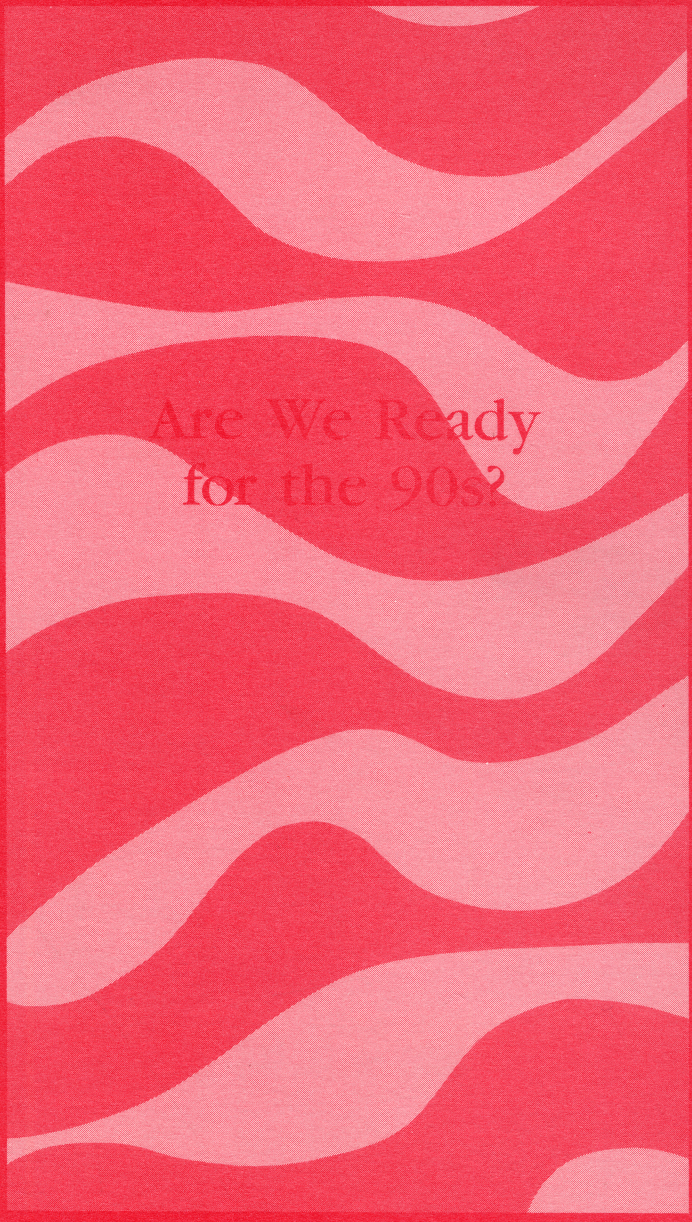
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CURRENTS

in Theology and Mission

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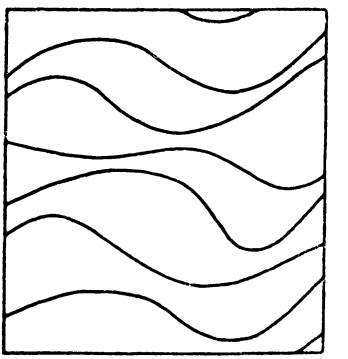
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Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany—Good Friday

Are We Ready for the 90s?

Ministry, like life itself, gets more complicated and more surprising all the time. Who would have guessed five years ago that the East-West struggle would end so peacefully, or that East Germany and the Baltic States would so soon find independence? Harried parish pastors lead increasingly diverse, and often smaller, congregations in a quest for meaning and salvation, for spiritual growth and the realization of justice. For many the road of ministry seems steeper all the time. We survived the sexual revolution of the 60s but often wonder whether new openness and honesty have really led to healthier sexuality. Charges of sexual harassment uncover an unsavory past and a perplexing present for victim and accused alike. Need I say that I am writing during the weekend of the Hill-Thomas hearing?

David Rhoads outlines one of the most severe challenges of the 90s: our fragile environment. Each year the world loses crop land the size of Kansas while the population will apparently double in the next forty years. By 2030 the oceans may rise by three feet and destroy coastal cities. Our dominion over the world has often meant domination. Even our most treasured theological concepts—fall, redemption, forgiveness, salvation—are human centered and ignore the rest of nature. Since our attachment to present lifestyles is idolatrous, we seek new models for what it means to be Christians and Christian congregations. To face this

challenge we must be fed by a joyful hope rooted in the ongoing creative activity of God among us in sacrificial self-giving and resurrection.

Homer U. Ashby, Jr. reflects on the steps backward in race relations in our country. Progress has slowed or been reversed, and higher education has proved not to be the savior: there are fewer African-Americans on campus, with less financial aid, and more racial incidents. We fear limits, we fear complex ambiguity, and we fear becoming different than we are. The burning issue for us today is no longer fighting injustice, but trying to decide whose justice merits our greater allegiance. He appeals to Martin Bucer for a vision: "God created all things so that they might contribute not to their own good but to that of others, and be an instrument and evidence of the divine goodness which all things should express and spread forth."

In an exposition of John 4, **José David Rodríguez** shows how Jesus broke down human barriers that hindered the reception and expansion of God's reign among the people of his time. For him reading the text "in Spanish" means making the Bible available to people in their vernacular, no longer under the control of the dominant groups of society. The stress given to European culture, leadership through domination, and the tendency to ignore the faithful witness of those who are different from ourselves form barriers to the witness of Lutheranism in America. Instead, faith should lead us to recognize God in and through the stranger.

Austra Reinis suggests that the Latvian church might profit from various themes in Latin American liberation theology: praxis as the point of departure, God's liberating word addressed to situations of oppression, and the close relationship between divine and human liberating actions. Political liberation will be freedom from the perpetual compromise of personal integrity demanded under ideological tyranny. While the dangers of private property are clear in Latin America, Latvia demonstrates the evil of state property ownership. Only a democratic political framework can enforce restraints on individual and state power. Latvians can learn that human liberating events are part of the coming of God's kingdom, but they also need to take human sinfulness into account as new political structures are instituted.

Craig L. Nessan reviews criticisms raised by liberation theology against "academic" theology and the clash between the notions that God sides with the poor and the claim of civil religion that America is God's chosen people. We need to ask liberation theology questions about its philosophical basis, its method, its theological anthropology, and the meaning of salvation/liberation. Is liberation theology overly optimistic about human possibilities? Is historical progress salvation? Each side in the discussion needs a critical appreciation of the countervailing position and self-criticism.

Richard J. Beauchesne and **Kathleen Coviello** respond to the suggestion of the BEM document that all churches review the old controversies about the Eucharist as sacrifice. To them the *anamnesis* leads to shaping one's speech and action in particular ways, namely, the sacrifice of self for the liberation of the oppressed. While the Eucharist was meant to be a remembrance of Jesus' liberative action, it came to be the preservation of the status quo. Hence it was alienated from the people and allied to the powers of domination. The Eucharist is the Christian expression of one's commitment to human liberation. One would rather die than live in compromise with oppressing powers.

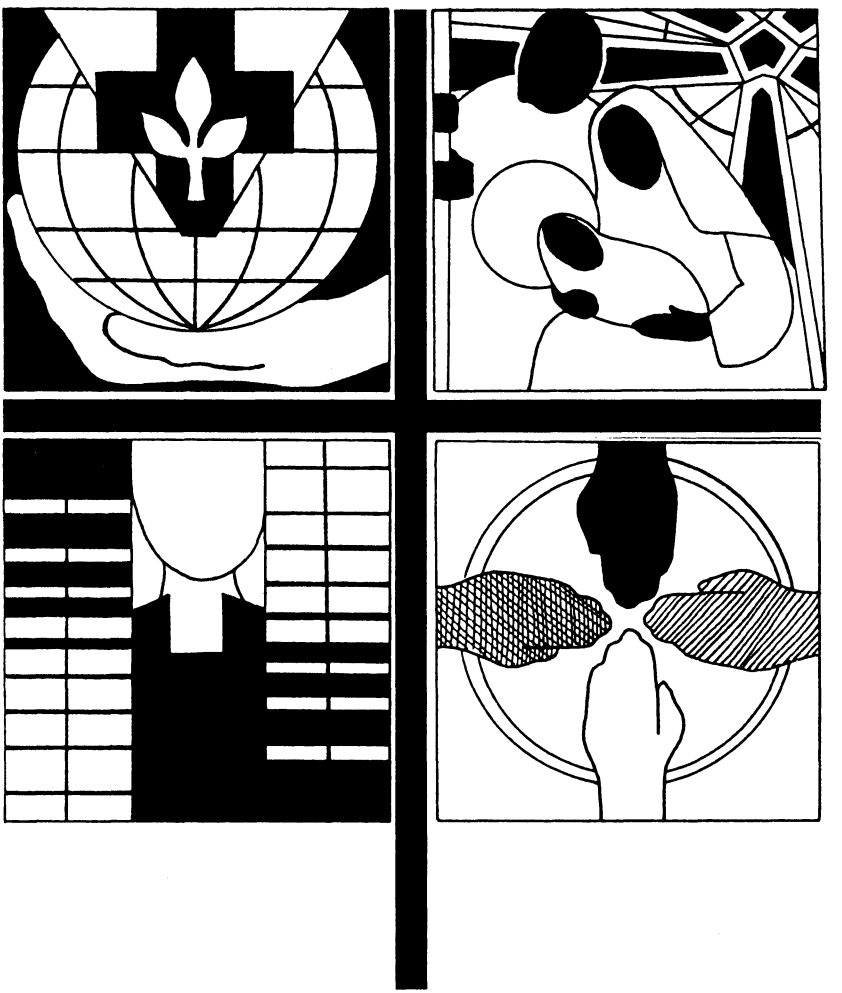
Wendell E. Henkenmeier explores the self psychology of Heinz Kohut and the so-called transferences between the poles of ambition, ideals, and intermediating talents and skills. The mirroring transference, the idealizing transference, and the twinning transference are useful in counseling and in understanding the interactions of pastors and parishes. The article illustrates how these transferences take place and how, through fixations, they can go wrong.

Patrick Hansel and **Michael Sherer** discuss anecdotes from parish life appropriate to the Christmas season. **Kenneth B. Storck** contributes a poem on preaching.

As we move into the mid 90s in the church, we need to reacquire rules of discourse that enable diverse people with diverse viewpoints to maintain the spirit of unity in a bond of peace. Matthew 18 urges personal conversation with an offending sister and brother in order to

win over that sister and brother. Luther's explanation of the eighth commandment urges us to apologize for the neighbor, speak well of the neighbor, and interpret charitably all that the neighbor does. Without such speaking the truth in love, I doubt that we can avoid the rocks and shoals of the 90s. With such speech we will promote the body's growth in building itself up in love. The way we talk to one another may, indeed, make us ready for the 90s.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor



The Role of the Church in the Care of the Earth

David Rhoads
Professor of New Testament
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

This was first presented as an Inaugural Lecture at LSTC in Spring 1989. Revised and updated, it was presented to the Greater Milwaukee Synod assembly in Spring 1991.

