment on the factor of college goals. We know that there is a considerable diversity in Lutheran colleges around the world, and I hope that there always will be. The diversity underscores the need to ascertain whether there is a minimal objective reality that can be set forth as an accurate response to the question. Teaching a class on Christianity in India to a hundred students, 95 of whom are Hindus and Muslims, in a nation where any form of classroom suasion of youth is vehemently resented and resisted, is one thing. Doing the same thing in Minnesota or Illinois may not be quite the same. The stated goal is important as a possible guide through

[1] By "religion" I mean religion and religions. The latter includes Christianity. I am not arguing the question of *whether* religion in this sense should be taught in a Lutheran college. I am accepting that as an assumption. I also assume that doing so will bring important benefits.

the diversity of situations we find in Lutheran colleges around the world.

Let me be biographical for a moment. I am a member of a Lutheran college that is academically integrated with a secular university, although legally and financially autonomous. I will not enter into an explanation of the Canadian post-secondary educational system that allows for provincially-supported denominational arts and science colleges within provincially-supported secular universities, a system that ultimately stems from the Oxford-Cambridge tradition. Let me merely say that Luther College at Regina and its Jesuit neighbor, Campion College, are united with the other colleges of the University of Regina in a common intellectual and educational enterprise which includes the teaching of religion. This situation of intimate relation cum distinction, this "in yet not of" position, requires that as much attention be paid to the nature of commonalities in the teaching of religion as to possible distinctions. How does a Lutheran teaching religion at Luther College differ from a Lutheran teaching religion in the Faculty of Arts, two hundred yards away? Such a question cannot be addressed without consideration of goal.

The goal of a Lutheran college is not infrequently described as "quality liberal education in a Christian context." The institutional objective is the provision of quality liberal education within a milieu created by Christians. I find this a reasonable statement, and much prefer it to the elusive phrase "Christian education," which no one seems to be able to clearly define. A Lutheran college, then, is a college of Christians in the Lutheran tradition, dedicated to the diakonia of education. This underlies the point that what is "Christian" in education is what Christians do in the spirit of Christ. If that is so, in theory you can have a Christian college without having a single class in religion, and the primary reason for having classes in religion in the educational curriculum resides not in the adjective "Lutheran" but in the nouns "college" and "education." This brings me to the second contextual factor that impinges on the question we are addressing, and that is the importance of the subject matter we call religion.

The study of religion is not only important, but is increasingly perceived as being important. This is so because the significance of the subject matter is widely recognized. Across the world of perceptive humanity there has developed an increasing consciousness of the vital role that religion plays in human life, and this is true even in so-called secular societies. Unfortunately that awareness has oft-times been stimulated by extreme expressions of religion in fascist or faddist forms, ranging from Bakker to Khomeiny. A well-known example is the fact that the study of Islam in the U.S.A. received a major boost from the hostage-taking incident in Teheran in 1979. But there is something deeper here than that. The study of religion and its linkages with various aspects of human life is now perceived as a practical necessity, but beyond that form of utilitarianism the realm of the sacred which is the subject matter of religion is being re-discovered, or at least freshly recognized. When Secretary Gorbachev speaks for freedom of religion and moreover says that "we need spiritual values" and "we have changed our attitude toward some matters such as religion—which, admittedly, we used to treat in a simplistic fashion,"[2] it points to the acknowledgement of an undeniable reality. The current situation, in fact, is a paradoxical one. In some parts of the world where religious faith and practice was strong to recent times, there is

---

[2] *Time* 134:24 (Dec. 11, 1989), 21.

a turning away from it as attention is concentrated on material advance, and the old-new god Mammon gains new worshippers, while in other parts of the world where the vacuity and destructiveness of pure materialism is becoming recognized, there are combinations of search for new value systems and fundamentalist protectionism of traditional belief systems.

However the phenomenon of religious interest may be described, it is clear that universities have responded to it, and in so doing have further stimulated it. The study of religion and its linkages is now perceived as a virtual requirement for a good academic program. Elsewhere I have discussed what I consider to be the relatively tentative and halting response in divinity schools, perhaps still suffering from the Enlightenment divorce between theology and religion.[3] The relative ignorance of the Christian pastorate on the subject of religion, concerning which society rather naturally anticipates that it has some expertise, is not a matter of pride. The academy, on the other hand, which first grabbed the religious ball only to become disenchanted for a time, is now once again deeply involved in educating people in religion. This development is reflected in the growth of departments of religious studies in North American universities,[4] the large enrollment of students especially in general introductory classes, and the great attention to theoretical and methodological questions related to the study of religion.

All this is not without significance for the question of the place of religion at a Lutheran college. The study of religion in all its diversity is as vital for a quality-education oriented Lutheran college as it is for a quality-education oriented secular university. It is vital as part of the educative process, not only as a spiritual growth concern. A good Lutheran college will therefore be committed, in my opinion, to a solid educational program in the study of the major religious traditions and the dominant religious themes of humanity in order to be true to its intellectual mission. To place the study of religion within the intellectual mission of the college is to provide the frame for the question, "How to study religion?" The question is not how to study Christianity—although that is part of it—nor how to study other religions in the light of Christianity, but how to study religion and religions. This point leads to the third contextual component, the modern approach to the study and teaching of religion.

The modern study of religion has benefited from the careful and dedicated work of many distinguished scholars, which has resulted in the reduction of a chaotic situation to some semblance of accepted form. Modernity in the field is generally traced to the work of Conrad Tiele (1830-1902) of Holland and Max Müller (1823-1900) of Germany and England. The latter's call for a new science of religion in 1867 provides

---

[3] Roland Miller, "Is the Emperor Naked?: Religions and Religion in Theological Education," in Walter Freitag, ed., *Festschrift: A Tribute to Dr. William Hordern* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1985), 109-24. The article traces the disjuncture between theological education and the study of religion, argues for a stronger commitment to the latter in divinity schools, both for the sake of theological competence and preparation for mission, and provides some suggestions as to how to proceed in the matter.

[4] Harold Remus, ed., *Directory of Departments and Programs in Religious Studies in North America* (Macon, GA: Council on the Study of Religion, Mercer University, 1985), lists about 990 four-year schools and graduate schools not located in theological schools, with departments of programs of religious studies, in the U.S.A. and Canada.

The study of religion in all its diversity is as vital for a quality-education oriented Lutheran college as it is for a quality-education oriented secular university.

a convenient, though inaccurate, starting-point. In his notable "plea for a new science of religion" (which still makes worthwhile reading), he called upon reverential scholarship "to take possession of this new territory in the name of true science *[wissenschaft]*."[5] Out of this ensuing process there has developed an approach to the study of religion which scholars shorthand as "the academic approach," although the various contending theories and methodologies are still far from being fully reconciled. In my view, it is in this approach, which I will outline below, that we have the primary pedagogical resource for answering the question of how to teach religion in a Lutheran college.

Why do I say that? I do so because a Lutheran college, apart from whatever else it is, is an academic institution. It therefore supports, fosters, and utilizes all truly helpful academic approaches. Woe unto us, if a Lutheran college is somehow less professional than a secular university! Indeed, if small is beautiful—and Lutheran colleges tend to be small—we might say that a Lutheran college must be fully and beautifully academic in perspective, not succumbing for a minute to the temptation that the gospel is somehow adorned by lesser commitments to intellectual rigor or by ignoring the mainstream of disciplinary advance. Rather it will be happily aware of, well disposed toward, and deliberately utilizing the best worked-out answers that the academy can provide to the quest, "How to study religion?", taking the good and rejoicing in it, and leaving what does not appear felicitous.

Someone may suggest that what has just been stated is an inappropriate approach for teachers in Lutheran colleges because the methodologies of the academy are born from and are characterized by a position of detachment from truth-claims, while a Lutheran college is committed to the light of the gospel. Before dealing with that criticism, let me turn to the final contextual factor that I wish to touch upon, namely, the atmosphere of relativistic universalism, or the newer terms inclusivism and pluralism, that now characterizes common thinking in the Christian west on the subject of world religions.[6]

The roots of this development are not yet well researched, and a plethora of factors may be adduced. It is undoubtedly essential that more work be done in carefully analyzing the real cause or causes of this development, otherwise much of the

---

[5] Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion* (2 vols.; The Hague: Mouton, 1973), I:95.

[6] The terms universalism, inclusivism, and pluralism are neutral in themselves, and have a variety of meanings. In theology, they are used to give both positive and negative connotations. In this essay, I am taking the terms in the negative sense to suggest "problems" they represent for orthodox Christian thought.

dealing with the question will be at a symptomatic level. To lay primary blame at the door of religious studies scholars in universities would not be justified, I believe, even though relativistic views are common in the field. In general, it is religious studies scholars who best know the real distinctions that exist among the religions, and their teaching depends on an accurate knowledge of the contrasting realities. It was not a religious studies scholar, after all, but a Christian theologian—Karl Rahner—who coined the phrase "anonymous Christians," which is not only theologically and religiously questionable, but which is regarded as rather insulting by the few non-Christians who know about it. It is religious studies scholars who are challenging some of the not-so-well-informed and somewhat easygoing assumptions of Hans Küng in his recent writings on the subject. At the same time, however, it may be naive history to ascribe too much responsibility to inclusivist Christian theologians, simply because they lack influence at popular Christian levels. Their views, in fact, may be as much a result of something that has happened as a cause of something new unfolding.

Pluralistic views, wherever they stem from, are in the very air we breathe. When I returned from the mission field in 1976, I prepared to give a mission address at a Lutheran congregation in Amherst, Massachusetts. The pastor took me aside before the service and said, "I want you to know that at least half of my congregation are universalists." It was quite a shock for a returning missionary. Since that time I have observed the ideology developing and growing. It matters what kind of soap you purchase and what model of car you choose, but what kind of religion you espouse is fundamentally unimportant. It matters that there is economic free trade in the world and that material goods be shared, but the idea of spiritual free trade and the communication of religious goods is somehow outmoded. What is it that will bring some fresh air into this rather cloying atmosphere? What is it that will help to introduce more critical thought into this emotion-controlled mood? What is it that will restore credibility with non-Christians who think discretely about religion and their mission in the Christian world? What, in the end, will be the chief Lutheran college contribution to the church's dealing with a pluralistic thought-world? It could very well be that which corresponds with its educational goal, namely the intellectual enterprise of correct teaching applied to religious materials, correct teaching of the beliefs and practices of the major living religious traditions, so that a foundation is laid for spiritual reflection based on reality.

The collegium approach

Lutheran colleges share with secular universities purpose, subject matter, and academic perspective, while they share with Lutheran divinity schools a common tradition, a shared theological orientation and concern for *missio dei.* They share in two worlds. It is important to keep the overlaps and distinctions as clear as possible. The purpose, material, and perspective shared with the university provide the basic answer on how to teach religion in the classroom, while the tradition and orientation shared with divinity schools provide the approach for dealing with the pluralism question, particularly outside the classroom. The term "college" gathers up the former, and the word "Lutheran" the latter.

The core functional *raison d'etre* of a Lutheran college must be seen in the term *collegium.* College is the substantive and Lutheran the qualifier. The term "college"

Religion is an aspect of that total human experience which is probed, studied, and sought to be understood in and by the academy.

stems from *collegium*, which means "company of scholars." That is, faculty and students in a collegium are united in the scholarly task which is to gather, share, and increase knowledge. Knowledge enhancement of all kinds with reference to physical nature and human affairs, and instruction regarding their wise employment is the good that is pursued. It is clear that the collegium shares with the university both the task and the materials for providing a quality education.

The material for knowledge enhancement includes religious materials. Religion is an aspect of that total human experience which is probed, studied, and sought to be understood in and by the academy. Religion, in a definition that can be used in religious studies, is the human experience of the sacred and what people do with it.[7] It belongs, therefore, to the realm of human knowledge (although, from theological perspective, not only that), and the curriculum of a Lutheran college must embrace it to carry out the objective of teaching students fully and well. The opening sentence of the University of Regina calendar description of its program of Religious Studies reads:

> Religious Studies consist of a diversity of systematic inquiry into the timeless quest of human beings in the spiritual or transcendental realm, as well as their attempts to understand and relate to it.[8]

The description was developed before I came aboard, and I would prefer a somewhat revised wording, but I can identify with the intent. The collegium, in brief, is ready to teach Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism, and so on, and to do it expertly.

The implication of "Lutheran"

The word "collegium" means something. So does the word "Lutheran." We have said that a collegium conducted by Christians is not less academic than a secular university, and it appropriates the goal, materials, and perspective of the university in teaching religion. We have also said that the word "Lutheran" implies a certain tradition, theological orientation and missiological concern, all flowing from the gospel. How does a Lutheran college appropriate these perspectives in carrying out the teaching of religion?

It does not do so, in my opinion, by turning religious studies classes into theology of religion classes. I am afraid that I am not very objective on that point. I am aware of the trepidation that members of other faiths have about Christian teaching of their religion. When I introduced the courses on Islam into the University of Regina, there

---

[7] Definitions are myriad in number, and none completely satisfies; this one is the writer's.

[8] *General Calendar, University of Regina, 1989-90* (Regina: University Secretary's Office, 1989), 108.

was a wave of concern in the Muslim community and the question was being raised, "What are they doing with our religion?" The secretary and treasurer of the Islamics Association were requested by their community to enroll in my first class to find out what was going on! We are dealing with a conditioned reflex produced by a parlous history, which as Lutherans we want to minister to. Our accurate, impartial and respectful teaching is that ministry. If Christianity were taught in a Muslim College, I would like the class teacher, assuming he or she is a Muslim, to deal with Jesus Christ as Christians perceive and teach Christology. So also in discussing Muhammad, it is necessary that we present the Muhammad of Islamic faith and not the Muhammad of Christian theology, or worse, the Muhammad of medieval Christian diatribe. Very simply put, this is the application of the "golden rule" to the teaching of religion. It is the only effective rule for dealing with the power dynamics of a religious studies classroom.

There is, however, an additional and fundamental reason for not using the Lutheran college religious studies classroom as the natural place for doing theology of religions. We have already alluded to the principle that religious materials should be treated, from a descriptive point of view, like any other study materials. To go beyond that, to engage in formal and habitual theologizing in the religious studies classroom, gives the connotation that there is such a thing as "Christian religious studies." In my view, and I recognize that this is debatable, there is no such thing. There is Christian theology of religion, which has its time and place as a theological discipline, and there is the academic study of religion. There is no hybrid, in-between discipline called "Christian religious studies," which a Lutheran college should teach, any more

In discussing Muhammad, it is necessary that we present the Muhammad of Islamic faith, not the Muhammad of Christian theology.

than it teaches Christian anthropology or Christian chemistry. We can make words do anything, and the term "Christian" can be attached to anything. I suppose that, in theory, someone could start selling Christian Toyotas! But we observe clarity in language to express clarity in thought. There is no such thing as Christian anthropology or Christian chemistry. There is only anthropology or chemistry taught by Christians. Similarly, there is no such animal as Christian religious studies, although there is such a thing as religious studies taught by Christians, and there is such a thing as theology of religion.

Here we do well to differentiate the functions of a Lutheran college and Lutheran divinity schools. The latter, whether seminaries or Bible schools, have a different role than Lutheran colleges, a theological and professional function in the area of religious education. Their mandate and task, at their respective levels, is to pursue Christian studies, to reflect on various other aspects of human knowledge in relation to the Christian faith, to train in professional skills, and to utilize the classroom in the development of Christian piety and prayer. Such institutions indeed may have—and I

strongly maintain that they should have—solid objective courses on such religions as Buddhism and Islam. When they teach them, however, they will not stop with presenting descriptive facts, but will go on to reflect on those facts in relation to the doctrines of creation and revelation, the practice of mission, and so on. Religious facts are taken as materials for doing theology and missiology, which in turn are to contribute to the promotion of true Christian thought and the expansion of Christ's kingdom on earth.

How, then, do we measure the implication of "Lutheran" for the delicate activity of teaching religion in a Lutheran college? Let us be clear on what we are not doing when we suggest eliminating theology of religion as a formal classroom function in religious studies. We are *not* thereby removing the obligation of Christian educators to be both theologians and witnesses within their calling. Every Christian is a theologian of a kind, and a theologian must and will theologize; but theologizing is an activity, not an ontological state, for which one can choose an appropriate time and place. So also every Christian is a witness, no matter the vocation he or she may have, and this includes the Lutheran professorate. Yet witnessing too is something that we do, and its manner and language of doing fall into the area of Christian discretion and wisdom. Neither are we eliminating the moral responsibility of a Christian college to minister to young minds who are wondering about the issues raised by the religion, who are asking for questions and hoping for answers. All we are saying is that what is appropriate for the classroom is one thing, and what is appropriate for the contextual activities of a college is another. Let us examine their respective roles.

At the risk of being repetitive, I would like to make the point that the contribution of a Lutheran college to the issues raised is first and foremost the careful and accurate description of the actual faith and practice of living religious people, done in the spirit of understanding love. As it makes this basic contribution, in my view, a Lutheran college cannot do greater service than to help its student members, as well as other constituents,

—to understand that there exist fundamental differences between the religions that matter;

—to know that members of other religions have a faith that for them is absolute, and that they have no interest in being classified either as "just-as-good-as-Christians" or as "Christians-in-the-making;

—to provide accurate knowledge on the basis of which they will be able to carry on spiritual reflection and make theological judgments;

—to help create a sense of the members of other religions as fellow human subjects, and not merely objects of casual discourse; and

—to foster the attitudes of respect and empathy that not only open the door to learning, but represent the *sine qua non* of successful outreach in a world of plural convictions.

Implicit in what I have said is my personal, and personalist, point of view, undoubtedly a result of long residence in a Muslim village in India, that we must view religions not in the first place as systems of thought but as religious people with whom we have a relationship in the Friend of humanity and with whom we must strive for a relationship of empirical friendship. The first and greatest act of friendship is that we lay down our lives for our friends, the second is that we give them the gospel of God, and the third is that we offer them the gift of understanding love. Is not this what is implied in being "Lutheran"? Is not the

Lutheran educators must rejoice in any convergence on the principle of understanding love applied to the study of religion.

teaching of religion at a Lutheran college to reflect that spiritual reality?

I therefore speak about a "call to understanding"[9] that issues from the "minaret" of Christian colleges and seminaries alike, that belongs to good theology, that a Lutheran educator of religion can respond to, and can rejoice in responding to, as his or her rightful task. Some time ago I was asked to do an analysis of Christian research centers around the world that deal with Muslims and with Muslim things, and to reflect on the place of research in Christian missiology. What I wrote in that context I will repeat now, since from my perspective what was said then has equal reference to the study and teaching of religion and religions in a Lutheran college today. Wherever the term "research" appears in the reading, therefore, I ask you to mentally substitute the words "study" and "teaching":[10]

> The "call to understanding" has practical implications. We will study Muslims and the things that are precious to them because they are our friends, doing to them what we would that they do for us. The love we have for them as people will move us to healthy intercourse, to warm relationships and to natural affections. The study projects we undertake will be our way of getting to know our friends better, and our method of introducing them to others. We will engage in our research in the respectful consciousness that we are entering the sacred shrine of people dear to us. In our investigations we will first of all seek what is good and notable, and carry on our study in the expectation that we will discover it. We will not falter in our integrity as objective scholars concerned with the facts, but our assessment of the facts will be fair and undistorted, and we will be honest in the way that friends can be honest with each other....
>
> We will view our research as a *servant* of *people*, and it will be humble and uncalculating in spirit. We will therefore also strive to meet the felt needs of Muslims themselves, and to make contributions that are appreciated by them as such. In all our research work we will seek for excellence—for shoddy intellectual work and poor scholarship do not adorn the gospel—but finally we will judge our efforts and ask that they be judged on the basis of whether they are rooted in understanding love....
>
> From this perspective, research is not so much a means to the mission of love as it is the mission of love itself. To that mission, it is the writer's experience, Muslims are, and will be, warmly responsive.

If you sense that there is a possible dawning of a convergence of thought on the epistemology of love, that draws together

---

[9] As far as I know, it was Kenneth Cragg who first used this term in his seminal work, *Call of the Minaret* (London: Oxford University Press, 2nd rev. ed., 1985), 171-92, in a chapter on the subject.

[10] Roland Miller, "Building the Network of Research Centres," in D. M. McCurry, ed., *The Gospel and Islam* (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1979), 461ff.

Lutheran college and seminary educators, Christian missiologists, and some leading representatives in *religionswissenschaft* at a critical point, it is not imagination, for the reality is actually that. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a religious studies scholar, stated it simply: "The knowledge of a person available to another person depends quite basically on the personal relationship between them. I cannot know my neighbor more than superficially unless I love him."[11] Similarly, the missiologist, Kenneth Cragg, reflects:

> In that instinct, surely, the Christian spirit is bound to share, taught by its own compassionate gospel an affinity with every human reverence.... What we need is just this capacity to feel with the reactions and impulses of men in every texture of belief and unbelief, and to possess, not merely as assessors, still less as aliens, but as companions of mortality, the world of their fears and sanctities.[12]

In a totally different context Kabir, the 15th century poet-mystic-saint of India who is claimed by both Hindus and Muslims, put the truth with simple eloquence: "Kabir says: 'Listen to me, my friend: he understands who loves....'"[13] Lutheran educators must welcome and rejoice in any convergence on the principle of understanding love applied to the study of religion. For is not this one aspect of the truly universal principle, opened out in Christ and the gospel by the Lord of the universe, the same principle that compels us to the diakonia of education and enables us to fill our thoughts with "all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, whatever is excellent and admirable" (Phil 4:8)?

The implication of the qualifying term "Lutheran" in the collegium's teaching of religion may be further, and programmatically expressed in two ways: one, through the provision of specific classes in the Christian studies stream; and two, through the deliberate creation of reflection centers and action opportunities for Christian students, both within and beyond the campus. Since these are activities that can take many different forms, I will deal with the points in a cursory manner.

It is in those Christianity classes where materials and discussions related to other religions have a *natural* curricular fit that opportunities exist, within classroom pedagogy, for a proper and explicit examination of the relation between the gospel and the religions. The examination may take place in existing classes on church history, history of missions, and so on, that deal with classical and current encounters with the religions. Moreover, it is also possible to conceive of special classes on the subject that deal with such topics as: "Christian Theologies of Religion: A Comparative Study" or "Dialogue: Its Principles, Purposes and Limits" or "The Issue of Plural-

---

11 W. C. Smith, "Comparative Religion, Whither and Why?" in *The History of Religions*, ed. by J. Kitagawa and M. Eliade (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, 46fn. For a similar affirmation, cf. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (2 vols.; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), I:484, who speaks of this attitude as "the loving gaze of the lover on the beloved object. For all understanding rests on self-surrendering love. Were that not the case, then not only all discussion of what appears in religion, but all discussion of appearance in general, would be quite impossible, since to him who does not love, nothing whatever is manifested."

12 Kenneth Cragg, *Christianity in World Perspective* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), 73.

13 "Yearning and Love for God" in Louis Renou, ed., *Hinduism* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 215.

ism in Christian History," and so on. I would argue that the time has probably come, and may be long overdue, for Lutheran college teachers of religious studies and Lutheran theologians to join together in preparing solid syllabi for such descriptive studies that would enable educators to introduce and deal with the issues that now occupy so much attention.

Since such specific classes are likely to touch only a minority of senior students in Lutheran colleges, however, the Christian *context* must be developed in such a way that a wider range of youth are provided with some resources for handling the issues. Those issues of relativism and pluralism must then be raised up, in some sort of controlled situation. This may be done through the creation of reflection centers—for example, the college chaplain conducting discussion sessions on universalism and pluralism—and action centers through which young Christians are challenged and assisted to translate their understanding of the gospel into action and to bring meaningful witness to their neighbors. Perhaps most important, however, is for individual teachers themselves to take more accurate note of the real mindset of youth in their college, who are undoubtedly a cross-section of a relativist society, and with some determination and dedication to become involved with that student thought world at personal levels of communication. Thus an instructor of religious studies will become a counselor in religion. Knowledge enhancement for dealing with alternate philosophies and for intelligent sharing of the gospel is surely an implication of "Lutheran" and a significant role that a Lutheran college must fill through the Christian context it is dedicated to creating. The students are probably ready. Is the context being created? Let the sharing commence! And that, surely, is why we are here together.

Conclusion

There is a risk in not teaching religions well at Lutheran colleges. The risks are that Lutherans will be uneducated in a primary area of human knowledge, that good theological thinking on the subject will be frustrated because Christians are engaged with the pluralistic question before they know the empirical realities, and that the gospel itself may be blanketed by a suffocating relativism. There is also, however, a risk in teaching religions in academic perspective, especially if the Christian context is underdeveloped. Jaroslav Pelikan has drawn attention to the ambiguity of the possible results, which include both the potentiality of deepened personal faith and the possibility of further drift in the hazy fog of uncertainty and even loss of faith. My own view is that if a Lutheran college is both deeply collegium and deeply Lutheran, the risks will become manageable and the results will be positive, and even exciting. Pelikan puts it another way, from within his situation in a secular university:

> As a Christian believer and as an orthodox theologian, I care about this process deeply, and seek... to apply the healing power of Word and Sacrament to those who are engaged in this struggle. But finally this is not our doing, nor should be. The issue of such struggles lies with the grace of One who is not the captive of our research.... As a whole person, both scholar and believer, I am willing to say that any religious faith ought to be able to take its chances on this process, or it will not be worthy of our scholarly research or of our personal commitment.[14]

I close, as it is almost mandatory for Lutheran educators to do, with a reference to the learned Martin Luther. In this case, however, I do so with a happy deliberation, respecting his remarkable relationship with

Islam, a story not yet fully told. He minced no words in stating the great importance of knowing what Muslims believe, personally went after as much information as he could obtain, knew a lot in the end, and wanted others to know the same. Even though he used very strong language in connection with the Turks (read "Muslims"), speaking of their "spirit of lies" and "spirit of murder," he saw the issue in other terms than did most people of his day.

> Think of all the heartbreak and misery that have been caused by the *cruciata* [=crusades, ed.], by the indulgences, and by the crusade taxes. With these Christians have been stirred up to take the sword and fight the Turk when they ought to have been fighting the devil and unbelief with word and prayer.[15]

In what was a remarkable action for his time, he insisted, in 1542, that permission be granted to Thomas Bibliander to publish Robert Ketton's Latin translation of the Qur'an, which had lain dormant in Europe since the days of Peter the Venerable in the 12th century, and he chastised the city council of Basle for interfering with the process. In the following words he expressed his concern about those who feel that the study and teaching of another religion is not a Christian obligation:

> To be sure, it often has disgusted me, and still does, that neither our great lords nor our scholars have been at any pains to give us any certain knowledge about the life of the Turks in the two classes, spiritual and temporal; and yet the Turk has come so near to us.[16]

And this may be a good word on which to end for those who are considering "a Lutheran college approach to the study and teaching of religion."

---

[14] Jaroslav Pelikan, "In Defence of Research in Religious Studies at the Secular University," in *Religion and the University* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press for York University, 1964), 19. [Symposium; no ed. listed]

[15] Martin Luther, treatise on "War Against the Turks" (1529), *Luther's Works* 46 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 186.

[16] Luther, "War Against the Turks," 175ff.

The Case for a Worldly Christianity

Paul P. Kuenning
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The case for a 'Worldly Christianity' is centered in the biblical assertions that both the revelation of God's love and the resolution of our human destiny are totally immersed in this world. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written,

> ...they who evade the earth do not find God.... They find a world beyond to be sure, but one that is not God's world.... They who evade the earth in order to find God, find only themselves.[1]

Although Bonhoeffer was not aware of it, recent historical studies indicate that this concept of a 'Worldly Christianity' has certain things in common with the ethical theology developed much earlier by German Lutheran Pietism. The Pietist tradition evolved and reached its fruition under the leadership of Philip Spener and August Francke in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. While Pietism held fast to Lutheran orthodoxy's view of the world as basically evil and contaminated by sin, this conviction did not result in a withdrawal from earthly realities, not to any significant degree of 'other-worldliness.' On the contrary Pietism's concern for an evil world asserted itself in the endeavor for renewal and reform in both church and society.

In contrast to groups of believers who either came to terms with a world in which evil was accepted as inevitable and basically unchangeable, or who fled from it and sought refuge in seclusion and the hope of a world beyond, classical Lutheran Pietism managed to maintain a precarious balance between these two extremes. While refusing to make peace with a sinful world, it was at the same time willing and ready to labor for its improvement.

The motivation for this kind of worldly involvement or activism arose from two primary sources: 1) a revitalization of the orthodox Lutheran doctrine of sanctification, which laid renewed stress on its indissoluble connection with justification, and on the corresponding conviction that the only true test of faith lay in the practice of love for the neighbor; and 2) an eschatology grounded in a theology of hope, based

---

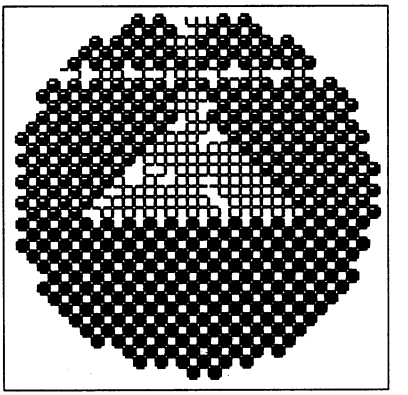
[1] Ernest Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Martin Rumscheidt (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 118.

on the promise of Scripture that God intended to bring the Kingdom into being on earth, and that Christian believers were privileged to be instruments in the implementation of this divine work.[2]

Bonhoeffer appears to have accepted the traditional Lutheran caricature of Pietism's theology as basically 'legalistic' and 'subjective.' Consequently he remained unaware of the creative and dynamic social ethic which it espoused. Yet both Bonhoeffer and classical Lutheran Pietism grounded their rationale for an activist approach to life in the assertion that the redemptive acts of God are revealed within the historical, and that as a consequence the importance of all earthly reality can never be simply written off as having some kind of secondary importance. In a word they insisted that true Christianity never allows the 'worldly' to be torn from its essential unity with ultimate and eternal realities.

This "Worldly Christianity' can help equip Lutheranism to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It can also provide an adequate alternative to a resurgent but regressive conservatism, with its penchant to wrench faith from life, and in particular from the political sphere of human endeavor. Usually referred to as 'neo-conservative,' this school of thought has a number of intellectually capable exponents, chief among whom is the prolific writer, former Lutheran pastor and recent convert to Catholicism, Richard J. Neuhaus.

Neuhaus and his colleagues argue that Lutheranism and Christian theology in general must rely heavily on an ethical analysis based on what has been traditionally referred to as the doctrine of the two kingdoms or the two realms, a cognomen which Neuhaus often refers to under the concept of "paradox." There have been innumerable complex theories spun out and many books written as to what this doctrine meant to



Luther, of how it has been misused, and why it needs to be retained in various modified forms. The practical results of the two kingdoms doctrine, however, have become indisputably clear. The tendency has been to erect a dividing wall of separation between the sacred and the secular, the transcendental and the historical. It has dulled the radical-prophetic edge of the gospel's implicit call for ethical and social reform.

The oft-repeated claim of neo-conservatism that the two kingdoms doctrine represents the only traditional position of Lutheranism is simply erroneous. Lutheran traditions are not monolithic. Classical Lutheran Pietism represents a vigorous and valid Lutheran heritage which refused to squeeze its response of faith into neatly divided compartments of sacred and secular, public and private. It quietly ignored the two kingdoms doctrine, assigning it to the limbo of benign neglect, while it resolutely applied the moral mandates of the Scriptures to every aspect of human existence.

---

[2] Paul P. Kuenning, *The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1988), 24-30.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer also stands solidly within the Lutheran tradition. Yet toward the close of his life, his view of the two kingdoms doctrine had shifted from one of qualified acceptance to the assertion that it was without adequate scriptural authority and largely devoid of theological validity. Perhaps no one has ever launched a more devastating attack upon the cogency of this doctrine, nor described so accurately its anachronistic quality and misuse, as Bonhoeffer did in his *Ethics*. He claimed that the theme of the two spheres erred in that it treated "such pairs of concepts as secular and Christian, natural and supernatural... as though they were ultimate static antithesis." Finally he warned that we must not allow this doctrine to "lead back to a static predominance of the spiritual sphere as an end in itself."[3]

Bonhoeffer's critique rejects any essential divisions between the eternal and the earthly, but this is precisely what the neo-conservative theology does. It claims, for instance, that whenever the church takes a partisan stand in regard to civil or public issues, it politicizes its faith. Therefore, according to Neuhaus, a "partisan church" is an apostate church, committing the cardinal sin of political idolatry by lifting up politics to the level of an ultimate significance. Such a church, he argues, engages in a kind of spiritual adultery by mixing together faith and politics, thus giving the impression that "politics is salvation, and salvation is politics," and in effect denying a "transcendent hope."[4] Another neo-conservative writer recently encapsulated this theological position by stating that "faith is ultimate, politics are not." This, the writer concludes, is "the orthodox paradox... which we surrender at our own eternal peril."[5]

The 'Worldly Christianity' advocated in this essay provides an authentically Lutheran alternative to this theological approach. It does not just allow for the interpenetration of faith and politics, it boldly asserts that the two belong together and that the danger of apostasy lies more in the direction of an essential separation than in a carefully defined synthesis. Let us consider why this is so. A 'Worldly Christianity' understands the incarnation to mean that what is Christian can only be found in the world, and partakes of both the divine and the human. The Godhead in itself is the one purely transcendental and ultimate reality. Yet the only God we can relate to and believe in is totally immersed in our earthly, human life. The glory of God can be known and experienced only through human instrumentality. As St. Paul wrote, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor 4:7). We are by nature cut off from the absolutely transcendent. Therein lies the *raison d'etre* of the Incarnation.