Every week we pray the offertory prayer to God: "We dedicate ourselves to the care and redemption of all that you have made." These words articulate an adequate vocation for humankind in our time, but they are bitter words to speak in light of our massive betrayal of this vocation in our domination and exploitation of the earth. Just what are we doing to our fragile earth? What are we doing to "our home which must be defended like a holy relic?" And how can we set ourselves on a new course to care for and redeem all that God has created?

The fires from the burning oils fields of Kuwait are a frightening sight. Recently, I taught a course on "The Care of the Earth" and one of the students said, "I took this course because I saw the television pictures of the fires in Kuwait. I was frightened that the effects of them might come over here and then what would we do." The fires of Kuwait are very visible, and the effect on the lungs of Kuwaitis is quite dramatic. But all the fires of Kuwait burning all year will account for only two percent of the carbon dioxide pollution this year. Most of the other 98 percent comes from the United States. We have our own fires here, coming from the industrial stacks and the tailpipes and the chimneys of America. Have you driven past Gary, Indiana, lately? It looks a lot like Kuwait. But most of our fires are small and the smoke is generally invisible—but the burning is there. An average automobile in this country emits its own weight in carbon dioxide into the air every year. It is now estimated that just living in Chicago is equivalent to smoking two packs of cigarettes a day. Kuwait is a visible metaphor for what is happening everywhere. The whole earth is a silent and invisible Kuwait.

Each year, humanity pours 5.7 billion tons of pollutants into the air from industrial

stacks, automobiles, and the burning of forests. The greenhouse effect resulting from such pollution is causing a rate of climate change which is 100 times faster than at any time in human history. The six warmest years in the last century have all occurred in the decade of the 80s. By the year 2030 the average global temperature may rise as much as five to eight degrees, causing erratic weather patterns and probably moving the growing belt from the Midwest northward toward Canada.

As the earth warms, the oceans will expand and rise. In the last eight years, the surface temperature of the ocean has gone up more than one degree Fahrenheit. By the year 2030, the level of the ocean may rise by as much as three feet, covering coastal farmland, and ruining fresh water reserves. The ocean rise will also create a major dislocation of people. Two-thirds of people worldwide live within 35 miles of a coast. There will be environmental refugees from the deltas of Egypt and Bangladesh and low-lying cities such as Taipei, Bangkok, New Orleans, and Miami. How will we relocate Miami?

Worldwide, we are now losing forests at the rate of territory one-half the size of California per year. In Third World countries especially, people use wood for survival to cook and to provide heat. They have already lost most of the forested areas in Ethiopia, Liberia, and India. Last year, rain forests in Alaska and Brazil were destroyed by cutting or burning at the rate of an area the size of a football field every second. The destruction of forests by fire accounted for more than 20 percent of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere last year.

Then there is the irreversible loss of farming land to desert due to the heat and dry conditions. The worldwide loss of cropland per year is an area equal to the size of Kansas, resulting in part from the overuse of cropland to feed larger populations. The loss of soil lowers the world food supply. For example, the 1988 drought in the Midwest alone reduced the grain crop worldwide by 31 percent.

These environmental changes are also causing the loss of biological diversity. Scientists estimate that each day we are driving one hundred plant and animal species to extinction. By the year 2030, we may have lost 30-40 percent of all species. The issue is not just the spotted owl but the whole ecosystem of which it is a part. Every type of ecosystem is now at risk. You can plant a tree but you cannot plant a forest. So when we cut down a forest, we can only plant trees to be harvested again. But we cannot plant the forest that was there before with its ecosystem and its plant and animal life, with its biological diversity.

Waste is a major part of the problem—toxic waste and garbage disposal, radioactive leakage, the release of human-made organisms, and oil spills. The U.S. alone generates 10 billion metric tons of waste a year and places it in thousands of landfills. Toxic chemicals and leachate from the dumps often seep into the ground water and enter the food chain. When we have run out of space on land, we are dumping in rivers, lakes, and oceans. A scientist from the University of Michigan who has worked in the Antarctic for years said that their team has not yet examined a sea or land animal which did not have some traces of styrofoam.

Then there is the ozone layer. In 1985, scientists discovered a hole over the Antarctic in the ozone layer of the atmosphere. Then, we learned that in the last twenty years there was a two percent depletion worldwide in the ozone layer, due mainly to the human use of chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs. The destructive power of a single chlorine atom is frightening. If your car air



conditioner leaks today, it will take eight to ten years for those chlorine atoms to reach the upper atmospheres, where they will remain for up to one hundred years. During that time, each chlorine atom is capable of destroying as many as 100,000 ozone molecules before it fades from the outer atmosphere. Even if we were to stop immediately all human causes of ozone depletion, imagine the long term destructive effects of what we have already released into the atmosphere. By 2030, as much as five to twenty percent more ultraviolet radiation will pass through the ozone layer to reach the earth, resulting in significant increases in skin cancer, eye afflictions, and the general depression of the immune system as well as bringing damage to the entire food chain.

Perhaps the most difficult problem is population. In 1800, the population of earth was one billion. By 1930, it had doubled. 45 years later in 1985, it had doubled again. The world population is now a little more than five billion. By 2030, it will likely double to ten billion. The increase in population will tax all earth's resources and every ecosystem much more than now. And the areas hit worst will probably be Third World countries. In Ethiopia, for example, population is expected to increase five times from 100 to 530 million!

I have drawn a thumbnail sketch of the state of the environment from books and articles which are widely available. And there is general agreement on all these points. Scientists always acknowledge some uncertainty about their predictions. The models used to predict global changes are not yet adequate to account for all the factors involved. However, in this case, the margins of error have to do not with *whether* these things will happen. Most agree on that. The question is *when* they will happen. As such, the changes may be slower than anticipated. On the other hand, the changes could occur much more rapidly. Some scientists fear that a threshold will come when several factors could combine to trigger a rapid acceleration of changes.

In any case, we cannot go on this way indefinitely. Our whole lifestyle is based on taking non-renewable energies and minerals out of the land and the oceans, and transforming them into toxic pollutants, which we then pour back into the land or the air or the water. We will either run out of accessible resources or we will so pollute the earth as to make it uninhabitable. Worldwatch Institute gives us until 2030 to turn this around in a dramatic way or face irreversible damage to our life on earth. We have worried about the destruction of the planet by a nuclear holocaust—which might or might not happen. But the destruction of the environment has already begun and bears a stamp of inevitability. The situation is grim. As Woody Allen has rather cynically articulated it, "Humanity has come to a great crossroad. One path leads to hopelessness and despair, the other to total destruction. Let us pray that we have the courage to choose correctly."

I have presented this information in blunt reportorial fashion, because that is how we encounter it in the news. And I have not tried to soften it. For if we do not face the true size of the crisis, then we will not have an adequate response. If we do not see the full extent of the problem, we will not see the extent of the transformation needed. But it is hard to hear, difficult to take in. We tend either to dismiss what we hear or become overwhelmed by it. That is why it is crucial that we hear it as Christians. As Christians, we can hear these things without denial or despair. We have been justified by God, and we do not need to be defensive. And we are counseled through despair by the active presence of God.

It is very important that we bring this concern for the environment into the orbit of faith, because no technological fix will heal what we have done to creation. Healing will require a major change of lifestyle, a profound human transformation. It is hard to give up our exploitation of the earth because we have come to depend upon our standard of living. It is hard to give up the "use and throw away" mentality, because we are attached to the conveniences of modern life. In some ways we are addicted to our lifestyle. We are like a middle-aged overweight male with heart problems who eats too much, drinks too much, works too hard, and smokes, but who will not stop—who will not go to the doctor because he does not want to change his lifestyle. He just keeps on going, hoping that nothing will happen to him. But it's time to go to the doctor. Bringing this problem into the orbit of faith is crucial. Change must happen. Repentance must take place. Transformation must occur. And where else in our society can we gather for self-examination, repentance, and transformation?

We need a transformation. We have mistakenly assumed that the world was created for humans and that we have a right to exploit it to our use without limit. On the contrary, God made human beings to care for the earth, to tend the rest of creation. We have misinterpreted the biblical dictum to exercise dominion over the earth. We have understood dominion to mean domination and used it as a mandate to exploit the earth for human purposes. But the biblical meaning of exercising dominion is "to care for something or someone tenderly as a shepherd cares for the sheep." For God's sake, we have a responsibility to the trees and the streams and the land. We need a transformation.

In addition, our major theological concepts have been human-centered and have ignored the rest of nature. For example, the fall, redemption, forgiveness, and salvation are concepts which we have applied almost exclusively just to humans—as if God did not care to redeem all of creation. We have rendered nature as a backdrop, as if we were apart *from* nature and not a part *of* nature, as if we could survive without eating or drinking or breathing. But we are inextricably bound up with this world God is creating and which God calls good. We need to be creator-centered, experiencing God in all things and knowing that all things bear God's glory. Then we will truly see creation as our home and we will use creation carefully, out of a reverence for it and a delight in it. Technology, by itself, will not save us unless we use it in a context of deep respect for nature. We need a transformation.

We tend to assume that all things on the earth are unlimited and in ready supply for our use. Last year I was told about a pastor in the Midwest who visited a Native American family. Because the landscape was dry and it was a hot day he asked for a glass of water before he left. When they handed him a glass, he went to the sink, turned on the

faucet, let the water run until it became cool, then filled his glass, drank it, and finally rinsed the glass out before he turned off the faucet and handed the glass back. Whereupon he turned and saw the look of horror on their faces. In less than two minutes, he had used up their entire ration of water for the week. How much we take for granted!

No technological fix will heal what we have done to creation.

Imagine for a moment that you have just enough cool water to dip the tips of your fingers and cool your face. Feel the preciousness of the water to human survival and the human spirit. Such water is not unlimited and in ready supply. It is limited and in short supply. Already in California we are facing severe shortages and rationing of water. If this morning you took a shower and washed your hair, brushed your teeth or shaved and let the water run, and did the breakfast dishes, and flushed the toilet a few times, it is estimated that you used up more than 45 gallons of water. Now think of our whole assumption of unlimited resources—how we use and discard cans, bottles, aluminum, plastic, oil, gas, electricity, and paper by the grove. It will take a major reorientation for us to think of everything being limited and in short supply, to think about all things as if we were rationing them. We will have to alter basic assumptions in order to carefully use and reuse our precious resources—out of a love of the creation and a desire not to violate it. We need a transformation.

We assume there can be unlimited growth—in our lifestyle and our economy—"the sky's the limit" or "you can do anything you set your mind to" or in the words of the Wall Street commercial, "Your world should know no boundaries." This assumption of unlimited growth has been fundamental to the greatness of the American experiment, but its side effects are catching up to us. In the American culture, this limitless urge to get somewhere, usually to the top, has led us to do whatever devastation we have to do to the earth beneath or behind us to get there. It will be difficult to give up this American story of a world without limits, along with the individual dreams and ambitions that go with it. In his book, *The Travail of Nature*, Paul Santmire suggests we need to replace this mountain-climbing motif with the Biblical motif of settling in the good land. We need to replace striving and conquest with time for caring, tenderness toward the earth, and absorbing intimacy with creation. The Spirit says to us that we should learn to "linger," that we should "savor." Lord, we don't need another mountain. We need to settle down in the plain for the duration and enjoy the shared life in a single place for which we take good care. We need a transformation.

And the source of this transformation and the source of our power to act comes from God. Fear of what might happen will not inspire in us an adequate response. We must not think that staring into the abyss will fill us with such horror as to transform us. Nor is guilt an enduring motive for action. Indeed, we do have human compassion, especially when the crisis is local and specific. Consider the efforts to rescue four whales trapped in the Arctic ice. Or recall the workers at Prince William Sound after the Valdez oil spill, holding otters in their

arms and carefully combing oil from their coats of fur. Yet where do we conjure up hope when the situation is not local and somewhat manageable but is global and overwhelming? And how will our compassion last when it is fed only by fear and anger and grief?

No, it is clear that our compassion will last only as we are fed by a reservoir of compassion and joy that is larger than our own. And we know that reservoir. Our life is grounded in God, and we are fed by a joyful hope rooted in the ongoing creative activity of God among us in sacrificial self-giving and resurrection. It is this urge to life, this breath of God, this "dearest freshness deep down things," this spirit pulsating in and through all living things to which we devote our lives. This is the One in whom together with all creation we live and move and have our being. It is in this stream of God's joyful, indeed playful, love for all creation that we are led and fed to care for an ailing earth.

And it is out of this rootedness in the love of God that we can articulate a vision of what the care of the earth might be. I recently saw a poster that said simply, "Visualize peace." It made me aware how seldom we offer a full-blown vision of a lifegiving future. Rather, we tend to imagine peace in terms of incremental changes in the present realities. But we could use our imaginations to put together a picture of the future, revisioning a whole society devoted to the care of the earth—a sustainable economy, with natural farming, industries which transform their waste into useful products, cooperative efforts to protect the air and water, the careful, efficient, and conservative use of limited resources, a commitment to recycle absolutely everything, the planting of trees, the development of renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, ocean, or geothermal, all born out of deep respect for the beauty and intrinsic worth of the earth.

Such a life-giving vision would provide an alternative wellspring of hope out of which to live rather than simply facing of the worst. Jesus had a vital vision of the future of the human community rooted in God. He did not simply work slowly toward the future with incremental compromises along the way. Rather, he had the courage to act as if the future kingdom of God had arrived full-blown in the present. He had the courage to act unilaterally, often in radical distinction from the culture, when no one else was acting with him. And insofar as Jesus acted as though the kingdom had arrived, it did arrive. Oh, that we might have such courage to live the future in the present! The church is a place to visualize the future. The church is a place to take prophetic actions. The church is a place to experience now a new world in which things are different. The church is a place for transformation.

There are many actions which the church can take, and they are quite concrete. First of all, we can learn about the environment, help each other to face the crisis, and articulate for ourselves a life-giving vision. We can bring this whole problem into the orbit of faith by recognizing that the attachment to our lifestyle is idolatry, the exploitation of the earth is sin, the pollution of the air and water is a defilement, and that the source of our care for creation comes from the creator.

Secondly, we can explore new models for what it means to be Christians—grass roots organizers; ethical partners to business, industry, and the professions; environmental models of a simple and caring lifestyle; advocates for animal and plant rights.

Thirdly, we can develop rituals for transformation. For example, we can pro-

vide confession and forgiveness for our violation of creation. We can lament the extinction of species. We can offer prayers for the lakes and the forests. We can foster a spiritual renewal drawn from the love of the earth.

Fourthly, we can make our parish buildings into models for the care of creation. The idea is to think comprehensively and creatively. In the twenty-first century, what will a church look like that cares about creation? A small group of committed people can do an environmental inventory of the church building. Think about everything coming into your church—paper, plastic, water, electricity, oil, gas, and so on. Then ask how you can limit what goes in by requiring less and by using it more efficiently. How can you prevent anything toxic from coming in? How can you prevent anything from coming in which cannot be either used or recycled? Then look at everything which goes out from your church—examine the waste baskets and the garbage cans—and ask how you can achieve as close to 100 percent recycling and as safe a disposal as possible. If you want to be prophetic you can plant gardens or orchards on church property or invest in wind-power and solar reflectors to provide part of your energy. It may be helpful to have a symbol for your work, such as seeing the parish as a Creation-Awareness Center or as a Green Zone.

> Even with small efforts, we are an important part of a process of regeneration, indeed a process of resurrection.

Finally, the members of the parish can covenant together to do inventories of their homes and make their homes safe for the earth. The church can also serve as a model for local businesses, offices, and other organizations in the community. In addition, you can make information available about environmental issues in your area and support local efforts to recycle and to limit waste.

There are now many programs to assist the local parish. At the ELCA offices, Job Ebenezer will provide a packet of materials to help parishes become "Creation-Awareness Centers" (Phone 1-800-NET-ELCA, ext. 2708). At the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, we have developed a proposal to assist parishes in becoming a "Green Zone" dedicated to regenerating the environment. There are many guidebooks now available on the market. There are also now some consulting firms which will do an environmental inventory and make proposals for change. Synods can assist congregations in fostering care of the earth.

Finally, I enjoin you not to become discouraged. I myself have often been discouraged by the small results of my own efforts. And I used to be puzzled by scientists and environmentalists in the secular world who said they looked to the churches for a grass roots movement that would really make the difference. However, I came to understood it when Stan Hallett, a Chicago environmentalist, told the analogy of Mount St. Helen's. When the volcano blew, it destroyed all animal and plant life for miles around. The whole area was decimated. When the flora and fauna began to

return, here's what happened. First, the moss came back, and the moss created the conditions for the lichen to grow. The lichen returned, and that created the conditions for the shrubbery to grow. The shrubbery returned, and that has created the conditions for the aspen to begin to grow again. And the animal life has returned. All these small efforts we make at the grass roots are like the moss, creating the conditions for greater measures to be taken, which in turn create the conditions for even more extensive changes to take place at the level of corporations and governments. Thus, even with small efforts, we are an important part of a process of regeneration, indeed a process of resurrection, which is taking place among us. And we must be sure to do our part, so that we may once again, this time with feeling and with action, dedicate ourselves to the care and redemption of all that God has made.

"The Pastor's Call"

By Melanie Haack

Servant-Slave
puts heart in hand,
offering up concerns
for our Creation
Doctor Surgeon
cuts through
complacent ears and
word-worn eyes
and says
Listen!
the time is Now,
Then bearing the heavy
weight of crying hearts
and fractured minds
Teacher-Friend
stitches up the wounds
and says
Listen!
to the grace-filled Gift
of ever renewing Life,
Listen!
and continue to listen,
again and again and again,

Only this time
listen through your tears
with your whole Nature,
With eyes anew and
hearts anew and
hands anew,
In solidarity with one another and with
our living sustaining
Creator

[And
the
people
say
Amen.]

Melanie Haack is a senior at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

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Forward to the Past

Homer U. Ashby, Jr.
Professor of Pastoral Care
McCormick Theological Seminary
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A lecture given as part of the joint LSTC & McCormick Martin Luther King, Jr., celebration, January 1991.

Because I came of age in the 1960s, certain values and perspectives have become a part of my basic world view. Even though the values and perspectives have a history that pre-dates the civil rights movement, they really became vital for me during that hopeful, energetic, youthful period of the 60s.

Freedom, equality, and justice: words to be spoken, ends to be achieved. I found myself caught up in the words and the deeds. They moved me from a high school boy, concerned most about who I was going to take to the prom, to a young man who took the first of many bus trips to Washington to protest discrimination and call for the civil rights of all God's children. I and those with whom I marched sought the establishment of an American society where everyone was free, treated equally, and guaranteed equal justice under the law.

I guess you can say it was the naiveté associated with that developmental period in my life, but there were two beliefs I held at the time which I have had to reluctantly give up. The first belief was that the progress being made could continue indefinitely. *Ebony* magazine wouldn't be able to hold all of the achievements of black people. The civil rights movement would continue on and on, and at a pace that would increase with each passing year.

The second belief I held was that there would never be a reversal of previous gains. Once and for all, impediments had been removed. Martin Luther King had taken us to the banks of the River Jordan and pointed out to us the promised land. The only thing left was for us to make the gradual descent into that land of milk and honey. Having crossed the Jordan there would be no going back.

Dr. King had led us all to a place where progress toward freedom, equality, and justice was sure. Civil rights had become law. It was no longer just a nice idea or something that was left up to the individual conscience. Rather, the nation's lawmakers had mandated that the civil rights of all citizens were guaranteed. And the guarantee would be backed by the national government. (I never realized there was a time limit to the Civil Rights Bill of 1964.)

Another sign of the forward march toward freedom, equality, and justice was the increased opportunities for education. In the black community education has always been the royal road to achievement and success. Education has been the one credential that has had the power to open doors and widen horizons. How many

times had we heard our parents say, "Girl, get you an education and make somethin' of yourself," or "Boy, don't you flunk out of school." The revolution around education in the 60s and early 70s was wide-ranging and dramatic. The revolution involved preschoolers in Headstart programs and high school graduates who increasingly filled the ranks of the nation's colleges. In 1964 when I entered college the thirteen blacks in my class doubled the number of blacks on campus. The next year more than double that number matriculated. The drama of increasing numbers of blacks on campuses was not only numerical, but political as well. James Meredith's forced entry into Ole Miss was an example of both educational advancement and governmental support of civil rights. There was no turning back.

Dr. King vigorously fought efforts to finesse the civil rights movement into a black power movement.

Another element in the civil rights movement was the joining together of various groups to form effective coalitions. Dr. King was not concerned just about the emancipation of blacks. Rather, over the course of his life there was an ever increasing circle of concern. Bus riders in Montgomery, housing in Chicago, garbage workers in Memphis, peace in Vietnam. Dr. King linked the struggle of blacks in Montgomery with the urban plight of blacks across the country with the situation of all oppressed people throughout the world. Just as all were detrimentally affected by discrimination and oppression, so, too, all were needed to address the problem. And this rights/peace effort depended upon the development of coalitions among different constituencies. Dr. King worked hard at building and maintaining coalitions. He vigorously fought efforts to finesse the civil rights movement into a black power movement. For him the struggle for freedom could not be successfully accomplished on one's own. A prophet and teacher at all times, Dr. King was often forced to chide and criticize his coalition partners for their inability to keep the issues of freedom, equality, and justice at the forefront. His intent was never to break the coalition, but to strengthen it.

The movement to push forward the agenda of freedom, equality, and justice was structurally encased in programs such as the War on Poverty, Model Cities, Affirmative Action, and Equal Employment Opportunities Commissions. Again there appeared to be an effort to improve the social, financial, and spiritual well-being of persons of color in the society. In light of all of these developments there appeared to be no possibility that the forward progress would slow down, let alone stop or shift into reverse.