To define faith in Christ as existing in essential separation from earthly realities such as politics, is a violation of the biblical proclamation and of the gospel it contains. It detracts nothing from the significance of this faith to admit that, like everything else in this world, it is a mixture of the ultimate and the penultimate, the human and the divine. In the same way there can be no pure theological judgment, no perfectly accurate biblical interpretation, no absolutely 'true' church on earth.

---

[3] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Co., paperback edition, 1965), 198-99.

[4] Richard J. Neuhaus, *The Catholic Moment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 286-87.

[5] Michael Novak, "The Catholic Moment Revisited," *The Cresset* (December 1989), 33.

A faith which sets itself off from the world and from politics is not just lacking in relevance, it is devoid of reality.

So long as faith is yoked to Christ it cannot be divorced from all that is human, and politics lies at the heart and center of our human life. It not only affects, but frequently exercises a decisive influence upon the most critical moral issues and matters of life and death. Poverty, homelessness, hunger, and a whole myriad of other human predicaments are primarily the results of societal structures that can only be radically altered by political action. I will always remember how a beloved seminary professor, Joseph Sittler, counseled his students to prepare their sermons with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. This admonition to view the meaning of current events in the light of God's will was grounded in a steadfast refusal to put asunder that which God had joined together.

A faith which sets itself off from the world and from politics, which renounces its role as a conscience, guide, and directive for all of life, is not just lacking in relevance, it is devoid of reality. It falls into the category of what the radical reformer Thomas Müntzer referred to as a "fanciful faith."[6] It is an 'up-in-the -air' religion. It touches the earth too lightly, and the result, as Bonhoeffer pointed out, is that it misses heaven, too. Those who are so concerned about keeping the element of transcendence inviolate could learn from the Incarnation that the genuine transcendence of God and of faith is only revealed in its fullness by drawing it down from its aloofness into the very warp and woof of the world. It is of course true that God and the world are not one and the same. But in Christ they belong together and are bound together in a mysterious and indivisible unity.[7]

This assertion about the essential 'worldliness' of faith does not in any way compromise nor detract from the significance of the great biblical and Reformation truth of justification by faith alone. It rather adds to it by describing more precisely the nature and function of that faith through which salvation is bestowed. It is a faith that expresses itself in opposition to all injustice, oppression, hunger, homelessness, racism, unjust war, and unnecessary violence. It is a faith which realizes with Bonhoeffer (via Luther) that "what is nearest to God is precisely the need of one's neighbor." On the other hand, Bonhoeffer in keeping with the Lutheran Confessions does not hesitate to describe a faith which fails to express itself in terms of a 'this-worldly' love, as a "false faith... a hypocritical and self-invented faith, such as can never justify...."[8] Once faith is defined in this wholistic fashion, it becomes clear that it has very little if any theological meaning to insist that it is ultimate while politics is not. To do so only restricts the orb of faith from its living relationship to life in its entirety.

---

[6] Thomas Müntzer, *Mysticism and Dissent* (New Haven: Yale, 1973), 91-92.

[7] Eberhard Bethge, *Bonhoeffer, Exile and Martyr*, ed. John W. Degrudy (New York: Seabury, 1975), 146.

[8] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 137 and 122.

A dynamic and biblical faith always questions the morality and manner in which political power is exercised.

The confinement of the Christian faith to the personal and private sphere of the individual's mind and heart, into a 'my-Lord-and-me' kind of piety, is what Bonhoeffer rejected as a religion of deliverance from this world which he labeled as "idealistic and not Christian."[9]

Only a brief response on behalf of a 'Worldly Christianity' need be made to the persistent neo-conservative contention that for the church to relate the gospel to the controversial realm of the political is to invite division, rob its members of their 'Christian liberty,' and lead to membership loss and decreased giving.[10] The accusation is devoid of biblical or theological validity.

First, the membership loss which results from the sincere effort to relate the biblical teachings to politics is primarily that of the wealthy, upper-middle class, who feel threatened by the church's support of the poor and the oppressed, and by its willingness to confront the established power of the state. On the other hand it is evident that political involvement does not automatically entail loss of membership, certainly not vitality, as is evident in those church bodies in Central and South America and in Eastern Europe who have taken an activist role in on-going movements for political and social reform. Second, lack of controversy offers no insurance for the survival of Christian liberty. It may, in fact, do much to extinguish it. It is indeed under precisely the opposite set of circumstances—where conflicting interpretations of Scripture, and diverse opinions in regard to political advocacy are not only allowed but encouraged—that Christian liberty is best preserved.

Finally we must examine the question of the practical implications of the conservative penchant for viewing the Christian faith as a separate and special realm of life. Here it must be stated unequivocally that the depoliticization of the gospel by the church committed to its proclamation is nearly always a source of comfort and support to the most powerful and oppressive elements in society. This is so because a dynamic and biblical faith always questions the morality and manner in which political power is exercised. It automatically functions as a restraint upon the misuse of civil authority and becomes an active and formidable force of resistance against those who exercise power in an irresponsible, immoral, oppressive, or unjust fashion.

It is ironic that the church which attempts to follow a policy of total political abstinence, far from realizing the sort of 'distance' which it seeks, helps to create the very conditions by which it can be quietly and subtly coopted by the state. The decision of the church to confine itself to matters of 'religion,' refusing to speak out on behalf of human justice or against political corruption, allows it to slide into an exist-

---

[9] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 326.

[10] Neuhaus, *The Catholic Moment*, 191, 263-64, 268-69; and Novak, "The Catholic Moment Revisited," 32.

ence where it remains mute in the face of barbarous acts by the state. And since silence most often implies consent, this political abstinence can easily result in the identification of the church with the oppressive actions of the state. In this regard we may think of the Lutheran church in Germany under the regime of Hitler. Bonhoeffer discovered that the stand of the Confessing Church, in spite of its courage, proved in the end insufficient. The Confessing Church insisted that its struggle remain strictly within the confines of the ecclesiastical. At first the determination to preach the gospel proved in itself a real challenge to Nazism. But when the state acted to dismantle the Confessing Movement by law and began a wholesale persecution of the Jews, it became necessary for the church to oppose state legislation and to make a direct appeal for such opposition from the pulpit. When this did not happen, the strength of the Confessing Church turned to weakness. When war broke out many of its ministers volunteered for active service. In the end, the Confessing Church, too, fell into the trap of the conservative inclination to divide faith and politics, a fact of which Bonhoeffer was keenly and distressingly aware.[11]

This inability or unwillingness of the church and its people to relate their faith in a direct way to the political sphere in terms of resistance or even simple opposition to unprincipled and immoral acts of the state was demonstrated in our own country throughout the war in Vietnam. The community of the church remained for the most part silently supportive of a vicious, bloody, and unprincipled war, while being generous and kind to its victims. In the meantime, the government used the church's charitable donations to help fight the war. The state called upon the church to perform its Christian duty by binding up the wounds of the casualties and providing them with food, shelter, and clothing. This humanitarian aid was, however, not made available to the 'enemy.' During these years, the delegates to a synodical convention of the LCA gave a standing ovation to a report indicating that they had exceeded their goal of providing blankets for the homeless victims of the U.S. 'incursion' into Cambodia. But later that same day a recommendation to condemn the military action which created these refugees was defeated by a large majority vote. Nothing could more vividly illustrate the schizophrenic nature of the notion that the Christian faith must isolate itself from political issues.

This affliction has by no means been eradicated. It was demonstrated once again by the ominous silence on the part of the Christian community in the face of the blasphemous ultra-patriotism and bellicosity which characterized the invasions of Grenada and Panama. The silence shifted to little more than a murmur when this militarism reached its cruel and chilling climax in the war against Iraq. Seldom in history has a war been less justified in terms of moral principle or imminent threat to human security. There is little question that it could have been avoided had the will to do so existed. Yet it was prosecuted with scarcely any reservations. The *N. Y. Times* reported that the U.S. dropped more tonnage of bombs on Iraq in just the first three weeks of the war than in the whole of World War II. This unprecedented and ferocious utilization of carpet bombing, smart bombs, and guided missiles produced the most efficient killing machine in military history. According to most available reports, it resulted in the deaths of over 200,000 Iraqi

---

[11] Bethge, *Bonhoeffer, Exile and Martyr*, 70-72.

citizens, nearly half of them civilian. It now appears that the aftermath of disease, famine, hunger, and civil strife will claim more victims than the war itself. The environmental devastation in the wake of this blitzkrieg could result in further long term fatalities on a massive scale. Money for critical human needs in this country were sacrificed to the war effort. Yet polls ascertained that from eighty to ninety percent of U.S. citizens supported the war. Across the length and breadth of the land, a 'God-fearing' people gave voice to an uninhibited glorification of violence, an expressed exuberant pride in the 'power' of the U.S. military, and a de-humanization of the 'enemy' that either denied or ignored their suffering and dying. Shortly before the decision to engage in military action a number of U.S. church leaders, including the bishop of the ELCA, issued measured and strong objections, but after its commencement the criticisms ceased, and in the churches, for the most part, there were only lighted candles, yellow ribbons, and prayers for the war's victims.

There is little question that the church and its people will once more, in keeping with its true mission, respond with charity and concern for those who suffered the ravages of war. But once again we have witnessed a tragic demonstration of the fact that the Christian community cannot evade its 'political' and 'worldly' responsibility by fulfilling its vocation of personal compassion. It was during the crisis in Germany that Bonhoeffer raised the critical question which still awaits a definitive answer: "Has the church merely to gather up those whom the wheel has crushed, or has she to prevent the wheel from crushing them?"[12]

---

[12] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 321.

Pioneering Studies In Paul



PAULINE THEOLOGY
Volume I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon
Edited by JOUETTE M. BASSLER

An outstanding international group of Pauline scholars explores the theology and spirituality of the shorter letters.
$29.95 cloth

SACRED VIOLENCE
Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross
ROBERT G. HAMERTON-KELLY

"...a fresh and powerful vision, demanding the attention of both peace-makers and readers of the Bible, and opening the possibility that each group may recognize itself in the other."—J. LOUIS MARTYN $24.95 paper

HEIRS OF PAUL
Paul's Legacy in the New Testament and in the Church Today
J. CHRISTIAAN BEKER

"...suggests how the church today might best appropriate the witness of Paul...Here is a book no one interested in Paul and his legacy dare ignore."
—JACK DEAN KINGSBURY $8.95 paper

OBEYING THE TRUTH
Paul's Ethics in Galatians
JOHN M.G. BARCLAY

"The finest scholarly monograph on Galatians that has appeared in the past decade or two...a genuine advance in our understanding of this important document."
—MOISES SILVE $14.95 paper

THE REASONS FOR ROMANS
A.J.M. WEDDERBURN
Edited by JOHN E. RICHES

"An excellent example of how to combine different kinds of approaches to New Testament Studies—literary, social, and comparative—to analyze a central question."
—JOHN E. RICHES $11.95 paper

THEOCRACY IN PAUL'S PRAXIS AND THEOLOGY
DIETER GEORGI

Georgi revisions Paul's theology as a critique of Hellenistic Roman political and cultural structures and as an announcement of God's solidarity with victims.
$8.95 paper

THE FUTURE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester
Edited by BIRGER A. PEARSON

Thirty-nine scholars explore the Greco-Roman environment of early Christianity, early Christian history and archaeology, the matrix of Judaism, the New Testament, non-canonical literature, and Gnosticism. Koester himself provides an Epilogue on "Current Issues in New Testament Scholarship." $39.95 cloth

HELLENISTS AND HEBREWS
Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church
CRAIG C. HILL

"...will lead to a revision of widespread views about the development of early Christian history and theology."
—E.P. SANDERS $24.95 cloth

THE NARRATIVE UNITY OF LUKE-ACTS
A Literary Interpretation
Volume 1: Thie Gospel according to Luke
ROBERT C. TANNEHILL

Highlights the Lukan understanding of the purpose of God and the Lukan view of the mission of Jesus.
$19.95 cloth

At bookstores or from
FORTRESS PRESS
426 South Fifth Street
Box 1209
Minneapolis, MN 55440
1-800-328-4648

Recent BOOKS

SO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A NEW PREACHER

A Guide for Pulpit Nominating Committees

Elizabeth Achtemeier

"Provides prospective pastors with a profile of what should be expected of them in both personal and professional life. The wisdom in this book could save a church or a ministry." — *JAMES W. COX*

0596-5, Paper, $5.95

THE GÖTTINGEN DOGMATICS

Instruction in the Christian Religion, Volume I

Karl Barth

Introduction by Daniel L. Migliore

"*The Göttingen Dogmatics* is Barth's first venture at a scholarly dogmatics. . . . For historical reasons alone this work is important, since the genesis and evolution of an influential theology are given here." — *MARTIN RUMSCHEIDT*

2421-8, Cloth, $39.95

CHRISTENDOM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Relations between Religion, Church, and Society

Adriaan H. Bredero

"A monumental and largely successful attempt to synthesize a period of ten centuries in the intellectual and social life of the church. . . . No serious reader will be able to ignore it." — *JOHN R. SOMMERFELDT*

3692-5, Cloth, $29.95

ECUMENICAL TESTIMONY

Arie Brouwer

The sermons, addresses, and writings of a visionary ecumenical leader.

0610-4, Paper, $16.95

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem

"An extremely important resource for the history of biblical exegesis and thereby for the deeper understanding of the richness of the Christian tradition for both academy and Church. It is a fascinating book." — *DANIEL W. HARDY*

3693-3, Cloth, $24.95

LIBERATING REFORMED THEOLOGY

A South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate

John W. de Gruchy

"The author's creative interplay of the Calvinist tradition and the liberation concerns of third-world Christians is a significant contribution to new thinking." — *ROBERT McAFEE BROWN*

0536-1, Paper, $18.95

ANARCHY AND CHRISTIANITY

Jacques Ellul

"With the verve and the gift of trenchant simplification to which we have become accustomed, Ellul lays bare the fallacy that Christianity should normally be the ally of civil authority." — *JOHN HOWARD YODER*

0495-0, Paper, $9.95

READING IN COMMUNION

Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life

Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones

Fowl and Jones explore interpretive disputes among Christians and emphasize the importance of listening to the voices of those outside Christian communities.

0597-3, Paper, $13.95

THE CASE FOR CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

R. William Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw

"The authors . . . provide a convincing case for the essential compatibility of humanism and the Christian faith." — *MARK A. NOLL*

0606-6, Paper, $18.95

WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR WHOM?

The Recent Evangelical Debate over Capitalism

Craig M. Gay

Foreword by Peter L. Berger

"Carefully nuanced, Craig Gay's appraisal of the debate over capitalism involving the evangelical left, evangelical right, and the evangelical middle is a first-rate contribution to social ethics." — *CARL F. H. HENRY*

0289-3, Paper, $19.95

from EERDMANS

GOD, CREATION, AND REVELATION
A Neo-Evangelical Theology
Paul K. Jewett

Writing from a distinctively Reformed and evangelical viewpoint, Paul Jewett here offers a systematic theology that is real and practical for daily living.
0460-8, Paper, $29.95

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING
An Introduction to Christian Theology
Daniel L. Migliore

"A strikingly clear, satisfyingly comprehensive, and richly nuanced treatment of the essential elements and contemporary issues in theology."
— *LINDA A. MERCADANTE*
0601-5, Paper, $18.95
3695-X, Cloth, $29.95

DISSONANT VOICES
Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth
Harold A. Netland

"With scintillating perspicuity and impeccable reasoning Netland demonstrates that it is Christian exclusivism that is biblically required, logically valid, and ontologically hopeful."
— *DAVID J. HESSELGRAVE*
0602-3, Paper, $17.95

TRUTH TO TELL
The Gospel as Public Truth
Lesslie Newbigin

An important book for all who are concerned with the impact of Christianity on public life, this book affirms the gospel as the truth not only for personal life but for the public life of the nation.
0607-4, Paper, $6.95

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, Volume 1
Wolfhart Pannenberg

"This work demonstrates the centrality of the question of God for all Christian theology in a manner exceptional for both its erudition and its originality. A major work."
— *DAVID TRACY*
3656-9, Cloth, $39.95

THE BIBLE AND LITURGY
E. H. van Olst

"A rare, profoundly engaging work not to be missed by anyone concerned about the church's worship and scripture."
— *JOHN H. WESTERHOFF III*
0306-7, Paper, $13.95

A CASE STUDY OF MAINSTREAM PROTESTANTISM
The Disciples' Relation to American Culture, 1880-1989
Edited by D. Newell Williams

"This book is a rich storehouse of information and discerning interpretation concerning an American religious body in interaction with the cultural and social forces of the century just past."
— *RONALD E. OSBORN*
0540-X, Paper, $39.95

COMMENTARY SERIES

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT
Gordon D. Fee, editor

THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS
Revised Edition
Leon Morris
2168-5, Cloth, $27.95

NEW INTERNATIONAL GREEK TESTAMENT COMMENTARY
W. Ward Gasque and I. Howard Marshall, editors

COMMENTARY ON PHILIPPIANS
Peter T. O'Brien
2392-0, Cloth, $39.95

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY
Fredrick Holmgren and G.A.F. Knight, editors

JEREMIAH 26-52
To Build, To Plant
Walter Brueggemann
0600-7, Paper, $15.95

Eerdmans ISBN Prefix 0-8028
Prices subject to change without notice.
For more information on these and other Eerdmans titles, write to Eerdmans Textbook Department for a copy of our most recent Academic Catalog.

At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521
FAX 616-459-6540

175 WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49503

Book Reviews

Call to the Center. By M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O. New York: Doubleday, 1990. 206 pages. Paper. $8.95.

After his twenty-some books and a growing number of audio and video tapes, we might begin to wonder if there is anything new that Fr. Pennington can say about centering prayer. *Call to the Center* is not, however, a book that directly addresses the theory and practice of this prayer form. The author presumes the reader is familiar with centering prayer. Rather, through thirty daily meditations, Fr. Pennington leads us deeper into the experience of prayer.

The book's construction is quite simple. As is usual in the practice of sacred reading (*Lectio Divina*), the practice of daily prayer begins with the sacred text. Fr. Pennington has taken nearly thirty excepts from St. Matthew for us to meditate upon slowly and quietly.

Following each text the author has provided a short meditation of his own. In each meditation, Abbot Pennington walks down the spiritual path with us. This is reason enough to consider the book.

Every meditation is filled with more than enough to think about for one twenty-minute experience in centering prayer. It would be possible to read and reread these meditations and still find new levels of communication with a living God. This is the process the author has used in his retreats. Now, through this book he shares this practice with the rest of us.

Fr. Pennington suggests that with this model it would be good for us to continue on in our daily prayer with the other Gospels. And it would be as useful in a group setting as in our individual use.

Much of my own prayer life and my teaching of young people and adults has been influenced by centering prayer. My only criticism concerns my experience that centering prayer is not for everyone. Certainly Abbot Pennington would agree. However, this important point is not always obvious in his work.

Tim Hubert
Grace Lutheran Church
Westchester, Illinois

Changes in the Roman Empire: Essays in the Ordinary. By Ramsay MacMullen. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. xiv and 388 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

American New Testament scholars frequently cite Ramsay MacMullen (M.), Professor of Roman History at Yale University, specialist in the social history of the Roman Empire (period of the origins of Christianity). His books include *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Harvard, 1963), *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Harvard, 1966), *Roman Social Relations* (Yale, 1974), *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (Yale, 1981). His interests, as the titles indicate, are catholic.

In the course of his research M. wrote many articles on topics: method for writing social history, the "Romanization" of conquered areas, religious history, sex and gender, and relationships of differing social strata. This volume contains two dozen (three unpublished earlier), many significant for scholarship in the New Testament and early church. For example, he stresses the use of quantitative analysis for epigraphic, papyrological, and legal evidence. Historians of the Roman empire have more primary evidence available to them than historians of any period prior to 1000 C.E. Consider this sentence: "One is not obliged, as in other periods, to describe the past in terms methodologically unacceptable to the present, through eleven potsherds, a few snippets of ancient comedy, some single excavated house, and suchlike pitiful little collections of fact, without statistical significance" (8). He uses this mass of evidence magisterially. His footnotes are often more

interesting than many articles! New Testament and patristic scholars tend to focus on (philosophical and religious) literary texts to the exclusion of reading the archaeological and epigraphic records. M. shows how much we lose by such concentration.

M.'s essays remind us that Constantine's conversion depends in part on belief in magical miracles, e.g., the appearance of the labarum in the sky, of angels fighting with Christian armies, etc. The essay "Two Types of Conversion to Early Christianity" argues that words and logic had less effect in conversion than the demonstration of the superior *virtus* of the Christian God through miracles and acts of power. "What Difference Did Christianity Make?" argues that Christians differed in sexual ethics more than in any other area of ancient life. M. shows the contribution made by the close reading of often overlooked texts. Bishops were more influenced by the class distinctions they inherited than by the theology they professed in their ethic, e.g. re slavery, marriage, and disgust at gladiatorial contests.

The essays "Women in Public in the Roman Empire" and "Women's Power in the Principate" demonstrate the surprisingly active role that women played in the Roman world: the graffiti at Pompeii show that women were commercially active in business (Eumachia's market, renting out of property, lending money as a pawnbroker), made appeals about financial affairs in Roman courts (25% of the rescript addressees from Hadrian to Diocletian), served as patronesses of collegia, attended public banquets.

M. also pays attention to the lower, nonliterate classes in Roman society. His essays make clear how much we learn from social history. His primary intention is not to influence NT scholarship; the excellence of these essays imposes them as "must reading," even if that is not his intention.

Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present. By Harold O. J. Brown. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. (Originally published by Doubleday, 1984.) xxvi and 486 pages. Paper. $18.95.

Brown asserts that there once was, indeed, a body of commonly-accepted "truth" in the church: the "Faith once delivered to the saints." But in the beginning it was not explicitly defined in neat, codified form. Rather, it was implicit—and, at this late date, it can be viewed only obliquely: through the "mirror" of heretical protests and counter-proposals that reacted to it, and through the credal affirmations which these heretical protests necessitated on the part of the church.

For Brown, the greatest of these affirmations is that of Chalcedon in 451, which carefully distinguishes the two natures of Christ. This was Christian Orthodoxy in its best and purest form—the crown of Christianity's "Golden Age." However, in good Eusebian fashion, Brown views the history of the church mostly as a long slide downward from its "Golden Age." This history is marked by a series of recurrent attempts to mitigate or even simply deny the Chalcedonian teachings about Jesus Christ.

The first part of the book is useful. Brown delves into various classical Trinitarian and Christological heresies of the patristic era. To rouse fellow "evangelicals" to some interest in what may seem to them mere pre-Reformation scholastic hair-splitting, Brown is not content merely to describe the various divergent views; he also shows just how an issue—e.g., the argument over a "mere" *iota* in *homoiousion*—had important and potentially devastating implications for the church's view of Christ, salvation, and the like.

Apart from an occasional swipe at various "liberals" of recent times, Brown offers a useful and enlightening discussion of the heresies of this era. Things change, however, around the middle of the book, with the introduction of Radbertus and Ratramnus and their divergent opinions on the Real Presence in the sacrament.

Characterizing Radbertus' insistence on a real presence of Christ's body and blood in the

Sacrament as an "innovation" (a claim that would no doubt come as a surprise to the likes of Cyril of Alexandria or Ambrose of Milan), Brown begins to evidence a degree of "party spirit" in his interpretation of ecclesiastical history. This denominational flavoring then begins to affect much of the remainder of the book, which turns into sort of a general "history of the various post-Reformation traditions."

Confidence in Brown's interpretation is further shaken when one sees how he almost totally misunderstands and misinterprets as major a figure as Luther—particularly Luther's Christology.

Similarly problematic is Brown's final chapter, where he ruefully regards the 1951 "1500-year Jubilee" of Chalcedon as actually the "last hurrah" of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy (cf. the coincident emergence of Bultmann and his devastating influence on the "faith once delivered to the saints"). To this observation Brown adds the fact of the 1967 Israeli capture and reunification of Jerusalem, and then speculates on the meaning of these two phenomena as possible signs of the approaching "end time."

Keith Killinger
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of the History of Jesus. By John Painter. Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1987. xiv and 265 Pages. Paper. $14.95.

Some writers need interpreters and at times even defenders, particularly after their death. Bultmann found such an interpreter and defender in John Painter.

The author clarifies Bultmann's terminology which sometimes is confusing even to knowledgeable readers of Bultmann. In a number of cases he tabulates the occurrences of certain terms in his writings, e.g., "existence," "history;" this is very helpful in presenting a total view of Bultmann's rich work. Painter makes clear how Bultmann uses pre-understanding and distinguishes it from understanding.

The thesis that Bultmann's theology can be understood as hermeneutics is well presented and advocated. His theology of grace is illuminated in a remarkable manner. Painter succeeds in showing how the understanding of the entirety of a text depends on understanding all the parts and yet each part needs to be understood in terms of the whole text. Bultmann's theology is put into the context of other theologians and philosophers. His indebtedness to them is recognized by Bultmann himself and by Painter. Nevertheless, it is also demonstrated that Bultmann's theology is not dependent on Heidegger's philosophy. His consistency is well documented.

The main value of the book is the clarification of misunderstandings by other interpreters and the defense of Bultmann against many criticisms which often are unjustified. Such misunderstandings are frequently mentioned throughout the book. It is somewhat surprising that there should be so much misunderstanding. But it can be explained in the fact that Bultmann has written so prolifically, mainly in shorter or longer essays, often written in debate with other scholars, and that his views frequently caused shock and consternation. I would disagree somewhat with Painter that "his [Bultmann's] work is concerned primarily with understanding rather than apologetics" (53). Some critics also come to Bultmann with their own pre-understanding. The special targets of Painter are E. P. Sanders and particularly Robert C. Roberts. His arguments against Roberts are cogent and convincing.

Unfortunately, the book does not use inclusive language completely and is not free of misprints.

The book is to be recommended to persons who have some knowledge of Bultmann, who are somewhat attracted to him but have their doubts about the appropriateness of his views.

Wilhelm C. Linss
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

QuickVerse Bible Concordance. Hiawatha, IA: Parsons Technology, 1990. $35.00.

This IBM-based Bible concordance has at least three major advantages over its competitors.

While available in a number of different popular modern versions, including the NIV, RSV, and the NKJV, it is also ready for the NRSV, surely the version of choice for the next generation.

Secondly, for $29 extra, one can order a second "translation" from those mentioned above, but the best use of this $29 would be to request the Hebrew and Greek transliterated Bible. Through a process that is simple enough to learn but too difficult to explain in a review, a pastor can link the NRSV to the transliterated Hebrew/Greek Bible so that he or she can do word studies in English based on the original languages. Those who only use an English concordance have to face the fact that one Hebrew word may have fifteen or twenty English equivalents, or one English word may represent several Greek words. By linking the NRSV to the transliterated Bible, a person with almost no knowledge of the original languages can do in-depth theological word study, print out the results, photocopy them for an adult forum, or file them for a future sermon.

Third, the price. I have not checked out every competitor, but these prices are way toward the low end.

I have used a half dozen of these programs now. Once you learn to use one, the others are easy. QuickVerse's manual is good enough so that an amateur can figure it out, although from time to time a step or two could be stated more explicitly. QuickVerse can also be accessed from within most word processing programs. (This feature would not work for me, probably because of the particular graphics card I use for my Hebrew and Greek fonts.)

This is not yet a program that can study intricate features of grammar, morphology, and syntax. IBM versions of that are just around the corner, but such detailed work—and the significantly higher price that will go with it—are not needed by the average pastor.

But if you are IBM-based and like to wrestle with the text, this is an affordable program that will do a real job for you. Write Parsons Technology, One Parsons Drive, Hiawatha, IA 52233.

Ralph W. Klein
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Apocalyptic and the New Testament. Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn. Edited by Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards. Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 24. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989. 351 pages. Cloth. $42.50.

J. Louis Martyn taught New Testament at Union Seminary in New York for almost thirty years. He authored *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968, 2nd ed. 1979), which profoundly influenced the study of John down to the present. He also published a series of articles on Paul and apocalyptic thought; presently he is working on the Anchor Bible commentary on Galatians. In fact, he took early retirement in 1987 at age 62 to create time to complete the work.

This Festschrift by former students and colleagues concentrates on understanding apocalyptic in the New Testament. Festschriften are notoriously difficult to review, but articles gathered around a theme make the reviewer's task easier. The initial article by Richard E. Sturm reviews the study of apocalyptic in modern scholarship. Then twelve articles discuss aspects of apocalyptic in the Synoptic Gospels, Paul, and Hebrews. Their authors, mainly former students, are an index of Martyn's lasting influence: Joel Marcus, Jane Schaberg, Stephenson H. Brooks, O. Lamar Cope, Robin Scroggs, Thomas E. Boomershine, Martinus C. de Boer, Richard B. Hays, Judith L. Kovacs, Marion L. Soards, Charles P. Anderson, and Nancy J. Duff. Two theological articles, one by Paul Lehmann on the significance of Barmen, the other by Lou Martyn's wife, "A Child and Adam... A Parable of the Two Ages," complete the volume. It is a sign of progress that four articles are by women scholars and that one of the editors is a woman. *Laus deo.*

I found the following of special interest. Sturm's discussion of the study of apocalyptic is a useful overview of a century and more of

scholarship. Richard Hays' tradition critical study of the Christological category "the Righteous One" (ὁ δικαιος) illuminates Paul's citations of Hab 2:4. Judith Kovacs' interpretation of 1 Cor 2:6-16 rejects (correctly, in my opinion) gnostic motifs as the matrix of Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians, while Marion L. Soards' study of ζητεῖν, ἁμαρτωλός, ἁμαρτία in Gal 2:17 is the basis for arguing that the issue in Gal 2:17 is "what constitutes appropriate behavior 'in Christ.'"

The essays in this volume are consistently excellent, a tribute to Lou Martyn's influential teaching, a worthy recognition of his significance for New Testament studies. One might summarize its message: *floreat apocalypsis in mente studiorum novi testamenti.*

Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

The Widows—A Women's Ministry in the Early Church. By Bonnie Bowman Thurston. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989. 141 pages. Paper. $8.95.

In the Prologue of this book Thurston writes that her "practical aim... is to draw the modern church's attention to the high regard in which the widows of the early church were held and to the material help they received," with the "hope that our consciousness will be raised about the elderly poor in our midst." Her "scholarly aim... is to provide a few more pieces in the as yet incomplete picture of the role of women in the early church" (8). Whether the first is achieved will be decided by the individual reader. Her scholarly aim, however, more easily verifiable, is certainly achieved.

To examine the position of Christian widows from the time of Jesus to C.E. 325, the book is divided into seven chapters. In chapter 1 the topic is explored and defined ("widow" will denote a woman who has not remarried after the death of her husband"), plus informative background on women and widows in ancient Greek, Hebrew, and Roman cultures. Chapter 2 discusses widows in the New Testament, examining sayings of Paul, the Markan and Lukan traditions. Chapter 3, "Origins of the Widows' Order," examines the Pastoral Letters, especially 1 Tim 5:3-16. This chapter also discusses the early occurrence of "the equation of the offices of deaconess and widow" and informs us that "widows appear in the midst of the roster of officials" of the church as "a special group with assigned duties or functions within the community." In her discussion of the apostolic period, in chapter 4, Thurston contends that the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and the "extra-church sources" Pliny and Lucian of Samosata shed light on the position of widows in the church. Chapter 5 concerns the status of widows in the third century North African church, particularly as described by Tertullian, and the "apparently standard" practice of "seating widows with the clergy." Included here also is a brief, informative excursus on the ascetic tendencies in early Christianity. Chapter 6 addresses the status of widow in the third century Eastern church, particularly Alexandria and Syria, concluding, "We see in the *DA* [*Didascalia Apostolorum*, third century, Syria] the beginning of the ascendancy of the deaconess over the widow." Chapter 7, "The Widow as Altar: Metaphor and Ministry," draws its title and topic from a line in the *DA*: "And the orphans and widows shall be reckoned by you in the likeness of the altar" (106). Since the altar was stationary and a place of prayer and sacrifice, thus, argues Thurston, the ministry of widows became constricted, moreso like contemplative nuns than active ministers.

Thurston has closely examined the necessary primary and secondary sources. She discusses her topic in the context of the early church's emerging structure of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Thus, it is a useful introduction to the development and practice of ministry in the early church.

Andrew F. Weisner
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

After Ideology. Recovering the Spiritual Foundations of Freedom. By David Walsh. San Franciso: Harper & Row, 1990. ix and 281 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

In face of the collapse of Communism and the mounting internal crisis of Western capitalist liberalism, Walsh, professor of political thought at the Catholic University of America, presents a forceful case for a recovery of the spiritual foundations of a free society.

Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, Camus, and Voegelin are his postmodern protagonists of an existential overcoming of the nihilism inherent in modernity in both its totalitarian and its liberal form. It is no accident that Walsh's course of presentation follows a route similar to the mystics' journey "out of the dark night of the soul": Catharsis, diagnosis, ascent from the depths, and restoration of order. By weaving the experiential and analytical insights of his four protagonists together Walsh unfolds a powerful critique of humanitarian utopianism—which dead-ends either in totalitarian regimes or in a purely procedural liberalism. While his account has to be read as a strong foundationalist response to all the anti-foundationalist, neo-pragmatic defenses of liberalism, it is far from simply being a reactionary offer of just another "secondary ideology"—after ideology. Rather, his book points to the central human experience of existential openness to the transcendent as a way out of the impasse of a nihilistic modernity.

Only an existential catharsis similar to those Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, Camus, and Voegelin went through can free us from the present deification of the closed, hollow Self and open us to the transcendent order. Yet instead of a new dogmatic encapsulation of this existential truth into yet another ideology, the cathartic rediscovery of this transcendent reality opens the avenue to communal meditation of this existential experience to which all of us have potential access. It occurs through the experience of being completely thrown back onto ourselves, stripped of any self-illusion and conceit, where we encounter the living truth beyond ourself on which our life utterly depends. Thus, existential openness to the transcendent means, for Walsh, the recognition that the constitutive order of our human lives rests in a moral and religious reality which does not depend on us but on which we depend.