However, it is precisely a movement in reverse that is occurring in our society today. The advances of the past twenty years are slowly eroding. Perhaps the most graphic indication is the non-passage of the 1990 Civil Rights Bill. Reluctant to support what he felt were stringent quota requirements, President Bush focused on a minor provision in the bill, and this has opened the door for a renewal of discrimination and denial

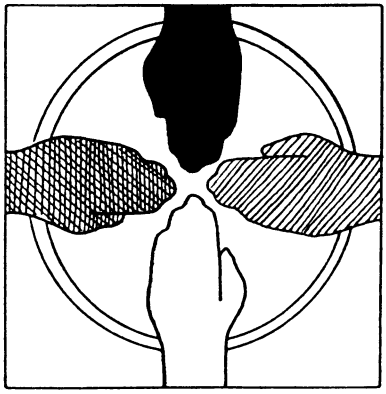
of civil rights to African-Americans, and to the physically challenged, women, and the poor. A recent example of the government's desire to stifle the advancement of minorities was the announcement by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights that they questioned the legality of college scholarships designated specifically for minority students. The ensuing uproar caused the administration to back down from its initial interpretation. However, actions such as these along with Bush's refusal to sign the 1990 Civil Rights Act are signs that the push for advancement is moving backward, not forward.

During the 1980s there was a significant decline in the number of African-Americans on college campuses. The federal government's reduction of funds for financial aid to colleges and secondary schools have made for a one-two punch that has severely crippled the ability of minority students to make it to college and to remain there. Take a "good" school like Kenwood Academy here in Hyde Park [LSTC's neighborhood]. 47 percent of the freshmen who enter do not graduate. And if those who graduate wish to go to college, the funds may not be available. No wonder there are as many African-American men in prison as there are in college. Cut off from the institution of higher education, African American men gravitate to the other two institutions to which they have much more ready access: jail and the military.

In the Gulf War African Americans made up about one third of the troops, but they are only 13 percent of the general population. What Dr. King said 28 years ago is true today: "We were taking the Black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem.... The poor fight and die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population."

But let us say that an African-American student does make it to a college campus. What will he or she find there? In addition to a decreasing pool of people of color, and fewer funds for financial aid, there will be increased instances of racial incidents on campus. From Brown to Berkeley, all across the nation racial slurs, epitaphs, and hate mail are finding their way onto college campuses. These incidents only reflect a larger trend in American society to stereotype and discriminate. A recent national survey by the National Opinion Research Center found that among whites 51 percent thought blacks were less patriotic, 53 percent thought them less intelligent, 56 percent thought them more violence prone, 62 percent thought blacks were more likely than whites to be lazy, and 78 percent thought blacks were more likely than whites to prefer living on welfare. The stereotypes remain. This stereotyping came home to me in my ministry discipline when I found this passage in the President's Communique of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors Newsletter. He writes:

> In the Strategic Plan, the concerns about inclusion are just that kind of difficult issue. On the one side we have the deeply held values of high standards of training and experience upon which our association has been built. The categories which we most often use to assess training and experience are not always those which describe the depth of training and experience of persons coming out of other cultures and religious backgrounds. On a collision course with these are our values of inclusion. We would like to appropriate multi-cultural and multi-racial ideals for our Association. Our struggle to reconcile these conflicting values and to find ways to resolve this will take time and careful, dedicated work.



It's going to take more than time and careful, dedicated work. It's going to take a change in heart. The implication here is that the inclusion of minorities will compromise the high standards of training and experience of the association. Minorities do not wish to enter this association on the basis of low standards. Rather, African-Americans and other minorities ask that issues of cultural difference or variance be taken seriously as positive criteria in the practice of our profession. Statements like this echo the fear that if minorities move in, there goes the neighborhood.

Fundamentally the retreat to the past represents a fear of moving ahead into the future. More precisely, the return to the past reflects a fear of what the future can bring. Martin had made it to the mountain top. He could see the promising future laid out beyond the Jordan. However, we as a people, although we will get to the promised land someday, are still in the wilderness. The freedom, justice, and equality we seek have a price. It will not be easy to acquire what we desire. In order for us all to be free there must be some constraints that we must all be willing to endure. To give voice to others requires that we at times must be silent. To allow people to be who they are we must give up what we want them to be in order to accept them for who they are. Freedom is always relationally relative. The same is true for justice and equality. The burning issue for us today is no longer fighting injustice, but trying to interpret whose justice merits our greater allegiance. We are engaged in a war now [January 1991] where this issue lies at the heart of our struggle as a nation. Is this a just war? Yes and no. Some action to stop aggression is necessary. Was war our best and only option? Equality means seeing others as different, but the same. Instead we seem caught in the trap of wanting to see others as different and less than. Somehow we have got to get out of the mindset that my worth is enhanced by my ability to put others in a more negative light. What do we fear in the future? We fear limits, we fear complex ambiguity, and we fear becoming different than we are.

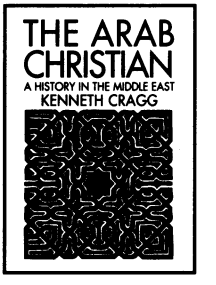
So here we are lost in the wilderness, murmuring about how we do not like where we are and wishing to return to Egypt. There is not enough bread to go around, and so we try to deal with our scarcity by denying food to one another. There really isn't any scarcity. Some have too much; the community spends its money on other things; in our minds and hearts we manufacture abundance and famine. There really *is* enough to go around. There are not clear answers to the complex issues of today, and so we precipitously turn to idols to make things simple and plain—idols like war, violence, hatred. In the past these seemed to provide easy solutions, though in reality they blotted out the difficult struggle to do what was right. Still we want to return to Egypt because there we had a clear identity. The future makes our identity less clear.

We find ourselves encountering different cultures, different perspectives, different customs, and as we come together we find that which made us who we are is being lost. Yet while the future holds dangers which we may want to avoid, the future also holds prophets like Dr. King who gave us reassurance about the future to come. Moving forward toward that prior dream is an endeavor I think we must undertake. For there is a dream that is full of promise and hope, not fear and loss. If we can hold fast to the concept of a promised hopeful future, then we can enter that future and all of the abundant life it will deliver. But if we retreat in order to spare ourselves the difficulties associated with claiming that future, then there will be no future for any of us.

I will end with words from my favorite reformer, Martin Bucer (1491-1551). I quote him in this context because of his historical importance in trying to reconcile Luther and Calvin, and also because his words express what I have been trying to say about what it means to live into the future: "It is clear that no one should live for him or herself, because God created all things so that they might contribute not to their own good but to that of others, and be an instrument and evidence of the divine goodness which all things should express and spread forth."

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The Challenge of Hispanic Ministry

(Reflections on John 4)[1]

José David Rodríguez
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Recently, William Muñiz-Rocha concluded that when dealing with Hispanics the church is far from following Paul's exhortation to the Galatians, that in Christ there is no discrimination between Greek or Jew, slave or free, man or woman (3:28). It is evident, the author noted, that for some inexplicable reason, the Executive Denominational Staff sees those of us who come from Latin America as not only having a second class status and poor education, but also as having the moral responsibility to appreciate with eternal gratitude the compassionate work the denominations have offered us.[2]

This article indicates, with clarity and eloquence, the presence of barriers negatively affecting the efforts to strengthen and expand Hispanic ministry in the U.S. and the Caribbean. Usually these barriers are based on stereotypes. Unfortunately, this condition of prejudice is perpetuated for a lack of a collective action to change it. This situation should lead us believers to reconsider our values, attitudes, and actions in light of God's will. The Bible, which points to God's acts of redemption in the past and helps us become aware of this active presence of God in the present, should guide us in these efforts.

The encounter of Jesus with a woman of Samaria in his journey to Galilee (Jn 4:5-30) presents us with valuable insights that may help us respond to some of the problems that presently challenge our efforts to strengthen and to develop Hispanic ministry in the U.S. and the Caribbean. I don't pretend to exhaust all possible insights contained in this passage. My main goal is to stimulate a mutually critical and constructive reading of this text and produce a more effective response to the diversity and complexity of the problems actually present in this ministry.

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[1]This was first given as an address to the 1989 Human Relations Institute at Carrol College, July 1989.

[2] William Muñiz-Rocha, "Si hay Judíos y griegos, esclavos y libres," in *Apuntes* 4 (Winter 1988): 88-91.

Jesus and the Samaritan woman

In Jn 4:1-4, the writer tells us that Jesus, in order to avoid a controversy with the Pharisees on the issue of baptism, decided to leave Judea to go to Galilee. At that time, the fastest route to Galilee was crossing through Samaria. This trip took usually three days. The alternative route was to cross the Jordan river, go up the eastern side of the river, recross the Jordan north of Samaria, and then enter Galilee. This route was twice as long.

On the way through Samaria Jesus and his disciples came to the town of Sychar. Weary from traveling, Jesus sat down to rest at the well of Jacob. It was midday, so the heat was at its greatest and Jesus was tired and thirsty from his journey. His disciples went on ahead to buy some food in the Samaritan town.

As Jesus sat there, a Samaritan woman came to the well. Jesus asked her to give him a drink. She was taken by surprise, for his accent and clothing revealed his Jewish identity, and there was a centuries-old feud between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus shared with her the good news of the imminent presence of God's reign. In her enthusiasm she left immediately to inform others of her encounter with the Messiah. The people's response to her witness was so positive that they asked Jesus to prolong his stay in Samaria, increasing the number of his followers.

The meaning of the story

This passage is a valuable resource to lead us in a careful reflection on those problems in our ministry that, whether conscious or unconscious, are a direct consequence of values, attitudes, and actions based on prejudices and/or dehumanizing stereotypes. Jesus broke down human barriers that hindered the reception and expansion of God's reign among the various people of his time.

The first barrier was ethnic and religious prejudice. The quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans had been long and bitter. The Jews despised the Samaritans, for they had lost their racial purity. About 721 B.C.E. the Assyrians had invaded the Northern Kingdom and subjugated it. They transported a large part of the population to another sector of the empire (2 Kgs 17:6) and brought foreigners to settle the conquered land (2 Kgs 17:24). Those who remained in the Northern Kingdom began to intermarry with the incoming foreigners and lost many of their customs and cultural identity.

The Jewish contempt for the Samaritans also had a religious nature. The Samaritans recognized only the Pentateuch as canonical and constructed a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. This Jewish-Samaritan controversy continued during Jesus' time. For these reasons it was no wonder that the Samaritan woman was astonished when Jesus, a Jew, spoke to her, a Samaritan. Jesus was breaking through the barriers of nationality and Jewish religious customs.

The second barrier mentioned in the text is gender. The customs of the time took for granted the inferior status of women in society. They were viewed as means to an end, instruments or things, rather than as human beings with the same status as their male counterparts. Some rabbis would not even speak to their own wife, daughter, or sister in public. There were even Pharisees who were called "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees" because they shut their eyes when they saw a woman on the street and so walked into walls and houses! For a rabbi like Jesus to be seen speaking to a woman in public was the end of his reputation—and yet Jesus spoke to this woman.