While the analysis is quite impressive, his perspective of a *postmodern liberal order* is not novel but remains surprisingly conventional. The decisive aspect is a renewed *public* recognition of those institutions which train us in practices of that transcendent moral order the recognition of which is the precondition for any workable liberal society: the family with its basis in lifelong marriage, the churches and religion in general, autonomous centers of learning, and all forms of voluntary associations. Thus, the strength of the book does not lie so much in its constructive perspective, but rather in the forceful journey from the crisis of nihilism through an existential catharsis to a new vision of a social and political order which still lies beyond the horizon of most of us.

Despite my sympathy with the major thrust of the analysis and the strong Christian overtones in the book, it does not convince me in the end, since I see the author, in the very way he frames his protagonists, still being captive to key modern strategies—namely, exactly those which lead into the very crisis of modernity in the first place. His abstract reappraisal of the truth of philosophy and Christianity in their common function of mediating a transcendent order represents a return to romantic concepts of religion and society. While Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, Camus, and Voegelin might have overcome modernity into a postmodern realm, Walsh's neo-romantic utilization of them remains thoroughly modern.

Despite this critique this book represents an important contribution to the debate on the internal crisis of modernity by which the churches are also deeply affected.

Reinhard Hütter
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Reader Perspectives on the New Testament. Edited by Edgar V. McKnight. *Semeia* 48. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989. vii and 206 pages. Paper.

This collection of essays grew out of seminars in the Society for New Testament Studies, particularly the 1985 seminar entitled "The Role of the Reader in the Interpretation of the New Testament." The focus of the essays is the application to the New Testament of theoretical works from the field of literary criticism. There is much discussion in secular literary criticism on the role of the reader, referred to as Reader Response Criticism and identified with critics such as Wayne Booth, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, Umberto Eco, Susan Suleiman, and Robert Holub. Reader Response Criticism distinguishes between narratees referred to in a narrative, ideal readers implied by the narrative, actual ancient readers, contemporary naive readers, and readers who are scholarly critics. Biblical critics are here drawing upon these categories to analyze the writings of Scripture.

In the introductory essay, Bernard Lategan distinguishes the implied reader (the reader "in the text") from the real reader (the reader "outside the text"). In the first section of the book, which deals with theory, Willem Vorster argues that the real reader must reconstruct the implied reader, as an image of the ideal reader encoded in the text, in order to attribute meaning to the text. In a critique of Vorster, Wilhelm Wuellner doubts that the theory of the implied reader is of much value unless it is combined with more recent theories of reading from deconstruction and the study of intertextuality. Wolfgang Schenk's essay further differentiates among real readers between a naive first reader and a scholarly critic. He also discusses reception history, the study of how readers have understood a text in the history of its interpretation.

In the second section of the book, which presents applications of the theories, B.M.F. van Iersel employs a model from Roland Barthes to analyze the connotative connections among Markan tests on the messianic secret. Robert Fowler deals with the Markan "rhetoric of direction" whereby the narrator gives explicit commentary to guide the reading experience and the Markan "rhetoric of indirection" whereby the narrator guides the reading experience implicitly by means of irony, metaphor, paradox, and ambiguity. Fowler also discusses reading as a sequential experience through time. Then there are three brief reviews of the reader-oriented commentary on Philippians by Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus*. Lategan closes this section with a study of instructions to the reader in Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

Literary critic Temma Berg concludes the volume with a critique of these essays. She observes how the articles generally lean toward a structuralist analysis of how the texts create and shape a reader. Such a structuralist approach, she argues, separates text and reader, so that the interpreter seeks either to master the text or to be mastered by it. By contrast, she argues for a post-structuralist approach which understands reading to be an endless, interactive experience between text and reader in which the reader too is an active producer of meaning.

The essays in this volume reveal that the reading process is a rather complex affair between reader and text. The volume also shows how contemporary analysis of the reading process is complex and often confusing. The focus on the reader as a way of getting at the meaning of texts is one of several fresh approaches to the study of the New Testament today. This focus on the reader is reflected, on the one hand, in Rhetorical Criticism and, on the other hand, in Reader Response Criticism, dealt with in these essays. This volume will probably be most useful to those already somewhat familiar with the field.

David Rhoads
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design. By David R. Bauer. Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 31. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1988. 182 pages. Cloth. £25.00; $42.50.

Matthew's Gospel both fascinates and puzzles. David R. Bauer took up one of Matthew's most fascinating aspects in the doctoral dissertation

he wrote under Prof. Jack D. Kingsbury at Union Seminary, Richmond, Virginia. After surveying earlier analyses of Matthew's structure (geographical-chronological; topical [alternating, chiastic, based on superscriptions]; conceptual), Bauer concludes that there is "a clear relationship between the determination of structure and the understanding of Matthew's theology.

Using literary analysis Bauer identifies four structural principles in Matthew's Gospel: repetition of comparison; repetition of contrast; repetition of particularization and climax with preparation and causation; climax with inclusio. Bauer argues for the threefold division (1:1–4:16, 4:17–16:20, 16:21–28:20), following an article I wrote and his teacher's views in *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), but he provides much additional evidence for this decision. He considers the great sermons in relation to structure and then draws theological conclusions about Matthew's Christology and salvation history. He follows his teacher in stressing "Son of God" as the basic christological motif, a conclusion I find difficult to accept (but won't argue here). Jesus' coming is a radical turning point in salvation history. Matthew sees no decisive break between Jesus and the church. Indeed, the final words of the Gospel stress the continuity between Jesus and the disciple community.

Bauer's dissertation is an excellent summary of the debate about the structure of Matthew and a major contribution to the determination of that structure. It should be one of the basic items in Matthaean studies in the future. Bauer shows the great contributions that literary analysis makes to understanding the important issues that motivated Matthew and their theological significance. I recommend this clearly written dissertation.

Edgar Krentz

The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance. By Bruce M. Metzger. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. x and 326 pages. Cloth. $55.00.

Bruce Metzger, Emeritus Professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary, gives us a useful discussion of the New Testament Canon. He first surveys scholarly literature on canon history, giving especially high praise to Hans von Campenhausen's magisterial book *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972). He also identifies the contemporary issues in canon research: canon within the canon, canonical criticism, early Catholicism, and the like.

The second section traces the canon process from the beginnings in the Apostolic Fathers through Athanasius in the East and Augustine in the West. The Apostolic Fathers take the words of Jesus as supreme authority, demonstrate an implicit authority in the apostolic writings they cite, but show no consciousness of that authority. Metzger surveys the significance of certain second century movements in canon history: Gnosticism, Marcion, Montanism, and persecution.

The early history of the canon is treated geographically in the east: Syria (Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Serapion of Antioch), Asia Minor (Martyrdom of Polycarp, Melito), Greece (Dionysius of Corinth, Athenagoras, Aristides), Egypt (Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen); and then the west: Rome (Justin Martyr, Hippolytus), Gaul (Epistle of Lyons and Viennes, Irenaeus), North Africa (Scilitan Martyr Acts, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ps.-Cyprian "Against Dice-Players"). Metzger discusses these significant figures with noteworthy compression, without sacrificing clarity or loss of data.

After a discussion of books regarded as canonical locally and for restricted periods of time (New Testament apocryphal literature), Metzger discusses the Muratorian Canon (which he dates in the late second century in Rome) and Eusebius's presentation of the canon. He then traces the close of the canon in the east (varying results in differing churches) and the west, including in the latter chapter a brief account of

canon decisions in the Reformation and at Trent. The historical discussion is complemented by four appendices that discuss the use of the word *κανών*, present the evidence for the order of New Testament books in biblical manuscripts, evaluate the titles of the books, and give translations of ancient canon lists from the Muratorian Canon to the Synod of Carthage in C.E. 397.

The third section of the book discusses problems that required decision in the early church: canon criteria (regular fidei, apostolicity, continuous acceptance by church at large), role of inspiration, order of canonical recognition, plurality of the gospels, and the particularity of the Pauline letters (how can they be catholic?). Finally Metzger briefly considers contemporary canon questions. Here he argues that "canonical" pertains "to the document *qua* document, and not to one particular form or version of that document." It is not clear why text criticism then is at all necessary—a point that Metzger does not discuss. While the limits of the canon may theoretically be open, Metzger regards a canon within the canon as a form of reductionism. Finally, the New Testament in a sense imposed itself on the church, the result of the divine overruling in the *providentia Dei*. Finally the canon, though based on historical reasons, is not arbitrary, but self-authenticating. The church did not create, but recognized the canon.

This is a useful volume, detailed, clearly written, with massive documentation from modern scholarly literature. Yet one might ask what is new here. Ultimately, I think, very little. The historical presentation is excellent, the theological discussion less so. Metzger does not take up the relation of the power of the gospel to the authority of Scripture. Is the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum* independent of the New Testament's salvific message? Are the books of the New Testament all on a level, as the concluding chapter implies? Questions remain, but credit Metzger with raising them for the reader.

Metzger's treatment of the New Testament canon completes a trilogy on the early history of the New Testament. The first volume (1964; rev. ed. 1969) presented the manuscript tradition of the New Testament; the second (1977) the early vernacular translations. All three are characterized by meticulous scholarship, fullness of treatment, sobriety of judgment, and clarity of language. They form a useful trilogy. It is unfortunate that the volume on the canon is priced so high that many will pass it by. They will miss a useful volume.

Edgar Krentz

Tracking the Maze: Finding our Way through Modern Theology from an Evangelical Perspective. By Clark Pinnock. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. 227 pages. U.S. $24.95; Canada $32.95.

Clark Pinnock is a prominent evangelical theologian who is as upset that his own tradition has ignored the problems of modernity as that moderns have not thought historic Christianity worth consideration. Over the past two decades Pinnock has sought to move theological discussions within his tradition beyond the comforts of Princeton orthodoxy and beyond the discomforts of the fundamentalist/modernist impasse. In this latest book Pinnock addresses a wide audience with two goals: first, to provide a guide to the contemporary intellectual scene in an effort to explain how modern theology came to resemble a maze; and second, to join those trying to discern the contours and content of a "postmodern" theology. The three sections of the book contain a gentle but critical survey of contemporary theologians Pinnock identifies as "progressives," "conservatives," and "moderates;" an exploration of the intellectual and historical roots of the contemporary theological scene and its makers (from a decidedly evangelical perspective); and finally an apologia for Pinnock's "postmodern" theology. Clearly Pinnock's loyalties are with the moderates he describes—those who have somehow avoided the excesses of both the progressives and the conservatives—but readers will wonder what these moderates have in common besides Pinnock's approbation. While *Tracking the Maze* is an important good faith effort by an engaged evangelical scholar, non-evangelical readers may wonder who Pinnock's real audience is, since postmoderns and moderates will recognize in Pinnock's brand of postmodern theology an uncanny resemblance to pre-mod-

ern conservatism, though shorn of its authoritarian ways, eschatological preoccupations, and its fateful obsession with inerrancy. Readers may not follow Pinnock's directions out of the maze, but they will benefit from his thoughtful and irenic assessment of the current theological scene.

Ken Sawyer
McCormick Theological Seminary

Matthew's Missionary Discourse: A Literary Critical Analysis. By Dorothy Jean Weaver. Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 38. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990. 250 pages. Cloth. $43.50.

Dorothy Jean Weaver uses Literary Criticism, the latest thing in the study of the Gospels, to analyze the place of the missionary discourse (9:35-11:1) in Matthew's Gospel. In Chapter 1 she first rejects three fundamentally historical approaches: (1) that which argues for a Galilean setting in the ministry of Jesus (an older view); (2) a dual approach which finds two sequential settings created by Matthew, a Galilean setting for 10:5b-15 and a later setting for 10:16-42; (3) a unified setting within Matthew's own church which superimposes a second, later setting over the earlier Galilean one. She argues that such approaches are invalid because they destroy the unity that Matthew has given the discourse and removes it from its narrative framework. Therefore only a literary critical analysis will do justice to the unity Matthew presupposes. This apodictic statement does not do justice to the redaction critical approach which regards the Galilean setting given to the sermon, including the elements Weaver identifies as literary techniques, as fundamental to its understanding of the Matthaean message (what Weaver later calls the presumed author's intention).

Weaver then devotes three chapters to the literary analysis of Matthew. Her analysis is interesting and instructive, though the results are less novel and original than she seems to think. In Chapter 2 ("Analysis of Matthew 1:1–9:35: The Implied Reader's 'pre-information,'") she analyzes the role of the narrator (the implied author with unlimited omniscience telling a story that is report, not invention), the implied reader (acquainted with Jewish culture), the stance of the narrator, and describes the basic elements of the narrator's story. Chapter 3 is a careful literary analysis of 9:35–11:1. She identifies 9:35–10:51 as narrative introduction, 11:1 as narrative conclusion. The discourse itself divides into three sections: 10:5b-15 describes the disciple ministry directly; 10:16-23 presents persecution, parallel to Jesus' ministry, as the direct result of disciple ministry; 10:24-42 describes fearless witness as the response to persecution that brings ultimate reward. Chapter 4 tracks the plot to the end of the book as the outcome of the discourse on disciple mission.

While there are many individual clear-sighted comments on specific passages, the dissertation has a number of flaws. She analyzes Mt 1:1–9:34 in terms of the number of verses which contain narrative, direct speech by Jesus, and speech by others (disciples or non-disciples). It is impossible to read her percentages and arrive at a coherent understanding of her figures. It requires much more careful and extensive presentation. Again, while she recognizes the significance of the closing formulae to the five discourses, she makes no attempt to understand the second discourse in relation to the other four. When she says that the use of the phrase "I say to you" sixteen times in 1:1–9:34 "has the effect of bringing the implied reader directly into Jesus' audience," it is mere assertion without any truly persuasive evidence. In Mt 5:21-48 the stress is certainly on "I" in the phrase, not on the "you"! She accepts Jack Kingsbury's understanding of the structure of Matthew (1:1–4:16; 4:17–16:20; 16:21–28:20); but it does not affect in the least her interpretation of the plot of the book.

Finally, Weaver's use of literary criticism raises some questions about the adequacy of the method. The description of the stance of the narrator makes many valid points. The analysis of 1:1–9:34 makes clear "that the lifetime of Jesus and the events of Jesus' life constitute the focal point of the story in terms of time." Did it really take literary criticism to determine that? Or did not redaction criticism already call attention to the multiple use of names and titles for Jesus, to Matthew's use of formulaic phrases

and catchwords, and to his use of inclusio and chiasmus? In short, Weaver implies more than literary criticism actually delivers. And, most serious of all, Weaver's use of the literary critical techniques developed in the analysis of film and story cannot void the historical questions which inevitably arise from a text that purports to present not a novel, but an actual life. I wish she had returned in a final chapter to a self-critical evaluation of what her literary approach had done and what not. This work was originally written as a doctoral dissertation at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

Edgar Krentz

Letters that Paul Did Not Write. The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline Pseudepigrapha. By Raymond F. Collins. Good News Studies 28. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988. 327 pages. Paper. $17.95.

Almost all New Testament scholars today hold that Hebrews is an anonymous document, whose author's name God alone knows (to cite Origen). Most New Testament scholars think Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles. A large majority of them are convinced that one of Paul's most brilliant students wrote Ephesians. And the prevailing opinion is that Colossians and 2 Thessalonians are also non-Pauline, though debate about the authorship is still going on. In short, six of the thirteen Pauline letters are regarded by many or most New Testament scholars as non-Pauline in origin, while seven are regarded as indubitably authentic.

Raymond Collins has written a helpful book about these eight letters for non-specialists. He summarizes the history of scholarship on the authorship question for each letter, presents the spectrum of current opinion, and then lays out and evaluates the argumentation. It includes the linguistic, historical, and theological matters judged important in the scholarly debate. All references to scholarly literature are included in the body of the text (no footnotes); all citations are translated into English. He concludes each chapter with a basic English-language bibliography (excluding commentaries). He regards Hebrews as an anonymous document, the others as true pseudepigraphs.

Collins provides excellent helps for the reader. Chapter 2 discusses anonymity and pseudonymity in ancient Jewish and Christian writers, with some attention to the Greco-Roman world. Chapter 7 discusses the Pauline pseudepigrapha in early Christianity and in the formation of the canon. Here Collins deals pastorally with the ethical issues many moderns raise about pseudonymity, discusses how Catholic scholars react to the traditional views of authorship affirmed until recently by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and argues that the richness of the Pauline tradition is enhanced by the recognition of pseudonymity. Finally, he presents a glossary of technical terms used in the discussion and an extensive bibliography giving full data for all works referred to in the text, exclusive of commentaries.

A few negative comments are necessary. I wish Collins had attempted a more substantial history of the developments in the early church that necessitated the writing of such a diverse Pauline literature. Collins rejects the idea of a Pauline School, though Paul's authentic letters certainly show great variety and development, understandable in the light of Paul's career and the local conditions in the communities to which he writes. Collins' discussion of the individual letters is good, but does too little to locate each letter within the stream of early Christian history. A more minor point: Collins transliterates all the Greek he cites—in a schema that disregards iota subscripts and transliterates vocalic upsilian as u, not y. I wish he—and NT scholarship in general—would agree to use the system employed in classical philology in America.

But let us say it loud: Collins, Professor of NT at the University of Leuven (Louvain), Belgium, has written a good introductory volume that will be helpful to seminary and university students, and to anyone who wants an orientation into this aspect of the Pauline corpus. It is clear, coherent, and persuasive. I will make it required reading.

Edgar Krentz

Egypt-Sinai-Negev Slide Set. 142 slides, 43-page printed guide by Gary Pratico. Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1987. $119.50.

Galilee Archaeology Slide Set. 140 slides, 34-page printed guide by James F. Strange. Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1989. $119.50.

These are the fourth and fifth series of slides useful for understanding the world of the Bible published by the Biblical Archaeology Society. I highly recommended the first three sets (Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, and New Testament Archaeology) in an extended review in *Currents* 16 (1989): 230-232. These two series continue the same useful format, with one or two improvements.

Set four covers Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Palestinian area south of Hebron. The series begins with a NASA satellite photograph of Eastern Egypt and the Sinai peninsula. Nine slides of Egypt follow, showing social details from modern Egypt that illustrate facets of the Exodus narrative (brick-making, irrigation, etc.). Forty slides picture geographical features and sites in the Sinai. They illustrate Egyptian influence (Serabit el-Khadem), fifteen excellent slides of St. Catherine's Monastery (but none of the library itself or any manuscripts other than a Syriac Manuscript of the Gospels), and four of the Kadesh-Barnea Oasis. Seventy-three slides present the Negev from chalcolithic fortresses down into the Nabataean period. The major sites are all represented: Timna, Bab Edh-Dhra, Numeira, Arad, Beersheva, Tel Masos, Avdat, Mamshit, Shivta, Petra. Other, lesser-known sites will be a welcome surprise to users: Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Be'er Resisim, Deir el-Balah, and the Cave of the Chalcolithic Treasure. Finally, fourteen slides present flora and fauna of Sinai and the Negev.

The photographs are, as one expects form the Biblical Archaeology Society, spectacular. One often wishes for more, e.g. the theater at Petra, some of the houses at Avdat, architectural plans of Shivta and Arad, the temple and synagogue at En-Gedi, etc. The omission of Qumran and Masada is, perhaps, understandable (they are covered in the earlier sets). Cross referencing them in the printed guide would help the user. The printed guide is, in my opinion, the best of the first four. Its bibliography goes beyond the helpful list of articles in *Biblical Archaeology Review* to refer the reader to many works of scholarship. We owe BAS and Pratico thanks for an outstanding contribution.

The Galilee Set, also good, is arranged historically. Thirteen general slides orient the viewer to the geography of Galilee (Sea of Galilee, mountains and rivers). Eight slides present Pre-Israelite Galilee (Carmel caves, etc.), twenty-five Galilee from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period (Hazor, Megiddo, Dor, and Dan), eleven Herodian Galilee (Banyas, Gamla), twenty Roman Galilee (Hippos, Beth Shearim, Beth-Shean), forty-five the Byzantine Era (Hammath Gader, Hammath Tiberias, Capernaum, Chorazin, Kursi, Sepphoris, Meiron, Nabratein, Tabgha, Beth Alpha, Baram and Qatzrin), ten Crusader Galilee (Belvoir, Montfort, Nimrod, Acre), six Churches at Christian Sites (Nazareth, Tabgha, etc.), and two Huleh animals. The bibliography of articles in the *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *Bible Review* is less helpful than that in set four.

Prof. James F. Strange selected the slides and wrote the descriptive commentary. As photographs the slides are excellent. There is no map of Galilee or site plans. One needs plans to understand Megiddo, Hazor, Beth Shearim, Hammath Gader, and the strategic defense system of the Crusader fortresses. One who uses only these slides will gain no impression of how Iron Age sites or Hellenistic and Roman cities were laid out. *BAR* published excellent plans of Hammath Tiberias and Chorazin which should have been included. There are surprising omissions: Bronze Age Tel Taanach and its outstanding incense stand, Hellenistic Tel Anafa, Byzantine Khirbet Shema, the houses at Chorazin, the excavations under the Church of the Annunciation at Nazareth. The arrangement of the slide set gives the general impression that synagogues are the major feature of Byzantine Galilee. The monastery mosaics from Beth Shearim and a plan of the site might rectify that impression.

One is delighted to see artifacts such as the figurines from Dor, the Greek inscription from Dan, the first century boat from the Sea of

Galilee, and the magnificent Roman mosaics from Sepphoris. But one looks in vain for the city coins of Ptolemais and other cities or the coinage of the Herodian family. The marvelous Crusader column capitals from Nazareth (perhaps the best preserved Crusader sculpture in the Middle East) are omitted.

Prof. Strange has written excellent historical commentaries to accompany the slides. They are filled with important detail that underscores the significance of Galilee in Palestinian history. The commentary does not indicate the compass orientation of the pictures, describe construction techniques, or indicate the technology used in producing artifacts. At times one wishes for more precise detail, e.g., was the Hellenistic head from Dor (No. 36) carved only by chisel or was a drill used? What is the hair style and what are the artistic conventions of the Hellenistic period to which Strange refers? Lay users will be happy with what is given; archaeologists and art historians will miss more detailed and precise data and references to relevant literature.

Both sets fill gaps. The Egypt-Sinai-Negev set presents areas less known than the Galilee set, and therefore opens unknown areas. The Galilee set introduces viewers to the riches of Galilean synagogue architecture and decoration. Both sets will help viewers to understand visually the context of biblical and later Palestinian history. For that, give thanks.

Edgar Krentz

Studying the Synoptic Gospels. By E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies. London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 1989. ix and 374 pages. Cloth, $29.95; paper, $18.95.

Margaret Davies (University of Bristol) and her husband, E. P. Sanders (Cambridge University), collaborated in this practical, useful textbook on the modern study of the Synoptic Gospels. They both survey the modern literature of synoptic scholarship and provide practical exercises in the text of the Gospels to induct the student into the arcane mysteries of that scholarship.

An introduction of 45 pages defines terms, gives a preliminary survey of evidence for the dating and authorship of the Synoptics, and discusses the interrelationship of determining genre and defining the purposes of writing. The second section presents the synoptic problem and the proposed solutions of modern scholarship by taking the student through the careful analysis of a series of synoptic texts (based on Aland's *Synopsis*). They conclude that Matthew used Mark and other sources, that Luke used both of them, and that each "created some of the sayings material." The interrelationships are so complex that no solution currently proposed does justice to the data.

The third section is a fascinating discussion of form criticism. They are sceptical of wild "creativity" on the part of the community, though recognizing that many sayings are not "authentic." They examine three literary forms in detail: chreiai (misspelled in the table of contents), their term for all brief sayings and anecdotes; miracle stories; and parables. They give form criticism a reduced value in the study of parables, holding that they are more complex than the Jülicher-Jeremias approach allows. Section four ("Holistic Readings") evaluates redaction criticism, structuralism and de-construction, and rhetorical criticism (including reader-response criticism) and then discuss the genre of each Gospel. The final section reviews the modern historical Jesus quest.

I will use this textbook the next time I teach the Synoptic Gospels. The authors provide clear surveys of modern scholarship throughout, stress the importance of gathering evidence from the texts, lead students into the texts, and take stands that are clear, while providing students and teachers the data to understand the Gospels and critique modern scholarship, including their own. This is also an excellent text for those who wish to work their way into the Gospels on their own, or to revive past knowledge and competence.

Edgar Krentz

Briefly Noted

Christian Ethics. A Case Method Approach. By Robert L. Stivers, Christine E. Gudorf, Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans (Orbis, $13.95). The authors created a textbook of Christian ethics around the case study method approach. In an introduction and an appendix they present their way of learning ethics by the case study method and discuss both its strengths and limits. The book covers the areas of family, socio-political liberation, violence/nonviolence, environment, business, medicine, sexuality, life and death. This is decision- and action-oriented social ethics. Each of the chapters contains two cases, commentaries on each of them, and listings of additional resources. While the chapters are of varying quality and the commentaries do not always do full justice to the complexities involved, it is a very useful study-book for both college classrooms and local congregations. The cases lead into the life-contexts which perplex and haunt most people in our society and in the wider world, and the commentaries do not foreclose but encourage discussion and debate. Reinhard Hütter

Love, Law and Christian Life. Basic Attitudes of Christian Morality. By Vincent McNamara (Michael Glazier, $12.95). Irish Roman Catholic theologian McNamara presents an accessible account of the peculiarly Roman Catholic genre of "fundamental ethics," i.e. the fundamental aspects of morality. He moves from a discussion of the ethical dimension of life to the encounter with the Christian message and its inherent ethical claims. It is followed by discussions of the role of the Bible and of Christian discernment, agape, natural law, and the moral agent. Problematic areas as the principle of double effect, and morality and church discipline are touched. The concept of conscience is discussed in detail. The book closes with a chapter on the limits of ethics, moral failure, mortal sin, and reconciliation, followed by a wise and humble epilogue entitled "Waiting on God." Written from a distinctly Roman Catholic perspective, McNamara's book not only gives a good introduction into the rich tradition of Roman Catholic moral thought but also represents one voice of the post-Vatican II reformulation of moral theology around the themes of Bible, agape, natural law, and conscience. Reinhard Hütter

The Supplement Series to the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (Sheffield, England) prints useful special studies. Many, but not all, originate as doctoral dissertations. In **The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Idea** (Supplement 25; JSOT Press, $37.50) David Orton argues that Matthew describes the disciples positively as "understanding scribes and wise men" (Mt 13:51-52, Mt 23:24). He gives a positive picture of Jewish scribes elsewhere in the Gospel, drawing on the way scribes are presented in the OT and Second Temple period, especially the ideal scribe presented in apocalyptic literature (Jubilees, Enoch literature, 4 Ezra, Qumran, etc.). Matthew strives "to exonerate the scribes *per se* from outright condemnation and to portray them in an altogether better light." Matthew is not a "rabbinic author, but essentially apocalyptic, an inheritor of a creative "charismatic exegesis," which he uses to describe the creativity of disciples who produce new parables, wisdom sayings, and interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures. A valuable addition to Matthaean studies. Edgar Krentz

David Seeley looks for the conceptual world of Paul's interpretation of Jesus' death in **The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation** (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 28, JSOT Press, $37.50). He first rules out the Jewish sacrificial system, Isaiah's suffering servant, the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22), and any

borrowing from the mystery religions. 2 Maccabees provides an example of vicarious (though non-expiatory) martyrdom, called by Seeley the "Noble Death." It has four characteristics: vicariousness, obedience, military context, and overcoming physical vulnerability. 4 Maccabees adds a fifth, ancillary characteristic: the application of sacrificial metaphors. These five components also appear in Paul (Rom 6:1-11, Rom 5:12-21, 2 Cor 5:21, Rom 3:25, etc.). A final chapter argues that the same idea of the Noble Death is found in philosophers' deaths in the Early Roman Empire (Seneca, Epictetus, Regulus in Silius Italicus, Plutarch, Thrasea Paetus in Tacitus, and Demonax in Lucian).

Paul frequently uses military metaphor, though not in the key passages listed above. Seeley has to reach for apocalyptic end time battle to fill in this element. In similar fashion he finds overcoming of physical vulnerability in Rom 7:14-25. All five elements are almost never found in the same passage, neither in Paul or in the philosophers! This study, a Claremont dissertation in its first incarnation, is useful for its examination of the interpretation of death. While its interpretation of Paul is not as conclusive as Seeley argues, it makes clear how readers of Paul might interpret Paul's dying Jesus in their own conceptual world. Edgar Krentz

The precise description of the opposition in 2 Corinthians is one of New Testament scholarship's most difficult problems. Jerry L. Sumney wrote his doctoral dissertation at Southern Methodist University under the guidance of Victor Paul Furnish, the author of the best current commentary on 2 Corinthians. **Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians** (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 40: JSOT Press, $45.00 cloth, $33.50 paper) discusses the problems in three sections. The first is a typology of modern methods of solving the problem (Judaizers, Gnostics, divine men, pneumatics) to isolate methods used. The second is a theoretical discussion of the use of texts in historical reconstruction. He discusses criteria for using sources other than the primary text (2 Corinthians), pointing out the mere possibility of any reconstruction. Even parallels from Paul's other letters must be used with caution. In the primary text he identifies four levels of reliability in five levels of certainty of reference to the opposition. The third section applies his theoretical principles to 2 Corinthians. He identifies two letters (1-9, 10-13) in 2 Corinthians. The disagreement in the first centers on the "way divine power manifests itself in apostles' lives," i.e. point to Pneumatics. The opponents in 2 Corinthians 10-13 focus on the question of legitimacy for an apostle, i.e. "the proper manifestation of the Spirit in apostles' lives;" they are properly called Pneumatics. Sumney's clearly argued book makes a valuable contribution to the discussion of method in New Testament interpretation and to the identification of the opposition in 2 Corinthians. Edgar Krentz

The NRSV Concordance Unabridged. Edited by John R. Kohlenberger III (Zondervan, $39.95). Here we are just a year after the publication of the New Revised Standard Version, and we already have available an unabridged concordance to all its 84 books (including the apocryphal and deuterocanonical books). By contrast Cruden's Concordance of the KJV appeared 126 years after the original publication of the Authorized Version. This concordance indexes all 906,953 words of the NRSV [with a vocabulary of 16,529 words], though without correlation to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The concordance tells you how many times each word is used ("a" 10,838; "Aaron" 339) and even indexes frequent phrases (glory of the LORD, sons of Aaron). 87 words, such as articles, conj unctions and "O," that occur a total of 480,027 times—nearly half the NRSV, are listed in a separate section of the concordance. Believe it or not, this concordance also lists the 6,266 footnotes in the NRSV. Another unique feature is a 76-page topical index that tells you where to find information on, say, adultery, even when this specific term is not used in the Bible. A tremendous resource, promptly delivered! RWK

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (Oxford, $37.95). This volume provides comments on the New Revised Standard Version, that appeared in 1990. The NRSV reflects the best of the modern scholarly consensus on philology and makes the text gender inclusive in a non-offensive way, at least when dealing with human beings. The Oxford notes to the original RSV have been revised and updated, though by no means completely rewritten. The page layout has been considerably improved (though the paper seems excessively thin), and wide margins are provided for the reader's own notes. This is the best study Bible of the NRSV for now, although Harper & Row will publish a completely new annotated Bible in about a year, that will be much more detailed in its comments. When it appears, it will be the English Bible to have. RWK

The Problem of the Process of Tramsmission in the Pentateuch. By Rolf Rendtorff (Sheffield Academic Press, $37.50). First published in German in 1977, this translated volume makes available a classic attack on the documentary hypothesis. R. argues that Old Testament scholars have paid insufficient attention to the implications of form and tradition criticism. Instead he proposes that small individual units (stories) gradually came together into larger units, such as the primeval history, the patriarchal narrative, and Exodus 1-14. He also traces in detail the way in which the patriarchal narrative was shaped theologically by several hands over a long period of time, but he claims that the theological shaping of the other larger units (such as Exodus 1-14 and the Sinai account) was done in different ways and with different results. Hence he can find no theology of the Yahwist or of P that embraces all the units from Genesis through Numbers. He also shows quite convincingly that there is no priestly *narrative,* though there are priestly theological emphases and chronological notes that were added at various times. The only texts that tie the separate larger units of the Pentateuch together are assigned to deuteronomistic hands. Hence the final shape of the Pentateuch is quite late, though the process of development from the individual units to the larger units may have lasted centuries. R. still holds to the kind of literary criticism that identifies certain passages as secondary, and he thinks he can demonstrate that some forms of the promises in Genesis 12-50 are earlier than others. But the source hypothesis itself, in his view, no longer serves a useful purpose. RWK

Fourth Ezra. Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. By Michael Edward Stone (Fortress, $44.95). 4 Ezra (called 2 Esdras in the NRSV) was composed in Hebrew, in the land of Israel, about 100 C.E., by a single individual. Nothing of the Hebrew text remains, and only small parts of the Greek translation. Latin, Coptic, and other translations of the Greek provide the textual base for all modern discussions. As a theodicy, it responds to the destruction of the Second Temple in seven apocalyptic visions that question the justice of God in that destruction. Its answers are rather conventional: God's workings are a mystery and beyond human comprehension; God loves Israel and will vindicate Israel in the end. God rejoices over the few saved and is not concerned over the many damned. God's mercy works in this world, while his justice is fully active only in the world to come.

We do not know how the book functioned and to whom it was directed. The destruction of Rome was expected to take place through the Messiah's exercise of judgmental functions rather than through military means. God would vindicate his justice through the final day of judgment; the restoration of the Davidic empire was not crucial for the author.