The third barrier alluded to in this passage has to do with morality. The Samaritan was a woman of notorious character. No decent man, let alone a rabbi, would have been seen in her company or even exchange a word with her, and yet Jesus spoke to her. More than that, in his dialogue with this woman Jesus made available to her the opportunity to participate in the reign that he came to establish.

In the prophetic vision of the age to come, it was God who was the origin of the living fountain of the all-quenching water (Jer 17:13; Ps 36:9; Rev 22:1). The woman of Samaria believed these promises. When Jesus assured her of participation in this God-given reality, she rushed out to share this experience with others.

Reading the story today

It is very common in studying this biblical text to focus on the sinful life of the Samaritan woman, who had had five husbands and was now living with a man who was not her husband. Such study ends up becoming an exhortation against sexual sins, especially as they are evidenced by women. In fact, John Calvin, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, readily lays all responsibility to the Samaritan woman for being such a forward and disobedient wife, constraining her husbands to divorce her, and continuing her sinfulness by prostituting herself through fornication.[3]

A more careful examination of this passage helps us notice that only three verses out of thirty are devoted to the marital status of the woman. The larger part of the text relates to us her theological conversation with Jesus, her familiarity with Jewish religious teachings, her enthusiasm after receiving Jesus' message, and the effect of her witness on the people in her city.[4]

This story confronts us with the challenge placed before us by the gospel. Here we are being challenged by what Paul calls the power and scandal of God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 1). Here we see Jesus deliberately making of this human being, who had three strikes against her—being a woman, a Samaritan, and a sinner—a person useful for proclaiming the gospel. Jesus intentionally broke through barriers imposed by culture and religion to show that she who was a Samaritan and a sinner could still be an excellent witness to the good news of God's reign among us.

Jesus affirmed women and those who traditionally come from the marginalized sectors of society in ways his contemporaries and later followers still have not been able to fully recognize. Jesus' purpose was to break down human barriers based on prejudice and imposed by society, culture, and religion and to make way for the emergence of a new reality based on God's gracious loving mercy.

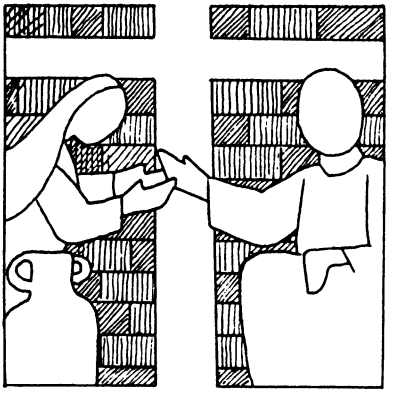
Reading the Bible in Spanish

Following the proposal of Dr. Justo L. González, I want to make a reading of this text "in Spanish." González's reference to a "reading of the Bible in Spanish" is not a chauvinistic appeal for Hispanics to do away with serious biblical research based on the historical critical method. Nor does he mean reading it in a Spanish translation.

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[3] I became familiarized with this fact by reading Rachel C. Wahlberg's book, *Jesus According to a Woman* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1975), 87. See also John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 1, trans. by William Pringle (Eerdmans, 1956), 153.

[4] Wahlberg, *Jesus According to a Woman*, 88.



What he means is much more than that. His suggestion is to take seriously an emphasis that has always been a character trait of the Protestant tradition: making the Bible available to the people in their vernacular.[5]

It is common to think that the goal of this approach was to give people access to something previously reserved for scholars. But there is a more significant and profound dimension to this process. When the Bible becomes a resource accessible to the people, and the people discover in the Bible their own particular perspective, then the Bible becomes the people's book, that is, a subversive book no longer under the control of the dominant groups of society.

> This is what I mean by "reading the Bible in Spanish": a reading which begins with the realization that the Bible is a political book; a reading in the "vernacular," not only in the cultural, linguistic sense, but also in the socio-political sense.[6]

The point of departure of such reading, in contrast to the one characteristic of the dominant culture, is to read Scripture as presenting a history of the people of God "beyond innocence," that is, to view biblical history as "responsible remembrance" leading to "responsible action." The Bible's main characters are presented as human beings struggling with ambiguities similar to the ones we confront daily.

Scripture's only real heroes are the God of history and history itself, which somehow continues moving forward in spite of the failure of its great protagonists. Since this is also the nature of Hispanic history,[7] it may well be that on this score we have a hermeneutical advantage over those whose history is still at the level of defensive innocence, and who therefore must read Scripture in the same way in which they read their own history, as a justification of their privileges and interests. Furthermore, if it is true that our perspective is closer to that of the protagonists in the Bible, we can bring a particular perspective to history and to the interpretation of the Bible that will prove useful, not only to us, but also to the church at large.

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[5] Justo L. González, "Reading the Bible in Spanish," in *Apuntes* (Summer 1989): 39-45.

[6] González, "Reading the Bible in Spanish," 45.

[7] "We know that we were born out of an act of violence of cosmic proportions in which our Spanish forefathers raped our Indian foremothers. We have no skeletons in our closet. Our skeletons are at the very heart of our history and our reality as a people. Therefore, we are comforted when we read the genealogy of Jesus, and find there, not only a Gentile like ourselves, but also an incest, and what amounts to David's rape of Bathsheba. The Gospel writer did not hide the skeletons in Jesus' closet, but listed them, so that we may know that the Savior has really come to be one of us—not just one of the high and the mighty, the aristocratic with impeccable blood lines, but one of us." González, "Reading the Bible in Spanish," 41.

Contemporary barriers

I will limit my concern in this final section to what I consider to be three important contemporary barriers to the witness of Lutheranism in America, particularly as it relates to ministry among and with traditionally under-represented communities. The first of these barriers relates to the overwhelming stress given to the European culture in all its manifestations, alongside the conscious or unconscious disregard of cultural expressions originating from traditionally marginalized groups.

The Lutheran tradition—not to mention Christianity as a whole—has always found in culture a valuable resource for developing a more authentic understanding of and witness to the gospel. When European Lutherans migrated to America they brought with them their pastors, their Bibles, their languages, and the customs and traditions of their own land, establishing colonies which even today, after several generations, preserve in their worship and other religious manifestations a strong flavor of their original cultural traditions. Lutheranism became so identified with the dominant European culture that it was sometimes equated with assimilation to the values and preferences of this culture.[8] The cultural expressions of Native Americans and other ethnic groups living in America were and still are unable to play a significant role in enriching this religious tradition.

It seems to be part of the sinful condition of humanity that we continually seek to erect barriers between one another. And even worse, we try to affirm ourselves by stepping upon others and even destroying them so that we might advance. Domination rather than mutuality seems to be the rule in humanity's quest for happiness. Brothers and sisters, families, clans, nations, and races are posed one against the other. As one gets into power, barriers of all types are built up so that others will not get in.[9]

The challenge presented to Lutheranism is to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the present. The evangelical understanding of justification by grace through faith should lead us to commit ourselves, both in word and deed, to the incarnation of the gospel in changing historical contexts and diverse cultural situations. Faithfulness to this call in the pluralistic context of the United States and the Caribbean requires that we enrich one another through our differences. Witness to the continuing saving work of God in the world challenges us to break down the barriers of gender, language, race, age, and class that have been built by humanity to separate nations, races, and families from one another. While the ministry and mission of the church are ultimately dependent on God's power, we are invited to participate today in God's creating, redeeming, and transforming experience by ushering in a new reality, a new way of relating as children of the same God, as brothers and sisters of one another.

The second barrier that we have to struggle to bring down today has to do with leadership styles developed by many of our brothers and sisters who, like myself, presently hold positions of power and/or influence. While we have come a long way from the time when members of traditionally under-represented communities were totally absent from the structures of power,

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[8] For an example of how this trend was experienced in the mission fields see José D. Rodríguez, "Lessons for the Church," in *The Lutheran* (September 1986), 11.

[9] Virgil Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo* (Bloomington: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988), 81.

It seems to be part of the sinful condition of humanity that we continually seek to erect barriers between one another.

we still have a long way to go to reach the time when those who are part of the power structure, even when they come from traditionally under-represented communities, can lead without domination.

Power can corrupt, and more power can corrupt even more. We have to realize that no one is exempt from the temptation of using others for personal advancement. Let's remind ourselves that gender, language, race, age, class, or any other element is not in itself an indelible mark of righteousness. Righteousness comes from God through Christ, who graciously and lovingly urges our commitment to the struggles of those who because of their gender, language, race, age, class, or any other reason are subjected to injustice, prejudice, and oppression. It will be good for us to remember that when the disciples were discussing with one another who was the greatest among them, Jesus broke into their conversation to say, "if anyone wants to be first, that someone must be the last of all, and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). Service, not rank or privilege, is the mark of greatness.

Finally, the third barrier we need to break down is the tendency to divorce our faith from our personal and public witness to the faith, the faith that we hold so dearly. Here again, the story of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman is significant. In two of Luther's sermons on this passage he places a special emphasis on God's initiative to become available in our lives in unexpected ways.[10] In one of his sermons Luther stresses that it is precisely a woman from Samaria who, in her dialogue with Jesus at Jacob's well, recognizes God's presence and is ready to share food and drink in response to the needs of the Messiah. With a reference to Matthew 25, Luther makes clear the relation that needs to be established between the doctrine of justification by grace through faith and the active, concrete witness of the believer:

> God says: "I do not choose to come to you in My majesty and in the company of angels but in the guise of a poor beggar asking for bread...." Christ says: "If I suffer hunger or thirst in the person of My apostle or of any Christian, yes, of a Christian child or of any person poor and in want, and you are aware of this situation, you are truly an archmiser if you close your eyes to this. I want you to know that I am the one who is suffering hunger and thirst. If you feed this person, you are feeding Me; if you let [this person] thirst, it is I whom you are permitting to perish of thirst."[11]

What are we doing for our brothers and sisters in need? Why can't our faith lead us to recognize the presence of God in these people and respond to their needs? If God's presence among us is like that of a stranger,

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[10] The four sermons on John 4 were given during the course of 1540. Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," in *Luther's Works* 22 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1957): ix-xi.

[11] Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," 520.

faith should lead us to recognize God in these strangers and to respond readily with our resources to their needs.

We need to be constantly reminded that out of the suffering, divided and segregated society of his time, Jesus ushered in a new reality and proclaimed the dream "that all may be one" (Jn 17:21). Since Jesus knew how shocking the socio-political implications of the gospel would be to his followers, he promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to give them understanding and assist them in carrying out their call to witness to the gospel. While Jesus died for that dream, yet on the morning of Pentecost, stirred by the powerful event of the resurrection, the dream began to be realized—and many diverse people were able to experience a new family unity that transcended the old barriers that had kept them apart (Acts 2:1-42). Those who bear testimony to this event, both then and now, become witnesses of a faith active in love that breaks down those barriers that prevent us from responding adequately to the gospel. The Latin American writer Nicolás Guillén exemplifies this witness of faith today in his poem "La Muralla":

> To build this wall bring me all your hands
> Blacks, their black hands, Whites, their white hands
> yes, a wall that goes from the beach to the mountains,
> from the mountains to the beach, reaching beyond the horizon.[12]

The erection of this wall built out of human hands, rather than fostering more divisions among people, will stand as a contribution towards the unity of humankind. This unity among human beings will allow us to struggle more effectively against those evils that affect us all, evils that erode our more fundamental values, and that deteriorate our humanity and the humanity of those who fall victims of our actions.