The Christian introduction (5 Ezra, chaps 1-2) and conclusion (6 Ezra, chaps 15-16), are not included in this excellent, detailed, and technical commentary. 4 Ezra had a major impact in the Latin church although the Council of Trent declared that it was not part of the canon. RWK

A. J. M. Wedderburn gathers seven excellent essays in **Paul and Jesus** (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement 37; Sheffield, $35.00). They include V. P. Furnish's "The Jesus-Paul debate: From Baur to Bultmann," originally published in 1965, and essays discussing Paul's knowledge of Jesus (N. Walter, "Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-Tradition;" C. Wolff, "True Apostolic Knowledge of Christ: Exegetical Reflections on 2 Corinthians 5:14ff.;" Wedderburn, "Paul and Jesus: The Problem of Continuity," "Paul and Jesus: Similarity and Continuity," "Paul and the Story of Jesus;" C. Wolff, "Humility and Self-Denial in Jesus' Life and Message and in the Apostolic Existence of Paul." Wedderburn provides an introduction and postscript that point out the problems, the tentative conclusions, and the significance of discussing Paul's knowledge of and continuity with Jesus and his proclamation. Stimulating, even when the results seem minimal. Edgar Krentz

Philip H. Towner, in **The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles** (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement 34; Sheffield, $46.50), his Aberdeen doctoral dissertation, maintains that the Pastoral Epistles argue against an historically real movement, somewhat analogous to the opposition in 1 Corinthians, dated between C.E. 60-70. The Pastorals stress the present reality of salvation through the adaptation of traditions. They are not representative of "early catholicism" or of a domesticated middle-class faith (*christliche Bürgerlichkeit*). Towner finally argues that the relation of the *parenesis* to theology in the Pastorals is closer to Paul than interpreters usually allow. Towner is a good apologist for the Pastorals as authentic Pauline letters—though I think he underestimates the differences between Pauline ethics and the more pedestrian Pastorals. He will make you rethink some of your pre-understandings of the Pastorals, and that's good. Edgar Krentz.

Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement 32; Sheffield Academic Press, $43.50), by Kevin Quest, examines the relation of Peter to the "Beloved Disciple" in John's Gospel. While Peter is an independent figure in John 1-12, chapters 13-20 use Peter as a foil for the Beloved Disciple, who must be interpreted in relation to one another. The Beloved Disciple is "an example of the true disciple's response of πιστις in its fullest sense; belief and faithfulness." Peter is clearly in a leadership role among the disciples throughout the Gospel; yet he misunderstands the foot-washing and denies Jesus. Ultimately, however, he is commended "as leader, spokesman, witness, disciple, and pastor." John 21, the epilogue, places Peter into a crucial role for the Johannine readers. Quast uses this literary analysis to understand the Johannine community in an interesting and valuable study. Edgar Krentz

Books reviewed in *Currents* can be ordered through the
LSTC Book Center
1100 East 55th St., Chicago, IL 60615
(312) 753-0753

Preaching Helps

The Resurrection of Our Lord—Seventh Sunday of Easter, Series C

Faith First

Mary Magdalene was first to arrive at the tomb, and Luke (24:34) confirms Paul's statement that the risen Christ "appeared first to Cephas" (1 Cor 15:5). As for himself, Paul was satisfied to be neither first nor second but "last of all, as one untimely born," counting himself the "least of all, unfit to be called an apostle" since he had persecuted the church of God (1 Cor 15:8-9).

Is there any "first" worth having or being? Isn't it unseemly even to raise the question of "firstness" in the presence of the crucified and resurrected Jesus?

And yet it seems that one of John's concerns in his Easter narrative (20:1-10) is to ponder this business of being first. Mary Magdalene was first at the tomb, arriving on the scene so early it was still dark. She's a clear first in that department. And John neither affirms nor denies that Peter may have been the first of the male disciples to "see" the risen Jesus. Peter and the Beloved Disciple engaged in an odd foot race on Easter morning. The Beloved Disciple got to the tomb first (the word for "first" appears both in v. 4 and in v. 8), but Peter entered first. After Peter entered, then the Beloved Disciple also entered. But only of the Beloved Disciple does the evangelist report: "He saw and believed."

He saw grave cloths and a headband carefully set aside, in fact ostentatiously displayed, paraded before his eyes as a sign that they had been discarded and would never again be needed. He saw so little, and yet he came quickly to faith. That is of "first" importance.

The whole of John 20 is about faith. In the opening verses of the chapter the evangelist seems to say that the Lord of Life leaves scattered clues in unlikely places, wooing and calling us to faith, just as the Beloved Disciple was summoned to faith. I think that the words of this Gospel are themselves grave cloths and headband, highly textured wrappings that convey the presence and the victory of the Lord of Life. Preachers are angels in the tomb, fingering the cloths, retelling the story, pointing to an absence and to a very real presence.

Michael J. Neils, senior pastor of All Saints Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona, has composed the First Readings for this issue. And the Pastoral Reflections come from the pen (actually a word processor) of Christine Buma, co-pastor at St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Lakewood, California.

Mike and Chris share with all of us their reactions to the rich web, the warp and woof, of the lessons for this great season. We are in their debt for their contributions to our thinking and preaching and efforts at encouraging faith in the people of God.

Faithfully,

Robert H. Smith
Editor of Preaching Helps

The Resurrection of Our Lord April 19, 1992

Psalm 118:1-2, 15-24
Exodus 15:1-11 or Psalm 118:14-24
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 24:1-11 or John 20:1-9 (10-18)

FIRST READING

I am thankful for the advent of the Easter Vigil. I used to hate preaching on Easter, mostly because on that morning many of those present are people who think it "nice" to go to church on Easter. I found that preaching for them was very different than the preaching I was inclined to do for those with whom I had kept Lent, celebrated the Great and Holy Week, and watched through the night before Easter dawn. Our calling is always to proclaim Christ, crucified and risen, but depending on the service and the make-up of the worshipping congregation, the preacher might want to focus in very different ways.

One prominent theme at Eastertide is Easter as a cosmic event. 1 Corinthians 15 carries the news of Christ's resurrection and the announcement that this is just the beginning: "He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Death is all around; it is in us and in our world; it is part of our relationships. What God has begun at Easter is a whole new creation in which everything is made new.

Another theme, hinted at in John but made more explicit in Mark, is the message of grace inherent in the fact that the women witnesses carried the news of the resurrection directly to Peter (Jn 20:2, Mk 16:7). It is one thing to declare that Christ is the resurrection and the life who offers us eternal life in his name. It is another thing to be counted (as Peter was, and we all are) among those who have so betrayed (or ignored) God, that we may not welcome the prospect of an eternity with our maker. That the message was carried to Peter is testimony that the Risen Lord is also one who forgives.

Another preaching option is presented in the fundamental Easter formula, "Jesus is risen!" The tendency is to put the emphasis on the latter word, "Jesus is RISEN." But our preaching needs to remind people that the heart of Easter is not that *any* one could rise; the message is that "JESUS is risen." "The stone which the builders had rejected has become the head of the corner" (Ps 118:22). Easter is vindication. The one whom the world rejected as mis-representing God is indeed the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Here is the theology of the cross with all its power. The one whom God raises is not what we expected, but then human beings are always confusing the living and the dead (Lk 24:25). God is not made in our own image (thank God!). Instead, God meets us in one who is not what we expect at all. Rather than confirming our notions of what a savior ought to be, Jesus requires us to die and rise again in faith. But if we die with *him* we shall also live. Blessed Easter! MJN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Easter like Christmas is a challenge for the preacher, in large part because the message is so familiar. Every Easter, no matter which Gospel text is used, the message is the same: "Christ is risen!" The primary difference between the Easter texts is in the response of those who hear the message.

In Matthew, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" are told by an angel that Jesus has been raised. On their way to share that message with the disciples, Jesus himself meets them and sends them to tell his disciples to go to Galilee. There they will see him. The Marys are perfectly obedient, and the disciples travel as directed to Galilee. They see Jesus. They worship him. *"But some doubted"* (Mt 28:17b). Even with the living Christ standing before them, some doubt.

At the end of Mark's Gospel, the women appear to be disobedient to the angelic assignment. They flee from the tomb in terror and amazement—"and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mk 16:8b).

In John's account Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb alone. When she sees that the stone has been removed, she runs to Peter and an unnamed

disciple and tells them that Jesus' body had been taken. Peter and the other disciple rush to the tomb to see for themselves. The other disciple reaches the tomb first and seeing the burial cloths "believed." But what did he believe? The next verse says, "as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead." Meanwhile Mary encounters Jesus at the tomb and supposes him to be the gardener. When she finally realizes it is Jesus, she goes to the disciples and announces to them, "I have seen the Lord."

In Luke's account, even though a significant number of women give their testimony, the disciples and those who hear them consider their words an idle tale. And they did not believe those women evangelists.

Responses in the Gospel accounts to the message of Easter are varied. They run the whole gamut from worship, amazement, silence, curiosity, and confused belief to terror, doubt, disobedience, and unbelief.

Our own responses to Easter are as varied and disappointing as those of the earliest Christians. The good news is that the crucified and resurrected Jesus still comes to us, calling us to receive the gift of life from his outstretched hands. CB

Second Sunday of Easter
April 26, 1992

Psalm 149
Acts 5:12, 17-32
Revelation 1:4-18
John 20:19-31

FIRST READING

It is instructive to read these lessons and the prayer of the day taking note of the variety of emotions being described. One reading shows feelings which set people at enmity with each other... and God. In Acts 5, the high priest and the party of the Sadducees are "filled with *jealousy*" (5:17), and later the captain of the temple and the chief priests are "much *perplexed*" (5:24). The soldiers sent to drag Peter and the other apostles back to the authorities do so without violence because they are "*afraid* of being stoned by the people" (5:26). You can hear both *anger* and *fear* in the high priest's claim that the apostles "intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (5:28). There is also dread aplenty in the room where the disciples are hiding behind a shut door "for *fear* of the Jews" (Jn 20:19).

In contrast, Peter and the apostles display *courage* when they respond to the demand to cease preaching by declaring, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). And there is profound comfort in that room full of fear, when Jesus miraculously shows up and greets his friends by saying, "*Peace* be with you" (Jn 20:19). It is the same risen Lord who triumphantly proclaims to the seer in Revelation, "*Fear not*... I am the living one" (Rev 1:18). The psalmist is singing in the same key, when he exults, "The Lord *takes pleasure* in his people" (Ps 149:4).

An old maxim of pastoral care is that feelings are morally neutral; it is how we act on our feelings that is of issue. It is not helpful for preachers to add a sense of guilt to people's inevitable feelings of fear. However, these lessons do provide an opportunity to proclaim the Risen Christ as one who overcomes the fears that sometimes lead us to act in ways which destroy human community and challenge God's rule of grace. It is by this grace that our fears may be held in check and we may begin to live so as to "show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do" (prayer of the day). MJN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In the Gospel text, Jesus greets the disciples three times with the words, "Peace be with you." In his mouth these words are gift and blessed reality. Often among us "peace" is only a pale hope and a dream seen from afar.

I have a mug which I bought at the bookstore where I attended college during the tumultuous 60s. Printed on the mug is the word "peace" in a variety of languages.

In our services of worship the pastor greets the congregation with the words, "The peace of

the Lord be with you always." Members respond, "And also with you." Then peace is shared personally among the members. "Peace be with you," we say to one another with a handshake or a hug. Yet many of our congregations and members know no peace.

During my last year of high school both Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were murdered. During my college years, students were killed at Kent State University; our nation fought in Viet Nam and invaded Cambodia. Then there was Watergate and the resignation of a President. These were years of turmoil in our country.

Last year, as our country fought a war in the Persian Gulf, many of our nation's youth once again passionately sang, "Give peace a chance."

Our *Lutheran Book of Worship* contains a marvelous prayer that asks God to give "peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts." That all-embracing peace is the benediction of Easter.

From prison, St. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6-7).

The peace of Christ reaches us even in the midst of struggles and conflict. When we rely on God (as St. Paul suggests in Philippians) we will experience peace regardless of our circumstances. CB

Third Sunday of Easter
May 3, 1992

Psalm 30
Acts 9:1-20
Revelation 5:11-14
John 21:1-14

FIRST READING

Part of my graduate work was done at Union Seminary in New York under the wise tutelage of Roger Shinn. A watershed class for me was a course he taught entitled "Perception and Belief." Our readings and the seminar discussions turned the maxim "seeing is believing" on end. More often, what we see is a product of what we believe. The Word of God as it comes through the lessons today is a case in point.

In Acts 9, the characters are a case study in spiritual myopia. Confronted with a vision of the Lord along the Damascus road, Saul can only blurt out, "Who are you...?" (9:5), whereas his companions are "hearing a voice but *seeing*" no one. Later on, Saul's eyes are *opened*, but he can *see no one* (9:7). And when Ananias is commissioned to go lay hands on Saul, he proves a reluctant prophet who sees the Lord's chosen instrument for the Gentiles only as one who has done much evil to the saints (9:13). Without believing there is no seeing.

By contrast, one way to fathom God's grace is to understand it as a gift of sight. The disciples fish all night in an empty hole, and when a stranger points them to a spot where the fish are teeming "...none of them dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord" (Jn 21:12). The vision in Revelation is an account of people who no longer see through a glass dimly but who behold Jesus as one worthy to receive "wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev 5:12)! The psalmist has also *seen* the difference that God can make (Ps 30:6).

The resurrection of our Lord enables us to see God aright, and the faith that our Lord is working in us can begin to help us see ourselves and each other as we ought. In 2 Cor 5:16, Paul

confessed, "From now on... we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer." Easter believing becomes Easter seeing. Enemies can be seen as friends (Saul, Ananias); those who had lost the way (Acts 9:2) or never found it can see in Jesus "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." MJN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The routine is the same each morning Monday through Friday. I awaken my son, and while he's getting dressed for school I go to the kitchen to fix breakfast. After the meal has been prepared I call to him, "Breakfast is ready! Come and eat!"

Many nutritionists claim that breakfast is our most important meal. Without a good breakfast we are ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the day.

In his third appearance following his resurrection, Jesus invites his disciples to "come and have breakfast." Jesus' feeding of the disciples serves as a prelude to the verses which follow where Peter is commanded to feed others on the Lord's behalf.

As we are fed by our Lord, we are given the strength to minister to those around us. We are blessed to be a blessing. There's a camp song which declares:

"Freely, freely you have received,
Freely, freely give."

Our Lord feeds us through Word and Sacrament.

In the parish I serve we gather each week around the Lord's table. Increasingly, congregations are discovering the gift of regular reception of the Eucharist rather than offering the Sacrament only once or twice per month. Additionally, many congregations are encouraging young children to commune at the discretion of pastor, parent, and child. The church is realizing more and more that children also are nourished by Word *and* Sacrament.

When our congregation was first considering offering communion to children under the age of ten, some adults were scandalized: "Children are too young to understand the meaning behind The Meal!" At a council meeting when we were discussing the ramifications of including children at the Lord's Table, I asked each council member to write on a sheet of paper, "Holy Communion is..." and then fill in the rest according to their understanding. After looking through the responses I reported to the council, "If understanding is the criterion for receiving Communion, then at least two-thirds of us are ineligible." With our congregational Board of Education we planned a program to educate the *adults* of our membership in the meaning of the Eucharist.

But the gift surpasses all education and understanding. The resurrected Lord stands at the lakeside and invites us, "Come and have breakfast." This meal is God's grace given for you and for me to nourish and strengthen us for service in God's name. CB

Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 10, 1992

Psalm 23
Acts 13:15-16a, 26-33
Revelation 7:9-17
John 10:22-30

FIRST READING

By the time this is in print, the 1992 presidential primary season will have passed its zenith and the nation will be steeling itself for a summer of discontent and an almost interminable fall campaign leading up to election day. Even by May, voter apathy is likely to be apparent, because, increasingly, people just do not believe that any potential leader is capable of directing our country in a way that will be significantly different or better than what has been. Political indifference (bordering on despair) can be a symptom of a deeper despondence, to which God has much to say on Good Shepherd Sunday.

The first lesson is an account of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Pisidia. The latter half of the lesson is a classic example of apostolic preaching. Of particular importance in my own study of

these texts are vv. 32-33, in which Paul declares God to be one who not only makes promises but who fulfills them! Preachers should take note of the fact that the first lesson for Easter 5 continues the account of the visit to Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:44-52).

The promise proclaimed by Paul (13:32-33) is made more explicit in the remaining Propers. In Jesus Christ the world is offered a leader very different from the political hacks who vie for our allegiance by means of empty promises and half truths. Jesus' sheep *hear* his voice and *follow* (Jn 10:27) because he *knows* them and gives them *eternal life*. Even among sheep, one of the dumbest animals in creation, allegiance has to be earned. Jesus is presented as worthy of our trust in part because where he leads there are still waters that restore (the Font!) and green pastures for nourishment (the Eucharistic feast!). Equally compelling is the knowledge that this one who would be our shepherd is himself the Lamb (Rev 7:17).