> Knock, knock! Who is it?—a rose and a carnation...
> Bring down the wall!
> Knock, knock! Who is it?—The sword of the soldier...
> Raise up the wall!
> ¡Tun, tun! Who is it?—The dove and the laurel wreath...
> Bring down the wall!
> ¡Tun, tun! ¿Quién es?—The scorpion and the centipede...
> Raise up the wall!
>
> Al corazón del amigo, ¡Abre la muralla! To poison and the dagger, ¡Cierra la muralla! To healing herbs and teas, ¡Abra la muralla! to the bite of the serpent, ¡Cierra la muralla! To the humming bird in the flower, ¡Abra la muralla!
>
> Alcemos una muralla juntando todas las manos, los negros sus manos negras, los blancos sus blancas manos. Una muralla que vaya desde la playa hasta el monte, desde el monte hasta la playa, bien, allá sobre el horizonte.

Lutherans are a confessional movement within the church catholic. As the people of God in the world, the church is called to continue God's work of redemption in its ministry and mission. This is our belief and hope; it is also an invitation to action for all who take this confession seriously.

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[12]This is a free translation by the author of Nicolás Guillén's poem. Nicolás Guillén, *La Paloma de Vuelo Popular* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Lozada, 1958), 21-22.

A Latvian Perspective on Liberation Theology

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On May 4, 1990, the newly elected Latvian parliament acted to restore the independence of the Republic of Latvia, which had been violated by the Soviet occupation during World War II. The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church (LELC) has been involved in the independence movement since the movement's inception several years ago. In the March 18, 1990, issue of *Sunday Morning*, the official newspaper of the Lutheran Church of Latvia, the Latvian Archbishop, Karlis Gailitis, characterized the church's relationship to this struggle as follows:

> We are living at a time of national spiritual renewal, when all are looking for a way out of crisis—whether the crisis be economic, ecological, or even spiritual. Although I know that the church does not have a monopoly on spirituality, I would like to say that without God and faith in God our path toward independence will be in vain. The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church is with the Latvian people on this road toward the much longed-for goal—a free and independent Latvia.[1]

The present situation of political upheaval presents a theological challenge to the Latvian church. How is the church to interpret its stand in the Latvian liberation struggle? In fact, a Latvian "second world" liberation theology might benefit from some of the chief insights offered by third world liberation theology. It would also differ from Latin American liberation theology in some important ways. Concepts such as 1) the adoption of praxis as the point of departure for doing theology, 2) the use of biblical themes that speak God's liberating word to situations of oppression, and 3) the formulation of a theology in which the relationship between divine and human liberating action is acknowledged and articulated, would be relevant to doing theology in the Latvian situation. On the other hand, the use of Marxist philosophy, such as that found in Gustavo Gutierrez's book, *A Theology of Liberation*, to analyze the present situation and to prescribe political solutions to this situation, would be problematic in the Latvian situation. Instead, a Latvian liberation theology could look to Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism for both an understanding of the present situation of

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[1] Karlis Gailitis, "On the Way Toward an Independent Latvian State," *Svetdienas Rits* [Sunday Morning] (March 18, 1990), 2.

oppression and for an approach to political solutions.

Latin American liberation theologians insist that the departure point for doing theology is praxis. That is to say, theological thinking must begin with an analysis of the circumstances in which a Christian community finds itself. Gutierrez writes:

> In the underdeveloped countries one starts with a rejection of the existing situation, considered as fundamentally unjust and dehumanizing. Although this is a negative vision, it is nevertheless the only one which allows us to go to the root of the problems and to create without compromises a new social order, based on justice and brotherhood. This rejection does not produce an escapist attitude, but rather a will to revolution.[2]

Like Christians in Latin America, Lutherans in Latvia must reject the "fundamentally unjust" and "dehumanizing" situation in which they find themselves. Latvia, along with its neighbors Estonia and Lithuania, was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union during World War II as the result of a secret agreement between Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Political, religious, ethnic, and economic oppression have followed as a result of the Soviet occupation. Politically speaking, the Latvian people have for forty years had virtually no say in the government of their country. Until March 1989 there were no contested elections in Latvia, and even the March elections were far from democratic in the Western sense. Where religion is concerned, the "Law on Religious Associations" still limits the work of the church exclusively to worship services in designated church buildings—all other religious activity is illegal. Many church buildings have been demolished, while others have been "converted" into concert halls and museums. In the economic arena, a planned program of forced industrialization initiated by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin has caused a massive influx of non-Latvian labor into Latvia. This has resulted in ethnic discrimination against Latvians in the area of housing, the reduction of Latvians to less than 50 percent of the population in their own land, and extensive degradation of the environment. After 40 years of silence, changes in the political climate have enabled the Latvian people to name their situation of oppression. The newspapers published by opposition groups are uncovering and publicizing the dire results of forty years of political, religious, ethnic, and economic oppression. Opposition groups such as the Latvian Popular Front and the Latvian National Independence Movement are calling for full political independence for Latvia. Archbishop Gailitis has declared that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia supports the political goals of self-determination and independence.

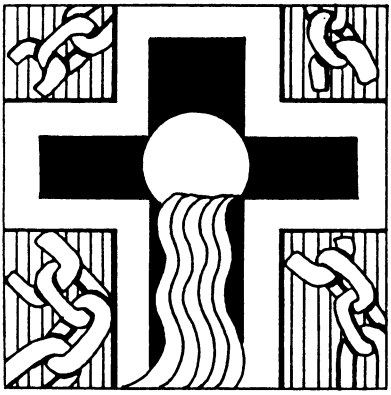
What biblical themes could Latvian Lutherans draw on to clarify their support of Latvian demands for independence? Gutierrez develops two biblical themes of liberation which would seem to me to be particularly relevant to the Latvian struggle—the theme of God's liberation of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt, and the theme of Christ's liberation of humanity from bondage to sin. Gutierrez regards the Exodus not solely as a religious event, but as a "historic-salvific fact," a "political liberation through which Yahweh expresses his love for his people."[3] In

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[2] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 174.

[3] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 156-57.

the book of Exodus it is written: "I [God] have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey..." (Ex 3:7-8). God sees Israel's situation of oppression, and this oppression is clearly political oppression. Similarly, God's deliverance of Israel is clearly political deliverance, which takes the form of the gift of a land where the people of Israel can shape their own destiny. In the Latvian case, the Lutheran church also sees liberation in terms of political deliverance from oppression. As mentioned above, Lutherans support efforts aimed at Latvian self-determination and independence.



Gutierrez believes political liberation to be encompassed not only in the Exodus event, but in the salvific work of Christ as well. A broad definition of sin makes this interpretation possible: "Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood and love in relationships among men, the breach of friendship with God and with other men, and therefore, an interior, personal fracture" (p. 175). Sin, understood in this way, "demands a radical liberation, which in turn necessarily implies a political liberation" (p. 176). Thus political liberation is implicit for Gutierrez in the liberation from sin that Christ accomplished for human beings through his death on the cross. In the Latvian situation, political liberation will be liberation from various expressions of sin. In particular, political liberation would bring about freedom from the perpetual compromise of personal integrity that is demanded under ideological tyranny. Under Soviet domination, Latvian history books have been subject to blatant falsification. From the very earliest grades, children learned from their history books and repeated on their examinations that a spontaneous workers' revolution happened in Latvia in 1940, and that the Latvian parliament voted to petition the Soviet Union for admission to the Union, a request the Soviet Union magnanimously granted. In actual fact, Latvia was invaded by Soviet troops in 1940 and the parliamentary vote was taken under the presence of a military occupation. It will take political liberation to guarantee Latvians freedom from this type of ideological slavery, which is a manifestation of sin.

Given the situation of oppression and God's promise of liberation from that oppression, how does liberation theology see the role of human beings in a particular struggle for liberation? According to Gutierrez's theology, there is a connection between divine and human liberating action. Liberating historical events, such as the Exodus, are to be understood as a part of Christ's work of redemption:

> Without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom. But the process of liberation will not have conquered the very roots of

> oppression and the exploitation of man by man without the coming of the Kingdom, which is above all a gift. Moreover, we can say that the historical, political liberating event *is* the growth of the Kingdom and *is* a salvific event; but it is not *the* coming of the Kingdom, not *all* of salvation. (p. 177)

According to Gutierrez's reasoning, it could be argued that the present liberation struggle in Latvia is a liberating historical event, and is part of the growth of the Kingdom. How does the Latvian Lutheran Church see its role in this liberating event? Lutheran clergy have supported the work of the Latvian Popular Front and the Latvian National Independence movement since the inception of these movements. Before the Popular Front had its own newspaper, information that the Front wished published was read from Lutheran pulpits all over the country. Lutheran church buildings are used for activities sponsored by the Popular Front or related opposition groups.

Gustavo Gutierrez goes beyond offering a biblical and theological justification for the involvement of Christians in liberation struggles. He proposes a political solution to the situation in Latin America which rests on a Marxist economic analysis. He writes:

> There is one characteristic in particular which holds a central place: the division of humanity into oppressors and oppressed, into owners of the means of production and those dispossessed of the fruit of their work, into antagonistic social classes. But this is not all, the division brings with it confrontations, struggles, violence. (p. 273)

Thus the fundamental problem with Latin American economics, according to Gutierrez, is that the social class owning the means of production oppresses the other class, which does not own the means of production. Any change in this situation will involve class struggle, and Gutierrez argues that Christians need to be politically involved in this struggle. He writes that "class struggle is a fact, and neutrality in this matter is impossible" (p. 273).

The problem with Gutierrez's analysis is that it is extremely vague. Though he does not explicitly say so, Gutierrez appears to denounce categorically the evils of private property and to advocate unconditionally the benefits of collective or state ownership of property. While the dangers of private property ownership are painfully clear in Latin America, the oppressive situation in Latvia is a glaring example of the dangers of state property ownership.

When Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union, virtually all sectors of the economy were placed under state control. Theoretically, this means that the people are now owners of the means of production. In reality, however, they are employees of the state, which has full control of the means of production and furthermore is accountable to no one, least of all the workers. In theory, the workers are now able to benefit from the fruits of their labor; in practice, wages are low and the standard of living is rapidly deteriorating. In theory, workers are no longer alienated from their work; in practice, since individual incentive is not rewarded, there is little to motivate people to work. Productivity is low and absenteeism high. While the workers live in poverty, however, the managers of the state-run enterprises, who are members of the Communist Party, enjoy substantial economic privileges. These privileges include preferential treatment with respect to housing and access to scarce consumer goods through stores which are open only to party members. Lately, the opposition press in Latvia has begun to refer to this privileged class of managers and bureaucrats as the "partyocracy."

Gutierrez goes beyond offering a biblical and theological justification for the involvement of Christians in liberation struggles.

Clearly, there are dangers inherent both in private ownership of property as well as in state ownership. Whereas the oppressed class in Latin America needs to struggle to wrest control over the means of production from the hands of private property owners. The oppressed in Latvia will need to struggle to wrest property ownership from the state.

In his book *Children of Light and Children of Darkness*, Reinhold Niebuhr provides a succinct analysis of the dangers of both private and collective property ownership. His analysis of these dangers is based on his assessment of human nature, in particular, human sinfulness. Niebuhr posits that human beings experience a constant inward struggle between altruism and self-interest, or, in his words, a "will-to-live-truly" and a "will-to-power." History, he says, bears witness to the fact that the "will-to-power" often wins out in this struggle.[4]

Property, according to Niebuhr, must be understood as a "form of power which can be used in either its individual or its social form as an instrument of particular interest against the general interest" (p. 106). Neither private ownership of property nor its collective ownership is immune to misuse of power. "Bourgeois property theory has no safeguard against the power of individual property; and Marxist theory has no protection against the excessive power of those who manipulate a socialized economic process or who combine the control of both the economic and the political process" (pp. 112-13).

Niebuhr argues that economic and political theory must take human sinfulness into account. With respect to ownership of property, he suggests that society must strive to maintain a balance between private and collective property ownership. "The property issue must... be continually solved within the framework of the democratic process" (p. 115). A balance, he concludes, can be achieved only through a democratic political framework, because a democratic framework can place and enforce restraints both on individual and on state power. "Democracy is a method of finding proximate solutions for insoluble problems," Niebuhr concludes (p. 118).

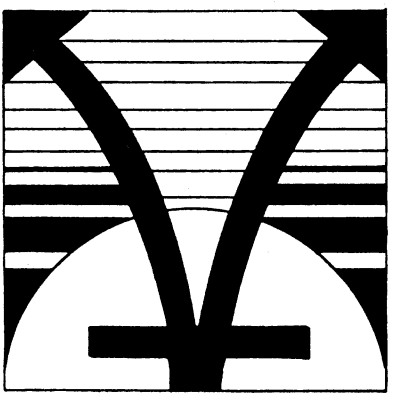
As the Latvian people struggle to liberate themselves from foreign oppression, the Lutheran church can strengthen its people with liberation theology's insight that human liberating events are part of the coming of God's kingdom. When Latvians achieve liberation and begin to build a new social order, the Lutheran church can caution its people with Reinhold Niebuhr's insistence that human sinfulness must be taken into account as new political structures are instituted.

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[4] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), 21-22.

Dynamics of Polarization: North American Critics Versus Liberation Theology

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No theological movement has in recent years evoked such strong reactions as liberation theology. Not since the debate over "death of God" theology have positions among theologians and within the church been so severely polarized. A survey of the North American literature in response to Latin American liberation theology reveals a sharply divided opinion about its merits and liabilities.[1] This essay will examine several major factors contributing to the argument between liberation theology and its critics. Where the polarization of positions has led to an impasse, where further discussion has been rendered virtually impossible, a way to reopen the dialogue will be proposed.

[1] Cf. Craig L. Nessan, *Orthopraxis or Heresy: The North American Theological Response to Latin American Liberation Theology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), chapters 3 and 4.

Threat of innovation

At the time of its earliest arrival in North America, bold claims were made for liberation theology both by Latin American proponents and North American sympathizers. Such claims set forth the uniqueness of liberation theology's method (i.e., "a new way of doing theology"), declared its significance for the church worldwide, and even designated liberation theology as a "prophetic" movement. Such extraordinary claims were met with skepticism by many North American theologians. While every form of innovation meets with resistance from those holding a well-established position, this reaction was exaggerated from the very start by the magnitude of the claims made for liberation theology.

Criticism of Western academic theology

Liberation theology has been extremely critical of what it understands to be the deficiencies of Western "academic" theology. Where most modern theology has originated in Europe, liberation theology insists on the particularity of the Latin American context for its position. Insofar as Western theology has become an academic discipline exercised by and for a professional elite, liberation theology would attend to the meaning of God for poor people living in deprivation in the cities and on the land of Latin America. Where Western academic theology values an objective, unbiased methodology in addressing questions of intellectual interest, liberation theology insists on a method which is impassioned and partial on behalf of a praxis to reduce human suffering and promote justice.

Those who have invested their lives in the pursuit of an intellectually responsible academic theology with its appropriate methods and modes of reflection can point to a long and respected tradition for their discipline.[2] To them this criticism by liberation theology appears not only presumptuous but misguided in neglecting to appreciate the challenge which modern thought has presented to the very notion of God. Academic theology has been required in order to defend the very intelligibility of continuing to speak of God in the modern world.

Liberation theology's critique of academic theology has been further exacerbated by charging academic theologians themselves with providing the ideological framework by which an unjust international social order has been maintained. This criticism, derived from the sociology of knowledge, has set the stage for heated polemic.

Rejecting the tenets of American civil religion

Liberation theology has been unflinching in its criticism of the United States for economic, political, and military policies in support of authoritarian regimes unresponsive to the needs of the poor. This criticism, combined with liberation theology's use of certain Marxist categories (particularly that of class conflict) and its advocacy of socialism, stirs up an anti-communist sentiment which has deep roots in the American psyche.

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[2] Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), esp. 228-296, and Gerhard Ebeling, *The Study of Theology*, trans. Duane Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

Liberation theology has raised a direct and aggressive challenge to the legitimacy of the tenets of American civil religion.

Liberation theology has been radically iconoclastic in attacking the most cherished tenets of American civil religion.[3] Sociologist Robert Bellah has identified as an integral element of civil religion what he calls "the American taboo on socialism."[4] The connotations of "socialism" in American culture include images of the "foreign" and "alien"; of "collectivism" as opposed to the valued individualism of American belief; and of the atheistic and "anti-religious." Such a taboo on socialism was intensified during the decade of the eighties by the prominence of the main themes of American civil religion under the influence of the New Right.[5]

Liberation theology's use of Marxist categories and advocacy of socialism for the future of Latin America confronts and challenges this American taboo. By its criticism of the U.S. role in contributing to social injustice in Latin America, it further assaults other basic tenets of American civil religion: that a unique covenant exists between God and America; that America is the "New Israel," the "Chosen People," the "Promised Land," the "New Jerusalem";[6] that America is a "redeemer nation,"[7] a "beacon of light" to the poor; that America is beyond evil in the goodness of its purpose.[8] The central assertion of liberation theology that God sides with the Latin American poor clashes with the assertion of civil religion that America is God's chosen people. Liberation theology's charge of American culpability for Latin American poverty contradicts civil religion's affirmation of American virtue. Not only does liberation theology question America's privileged place in the divine scheme of things, but it dares to propose that God, in being partial to the poor, is against the policies of the United States. What is more, liberation theology dares to make its case with biblical arguments! For American civil religion, this is nothing other than heresy.

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[3] For an excellent summary of recent research on civil religion, see Andrew L. Pratt, "Religious Faith and Civil Religion: American Evangelicalism and the Vietnam War, 1964-1973," Ph.D. dissertation (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), 30-51.

[4] Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 112-38.

[5] Cf. Paul Johnson, "The Almost-Chosen People: Why America is Different," First Annual Erasmus Lecture (Rockford: The Rockford Institute, 1985), 11-12.

[6] Cf. Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," Chapter 9 in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 168-89.

[7] Cf. Ernest Lee Tvveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

[8] Robert N. Bellah, "Evil and the American Ethos," in Nevitt Stanford and Craig Comstalk, eds., *Sanctions for Evil* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971), 184-87.

Liberation theology has raised a direct and aggressive challenge to the legitimacy of the tenets of American civil religion in a time when belief in these tenets has regained a high level of credibility in American society. Those theologians committed to the positive value of religion in providing a "sacred canopy" over American society have been most rigorous in their opposition to liberation theology.[9]

Rival trajectories

Walter Brueggemann has argued that two trajectories of covenant tradition are prominent in the Old Testament, the Mosaic and the Davidic.[10] While the Bible presents itself as one unified tradition, "critical scholarship, however, has now made it reasonable to assume that these two articulations of covenant are not only distinct but also came from very different centers of power and very different processes of tradition building."[11] The first of these trajectories, the Mosaic:

> tends to be a movement of protest which is situated among the disinherited and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who intrudes, even against seemingly impenetrable institutions and orderings. On the other hand, the Davidic tradition tends to be a movement of consolidation which is situated among the established and secure and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who faithfully abides and sustains on behalf of the present ordering.[12]

Brueggemann proceeds to label these two distinct trajectories the "liberation trajectory" and the "royal trajectory," respectively.

Could a large portion of the debate for and against liberation theology be rooted in the differing biblical trajectories to which theologians appeal? Brueggemann himself suggests that this is the case by citing the differences between process hermeneutics and liberation hermeneutics. Liberation theology does appeal to a definite biblical trajectory running from the Exodus through the seventh and eighth century Hebrew prophets to the stress on the kingdom of God by Jesus. The critics of liberation theology have frequently appealed to a theology of creation consistent with the royal trajectory in their defense of established institutions.[13]

What is of particular importance is the recognition of how social location affected the development of the biblical tradition itself. The current polarization between a theology with royalist tendencies and liberation theology can be understood to be as old as the Old Testament traditions themselves. Contemporary theological rivals can each call upon a significant biblical trajectory to buttress their arguments. It does not suffice therefore to dismiss either the current defenders of the royal trajectory

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[9] The term "sacred canopy" is that of Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1969). An elaborate defense of the idea that religion should provide a sacred canopy for American society is Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

[10] Walter Brueggemann, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (June 1979): 161-85.

[11] Brueggemann, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature," 161.

[12] Brueggemann, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature," 162.

[13] Cf. Michael Novak, *Freedom With Justice: Catholic Social Thought and Liberal Institutions* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 162-64.

or the current representatives of the liberation trajectory by accusing them of "the mere rationalization of positions already taken."[14] This is due to the fact that the two conflicting biblical trajectories serve not only as a source for arguments in defense of a preconceived position but may themselves be creative of the conflicting positions in the first place. The royal trajectory fosters the development of a socially conservative theology which values stability and supports the established institutions, while the liberation trajectory fosters a socially radical theology which values transformation and supports movements for social justice. The relationship between the origins of a particular theological option in one particular biblical trajectory and the warrants drawn from that particular biblical trajectory in defense of a particular contemporary theological option is thus a circular one.

Since there can be a tendency to make exclusive claims to divine sanction for one's own theological position based on a particular trajectory, the tendency toward polarization which characterizes the current discussion of liberation theology seems inherent to the Bible itself. The decisive arguments therefore cannot be solely based upon appeals to biblical authority. Appeals to biblical texts must be accompanied by the explanation of historical context—both the original one and the contemporary one—in the course of interpretation. The impasse of polarization can in part be dismantled by recognizing the complexity of the hermeneutical process in which all appeals to Scripture take place.