In Psalm 23 there is a phrase that could direct our preaching along a different path than the one I have already mentioned. The promise that God will be with us through the valley of the shadow of death (23:4) is too often associated only with the end of physical life. But death casts shadows across our lives every day, for sin is death. God promises to be with us and to guide us through all of life's dark shadows. MJN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Gospel text is part of a much larger context in which Jesus uses shepherd/sheep imagery to underscore the intimate and sacrificial nature of the relationship he has with those who trust him. Intimacy is clearly expressed in verse 27 where Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me."

Not long ago a survey was taken among the students at the high school where my husband teaches. Responding to one question in the survey, a clear majority of the students indicated that they did not feel they had any close friends, nor did they feel that anyone really knew them. Whoever said that "your high school years are the best years of your life" obviously never spoke with these students.

"All the lonely people, where do they all come from?" sang the Beatles in the early years of their popularity. They were in touch with adolescent reality.

To be known and loved by another is a precious gift. But we often make it difficult for others to get to know us.

In his book *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* John Powell tells the story of speaking to someone as he was writing his book. Powell's companion offered a classic explanation as to why we do not open up to others. Powell's friend declares: "If I tell you who I am, you may not like who I am, and it's all that I have."

Most of us wear masks day in and day out, hoping that those around us won't find out the "truth" about us. It seems safer to remain behind a mask than to take the risk of rejection.

Although real intimacy is scary, we all crave it. We long to be known and loved, not only because of who we are, but also in spite of who we are.

In the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness we address God as One "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid...." Our text reminds us that we have a Lord who, intimately knowing us, accepts us and loves us unconditionally.

Martin Luther once declared that one of the ways God offers us grace is through the "conversation and consolation of the saints." As we share with and listen to each other we discover we are all made of the same stuff. We have common fears, dreams, hopes, sins, needs, weaknesses and strengths. When we are willing to risk sharing who we are, "warts and all," we discover we are not alone but part of the community of "saints and sinners."

For the church to be a healing community, we must be willing to risk self-revelation and then to bear each other's burdens. There would be standing-room-only in our places of worship if we were able to leave our masks at the door, embrace one another, forgive each other's failures, and be the caring community we are called by God to be.

Two children's books offer powerful illustrations of what it means to be intimately known and loved. In *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupery, a story is told of the relationship

between a fox and a little boy. In the story, the fox instructs the little boy in how to "tame" him (to know and love him). In *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Williams, the Skin Horse shares with a Rabbit from personal experience what it means to become "real" (known and loved).

In hearing the voice of the Shepherd, we become real. CB

Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 17, 1992

Psalm 145:1-13
Acts 13:44-52
Revelation 21:1-5
John 13:31-35

FIRST READING

Because we are all seduced at least to some extent by a "theology of glory," it is easy to operate as though the call of God can come only through what the world would judge to be *positive*. Words like "opportunity" and "challenge" stir us.

By contrast, one preaching option this week is to explore how God uses failure to bring the kingdom closer.

The first lesson continues the account of Paul in Antioch of Pisidia. As a result of his preaching there was so much strife and anger from the Jews (take heart, Paul—at least your congregation was listening!) that Paul and Barnabas determine to "turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). It could be viewed as a failure, but in Acts, Luke has recorded several instances where God used seeming failure to extend the kingdom. The dispute between Paul and Barnabas over the reliability of John Mark (Acts 13:13, 15:36ff.) led to a division of labor among apostolic missionaries and an extended ability to proclaim the Good News. Earlier on, it was the persecution of the believers (Acts 8:1) that finally drove them out of Jerusalem and into the mission fields of Samaria and the ends of the earth. But why should we be surprised if God uses failure to bring blessings to the world? We preach Christ crucified, the wisdom of God which turns all earthly notions of success upside down!

There is a very different theme in the second lesson and the Gospel. More astute exegetes will have noticed years ago what I heard for only the first time on this journey through John 13. Until now, I never sensed the connection between Jesus' announced departure (13:33) and the commandment to love one another (13:34). One gets the sense of a beloved parent speaking to a family and saying, "Be good to each other while I am gone." Surely this is part of how our Lord "makes all things new" (Rev 21:5) and banishes all "mourning, crying... [and] pain." He taught that we cannot come where he is going, but he can come with us, and this he does as his love is made incarnate through the community of the baptized embracing the mission to be "little Christs" to each other.

The prayer of the day asks God to "form the minds of your faithful people into a single will." If we have the will to love each other with the love that Christ is giving us, then all things will be new! MJN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

She came to see me one morning to discuss my possible support for a special ministry she headed which is connected with our synod. As we talked, she shared that she had not always been a Christian. Following her conversion to Christianity, she chose to attend a Christian college so she could work in a Christian organization. She thought her dream had been realized when she began her current position. After sharing her story she reflected, "I thought working with Christians would be wonderful. But I was surprised to observe how little they actually love one another."

With gusto we sing: "And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love." How consistent are the words of this song with our behavior and the behavior of the people we serve?

I have a black and white poster in my office showing two people embracing. The caption

reads: "A modest proposal for peace—that the Christians of the world agree not to kill each other."

The Gospel for today is set in the context of Jesus' final passover meal with his disciples. During this meal Jesus vividly demonstrates what he means when he commands his followers to love as he loves: he washes his disciples' feet.

We often mistakenly assume that Jesus' command to love others means that we must also "like" them. But that is not the meaning of the Greek word *agape*. To love another in the sense that Jesus commands is to look out for the best interests of the other, to serve them and care for them as we ourselves wish to be served and cared for. *Agape* acts in response to a need in another person. To love as Jesus commands is a matter of our will, not our feelings.

Jesus' entire life is a demonstration of *agape*. Phil 2:6-8 reminds us that though he was in the form of God he emptied himself of his divine privilege, taking the form of a slave, obediently humbling himself even to the point of death. As Christians we too are called to give ourselves away out of love for others. CB

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 24, 1992

Psalm 67
Acts 14:8-18
Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23
John 14:23-29

FIRST READING

I confess that I do not often find The Revelation to St. John helpful for preaching. To me, the book has always seemed a spiritual equivalent to the "Star Wars" film trilogy. The forces of good and evil are engaged in a cosmic struggle, and whereas there is some lively action and vivid imagery, the issue is never in doubt. What enthralls people are the special effects.

Easter 6, Commemoration of Nicolaus Copernicus and Leonhard Euler, provides an occasion for me (and others who tend to dodge apocalyptic) to repent. It seems to me that the second lesson provides the core imagery for preaching on this day. Rev 21:10ff. continues a vision of heaven. V. 22 declares that the "new Jerusalem" contains no temple, "for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." Also, in the holy city there is no need for sun or moon, "for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev 21:23).

The promise is that God is accessible at all times; in fact, God is more than accessible: God is present. There is no need for a temple meeting ground any longer. The new creation begun in Christ is one in which the promise is "Lo, I am with you always," and because of his presence there is light (cf. Isa 60:19-20, Ps 36:10).

In verses that immediately precede the Gospel for today, Jesus declares that he will not leave his followers *orphanous* (Jn 14:18). Though he leaves the world, he is still with his followers. He and the Father promise to come and make a home with all who love them and keep their word (Jn 14:23). A major theme in Barth's classic commentary on Romans was that God's transcendence is made manifest in God's immanence. On the very verge of the Ascension (May 28), here is a chance to proclaim God as intimate and present to all.

Those with a knowledge of science may want to explore another preaching option, using the name of Copernicus. For an insight into Copernicus' genius (and good fortune), peruse Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn's thesis is that the greatest moments in science have come when someone is led to step outside the established thought systems of the age and try a completely new paradigm. Acts 14 is an example of people trying to squeeze the new age begun in Christ into the old wineskins of existing models of thought. A creative preacher could explore the new paradigm for faith, knowledge, and love which exists because of the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. MJN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Gospel for today is a portion of Jesus' farewell discourse. Having just emphasized the special relationship he will have with those who keep his commandments, Jesus responds to a question asked by Judas, whom the text describes as "not Iscariot." Jesus says, "Those who love me will keep my word."

Some time back a guest pastor was the speaker at our Confirmation banquet. He asked us to use the Bibles before us and turn to the Commandments as listed in Exodus 20. He then asked us to summarize the commandments in as succinct a form as possible, using the paper and pencils provided. He then asked us to share what we had written. The briefest summary consisted of six words: "Love God, and neighbor as self."

In John 13, Jesus gave his disciples something even more stunningly powerful than that six-word summary. He washed their feet. He lovingly served them with a towel and a basin. He also made it clear that we are called to take up towel and basin, and to offer loving service in God's name.

Service is not our innate posture. It must be learned. When we are born, the world seems to revolve around us. As we grow, we are taught to share and to serve. It is only with great reluctance that children first risk sharing their toys.

In discussing the concept of original sin when I do pre-baptismal instruction, I often use an illustration from an old fast-food restaurant advertising jungle. "Have it your way! Have it your way!" the ditty goes. This was an especially memorable advertisement because it taps into our fallen human nature. We do want to have it our way. "Me first! Myself second! If there's anything left over, I'll take it!" is the motto of our fallen nature.

It is only through God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit that we become molded and shaped in the posture of a servant and can do what the Lord commands. In our experience of servanthood we express our love for the Lord and truly realize the abundant life God promises. CB

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 31, 1992

Psalm 47
Acts 16:6-10
Revelation 22:12-17, 20
John 17:20-26

FIRST READING

Take heart! Before the U.S. Congress changed Memorial Day to a Monday (May 25 this year), no one would have been in church on this weekend. Occasionally even the federal government does something useful!

Even after all these years of liturgical renewal, there is probably little notice taken of the trilogy of festivals which include The Annunciation (March 25), The Visitation (May 31), and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24). For those who have the inclination to do so, however, it is possible to let the occasion of the Visitation speak to and inform preaching for this final Sunday of Easter.

At the beginning of today's Gospel, we hear Jesus pray "...not for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word" (Jn 17:20). At the conclusion of the pericope, we hear him pray in longing to the one he called Father, "...the world has not known you." Yet the world is longing to hear. Paul's vision of the Macedonian man is the heart of the first lesson (Acts 16:10). Similarly, the reading in Revelation 22 includes the cry of *maranatha*. The world wants and needs Jesus to come; and the Psalm declares that "all peoples" will clap their hands when the reign of God is fully established (Ps 47:1).

This time between Ascension and Pentecost may rightly be the day for a small mission festival. The world needs to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. The world is longing for him. And, as the Visitation reminds us, the Word of God does not often come through a voice speaking from a cloud. The God who chose to make the Word flesh still put flesh and word together through the ministry of the Body of Christ in the world.

The reading in Luke for the Visitation con-

tains that strange passage in which a word from Mary sets John the Baptist (*in utero*) hopping. Does it seem likely that the world will still jump in the presence of the Christ who comes through the Word his people speak? Remember the words of the angel to the virgin who could not understand how she could bear a child, let alone the Messiah: "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Lk 1:37).

It is possible for the church to be the vehicle for God bringing the saving Word to the world. It is possible for God, through this same Word, to "make all Christians one with him" (prayer of the day) so that the world might believe (Jn 17:21). This is a day to proclaim God's possibilities... which are gracious and endless. MJN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In his "high priestly prayer" Jesus prays for unity among his disciples and those who will believe through their word.

Scripture testifies to the breadth and depth of brokenness. Beginning with the account of the Fall in Genesis, we read of disunity between human beings and God, between people and within creation.

Brokenness continues to the present day, permeating all aspects of life, infecting also the church. Jesus' prayer for unity has yet to receive its full response.

Last October I attended the National Conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal facilitated by Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline*. In one of the general sessions the Bible study leader asked for all who had experienced disunity within the church to identify themselves. Out of the several hundred participants only a few remained in their seats. (I wonder if those who stayed seated were paying attention!)

Unresolved anger, dissension, backbiting, quarreling, viciousness, resentment, anger, animosity, antagonism, and bitterness characterize many in our congregations and sometimes whole communities of struggling Christian people.

Conflict resolution teams are a common feature of synodical life, and bishops spend a tremendous amount of time dealing with disunity within congregations.

A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* reported that in greater numbers than ever before churches are terminating their pastors, often for little cause.

The model for unity in the church is the oneness of the Trinity. We cannot imagine the Trinity broken by bickering! Father against Son or Son against Spirit? Impossible!

Paul exhorts the church in Eph 4:1-6, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."

Christ's body was broken for the people whom he loved. Mercifully, he continues to use the broken body of the church to heal and to make whole. CB

U.S. Postal Service

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685

1A Title of Publication	1B PUBLICATION NO	2 Date of Filing
CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION	0 0 9 8 2 1 1 3	October 1, 1991
3 Frequency of Issue	3A No. of Issues Published Annually	3B Annual Subscription Price
Bi-monthly	six	$13.50

4 Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication *(Street, City, County, State and ZIP+4 Code) (Not printers)*

1100 East 55th Street Chicago, Illinois 60615-5199

5 Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters of General Business Offices of the Publisher *(Not printer)*

1100 East 55th Street Chicago, Illinois 60615-5199

6 Full Names and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor *(This item MUST NOT be blank)*

Publisher *(Name and Complete Mailing Address)*

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago 1100 E. 55th St. Chicago, IL 60615

Editor *(Name and Complete Mailing Address)*

Ralph W. Klein 1100 East 55th Street Chicago, Illinois 60615

Managing Editor *(Name and Complete Mailing Address)*

7 Owner *(If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.) (Item must be completed.)*

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago	1100 East 55th Street Chicago, IL 60615

8 Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities *(If there are none, so state)*

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
None	

9 For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized To Mail at Special Rates *(DMM Section 423.12 only)*
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes *(Check one)*

(1) ☐ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months

(2) ☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months

(If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)

10 Extent and Nature of Circulation *(See instructions on reverse side)*	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A Total No. Copies *(Net Press Run)*	4,000	3,800
B Paid and/or Requested Circulation 1 Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	105	92
2 Mail Subscription *(Paid and/or requested)*	3,551	3,386
C Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation *(Sum of 10B1 and 10B2)*	3,656	3,478
D Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies	236	222
E Total Distribution *(Sum of C and D)*	3,892	3,700
F Copies Not Distributed 1 Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	108	100
2 Return from News Agents	0	0
G TOTAL *(Sum of E, F1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in A)*	4,000	3,800

11 I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete	Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner
	Ralph W Klein

PS Form 3526, Feb 1989 *(See instructions on reverse)*

In Defense of Dialogue

William E. Lesher
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

What's wrong with dialogue with peoples of other faiths? Much of what is written today in Lutheran circles gives the impression that dialogue is compromise. Evangelism and dialogue are contrasted. To be for one, you must be opposed to the other. dialogue is characterized as being "soft" on Christ and giving up on the confessional core of the faith. I reject this dualism.

At LSTC today, we are engaged in initial phases of two very significant and fascinating dialogues: one with Muslims and the other with Buddhists. Chicago is an Islamic center, with more Muslims than Episcopalians (estimated 200,000 to 300,000). Buddhists are represented in smaller numbers, but through the Center for Global Mission at LSTC we have established a relationship with Mahidol University in Thailand, as well as with the local Buddhist community. Discussions and dialogue with both groups are underway.

We are novices in this process, but our experience leaves no doubt that dialogue is one way, one important way, to witness to Jesus Christ. Dialogue is civil discourse between peoples of different faiths. It is based on intense curiosity and desire: curiosity to learn how others believe, how they experience the Divine, and how they live in response to what has been revealed to them; and the desire to talk with dialogue partners about God who became flesh in Jesus Christ, who reveals the heart of God as love, who lived out that love in history, suffered, died, was buried and rose again, as a seal on the promise of forgiveness and the gift of life with God forever.

Telling that story is the opportunity dialogue provides. It also provides a chance to learn how others believe, what makes another faith work, and how there are things to share between people who are on the same pilgrimage, called life, and struggling with the resources available to make sense of the nonsense of much of the journey. Dialogue can and should build understanding, respect, and maybe even friendship. It also creates in Christian hearts a great longing, because however pleasing, satisfying and genuine other religions are, they lack the one thing needed—the proclamation of a gracious and a grace-filled God. Christians involved in dialogues long to fill that lack with the Word that gives us life and liberation.

Dialogue is not evil; it is not compromise; it is not selling out or going soft on Christ. It is one important and increasingly available way to make a witness to our faith and Jesus Christ. It is not swapping faith stories. It is getting to know each other, learning to like each other, helping each other, and sharing life's deepest convictions with each other.

To do that as effectively as possible is the challenge of dialogue. It is an opportunity made possible by the conditions of life in our pluralistic world and society, where people of other faiths are not foreigners from afar, but are our neighbors.

Will dialogues be effective? We pray that they will. Will they cause people of other faiths to convert and confess Christ? In most instances, probably not. Sometimes, maybe. But we've never regarded success as our responsibility. The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens. We are to take every opportunity to witness, and dialogue is one modern way.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

If you are moving, please send your corrected mailing label, or a photocopy, or any change-of-address form, to *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, or call (312) 753-0751.

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

Currents
in Theology and Mission
1100 East 55th St.
Chicago, IL 60615

Second Class Postage
Paid
Chicago, IL
and at other
mailing offices