Differences of substance

Only when the foregoing issues have been cleared away can one begin to address the more substantive differences which appear to separate liberation theology and its critics. Significant matters do require clarification by liberation theologians, particularly questions such as these:[15]

1. What is the philosophical basis of liberation theology?
2. How does liberation theology articulate its method?
3. What is the theological anthropology of liberation theology?
4. How does liberation theology understand the meaning of salvation/liberation?

Of the many criticisms leveled against liberation theology, these four emerge as the most substantive questions.

Liberation theology has strongly emphasized praxis, criticizing academic theology for its abstraction. Is it possible, however, to entirely avoid philosophical underpinnings? Several North American theologians have charged that liberation theology owes too much to Marx. It would be constructive for liberation theologians to clarify their philosophical basis; for example, Juan Luis Segundo's use of Teilhard or Clodovis Boff's debt to Thomism.

In terms of method, liberation theology needs to further demonstrate the ways in which its theological vision establishes checks and balances upon its chosen praxis. What is the relationship between social analysis and theological vision in liberation theology? It has been charged that theology

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[14] This phrase is that of Schubert M. Ogden, "The Concept of a Theology of Liberation: Must a Christian Theology Today Be So Conceived?" in Brian Mahan and L. Dale Richesin, eds., *The Challenge of Liberation Theology: A First World Response* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), 134.

[15] Cf. Nessan, *Orthopraxis or Heresy*, 388-401.

does little more than provide ideological justification for a predetermined course of action. For example, against the charge that it is prone prematurely to adopt violence as a means of social change, liberation theology would do well to demonstrate how its grounding in the Christian tradition shapes its praxis. Whereas many outside the movement equate liberation theology with revolution, the symbiotic relationship between the basic Christian communities and liberation theology needs to be clearly elaborated.

The theological anthropology of liberation theology has been called into question by those who believe it fails to take human sinfulness with sufficient seriousness. On the one hand, this charge appears ironic in that liberation theology has made a major contribution toward analyzing the sinfulness of political and economic structures. On the other hand, many charge that liberation theology is overly optimistic in its estimate of human possibilities, particularly the possibilities of the poor. What role does the notion of sin play for liberation theology? How does one articulate the reality of human sinfulness without undermining the entire liberation project? Liberation theology must express the need for the present political and economic structures to be radically altered without surrendering a realistic understanding of human hubris.

In a parallel way, liberation theology has been accused of confusing salvation with historical progress. For example, the contrast between a Protestant understanding of the gospel as a matter of "justification by grace through faith" appears to be substantially other than liberation theology's insistence upon the gospel as "good news for the poor." Liberation theology, as it has begun to do already, must clearly elaborate the connection it sees between salvation in personal terms and salvation as social reality. The biblical notion of *shalom* provides one important foundation for this discussion.

Polarization feeds on certainty, certainty about the truth of one's own position and the falsehood of the position of one's theological opponent.

Substantive issues like these do require further clarification in the conversation between liberation theology and its critics. Before it is possible, however, to carry on a constructive dialogue regarding such substantive issues, it will be necessary to overcome the impasse in communication resulting from the extreme polarization within the North American debate over liberation theology.

Beyond polarization

Polarization feeds on certainty, certainty about the truth of one's own position and the falsehood of the position of one's theological opponent. In the controversy surrounding liberation theology there is an urgent need for critical thought which will assist in "deideologizing," not only the position of the opponent but especially one's

own position."[16] While the effort to de-ideologize one's own position may be ill-suited to the maintenance of the polemical spirit often reigning in contemporary political discourse, it may be more appropriate to the arena of theological discourse.

A constructive approach in transcending the impasse of polarization would include two complementary elements. First, there is a need for a *critical appreciation* of the countervailing position. Such a critical appreciation begins with an authentic encounter with the fundamental logic and arguments of the other position and a genuine attempt to understand it on its own terms. This requires interpreters to make the same kind of effort at bridging the hermeneutical gap between their own context and that of liberation theology as is made at bridging the hermeneutical gap between their own context and that of an ancient text. A similar effort would be expected of liberation theologians in their interpretation of "academic" theology. Too often the reciprocating malediction between liberation theologians and critics has been based more on caricature than on a fair representation of the other's arguments.

A second element in an approach which can lead beyond the impasse of polarization involves the application of *self-criticism.* Critical thought does not begin and end with criticism of the arguments of others. Critical thought must also, if not primarily, be directed at one's own arguments. As Trutz Rendtorff has written regarding the scientific character of theology:

> ...the critical meaning of science is not attainable without the ethos of the scientific method which consists of being critical not only and not primarily over against "others" but in relationship to one's own standpoint.[17]

It is the absence of such self-critical thought which has marred the North American discussion of liberation theology, contributing to excessive polarization. The impasse of polarization can only be dismantled given a mutual commitment to both critical appreciation of the arguments of the other and self-criticism of one's own position.

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[16] The proposal of Schubert M. Ogden, *The Point of Christology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 93-96 and 164-68, regarding "deideologizing" deserves careful consideration as an essential component of theological method.

[17] Trutz Rendtorff, *Ethik: Grundelemente, Methodologie und Konkretionen einer ethischen Theologie* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1980), 1:29 (own translation).

The Eucharist as Sacrifice: Ethics that Enlightens Doctrine & Cult (An Ecumenical Praxis)[1]

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> [Sacrifice is] the everyday practical life of Christian virtue, in the apostolic and charitable work of being a good Christian, of being "for others" as Christ was "for us." It [is] a totally free and loving response, carried out on the practical level of human existence, to Christ's act of self giving love.[2]

The BEM—as it is often referred to by theologians—is a significant ecumenical document of the 80s on the topics of baptism, eucharist, and ministry.[3] It resulted from the Faith and Order Conference held in Lima, Peru, in 1982,[4] and reflects the ongoing concern of the Faith and Order Commission to work toward the visible manifestation of God's gift of unity to the Christian churches. Its ecumenical impact resounded through the numerous responses that the document has evoked on the part of the Christian churches.[5]

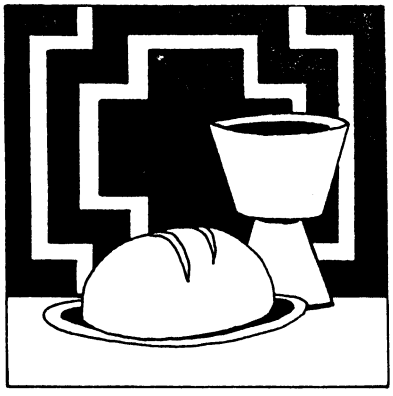
This article focuses on the eucharistic dimension of the BEM document. More specifically, it attempts to respond to a

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[1] The main theological thrust of this article (regarding both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures) is developed further in Robert Daly, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) and in Richard J. Beauchesne, "Worship as Life, Priesthood & Sacrifice in Yves Congar," *Église et Théologie* (Ottawa: St. Paul University), 21 (January 1990): 79-100.

[2] Daly, *The Origins*, 140.

[3] *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith & Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983).



BEM recommendation: that all churches review the old controversies about the eucharist as "sacrifice" (BEM, 11, *Commentary 8*). To do so, the article proposes a view of the Eucharist *as sacrifice*, which might offer an ecumenical perspective—one that finds its roots in the Christian origins of the meaning of sacrifice; namely, sacrifice as ethical praxis that pertains to human liberation.

Traditionally, especially within the Roman Catholic tradition, the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist has been grounded in the following assertion: namely, that in the three synoptic Gospels (Mt 26:17, Mk 14:12, Lk 22:11),[6] Jesus' last meal before he died is set within the context of Jewish Passover meals—covenantal sacrificial meals. These were ritualized meals that allowed one to eat and drink "after gazing on [the] God [of the Sinai Covenant]" (Ex 24:9-11). These meals were already ritualized in Ex 12:1-28 as Passover meals (Exodus 12) which, then, became the temple Passover (Deuteronomy 16) and finally the Jewish Passover, commonly celebrated in the time of Jesus. The sacrificial meals "began with the lamb being slaughtered by priests in the temple and with an elaborate blood rite of *tossing* or *throwing* the blood at the altar with strong covenantal associations" (Lev 3:2, 8:13, 7:14; Ex 24:3-8).[7]

However, a stronger case for viewing the Eucharist as sacrifice might be made by appealing to the Lord's *anamnesis* ("Do this in memory of me") interpreted as having *primarily* ethical rather than cultic or doctrinal significance. One might even suggest that in ecumenical dialogues the ethical ramifications of the *anamnesis* should determine both its cultic and doctrinal content, rather than the other way around.

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[4] See Michael A. Fahey, "Genesis of the Lima Document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry," pp. 3-6 in *Catholic Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: A Study Commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America* (Lanham/New York/London: University of America Press, 1986). See also BEM, vii-x.

[5] See for example the series of volumes (I to VI) entitled *Churches Respond to BEM*, Max Thurian, editor (Geneva: World Council of Churches): Vol. I (Faith and Order Paper #129, 1986), Vol. II (Paper #132, 1986), Vol. III (Paper #135, 1987), Vol. IV (Paper #137, 1987), Vol. V (Paper #143, 1988), Vol. VI (Paper #144, 1988).

[6] For a discussion of Jesus' last meal in John, see John Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord: The New Testament, Ecumenical Dialogues and Faith and Order on the Eucharist* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 3-4, 17-21.

[7] Daly, *The Origins*, 39; biblical references, 37-38. The discussion continues among biblical scholars as to whether or not the last meal taken by Jesus with his disciples was in fact a Passover meal. See Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord*, 2-4. Reumann concludes: "We can only say that Jesus' last meal before he died was 'at Passover time,' but about the exact type of meal or what he said over the loaf and the cup we cannot be sure."

In the Christian Scriptures, the *anamnesis* is attributed to Jesus once in Lk 22:19b and twice in Paul (1 Cor 11:24, 25). As John Reumann pointed out (referring to an analysis of "remembering" by Nils Dahl):

> To remember leads to shaping one's speech and action... in fact to a "way of life".... This strong moral or ethical side to anamnesis, so that memory and commemoration do not deal only with faith (doctrine) and worship [liturgy] but also with life... has often been overlooked. Yet Paul turned the "Christ-anamnesis" of Phil 2:6-11 to hortatory purposes (2:1-5) and employed the Words of Institution to deal with disciplinary and, more important, socioeconomic, ethical issues at Corinth (11:17-43)."[8]

Similarly, and more to the point, Robert J. Daly, S.J.—in concluding his in-depth study of *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*—stated succinctly his underlying thesis, namely, that the Christian understanding of worship (including that of the Eucharist) must be primarily formulated in ethical rather than cultic or doctrinal terms. Furthermore, that it is 'sacrifice' which is the proper Christian category to do so,

> that a proper understanding of the concept of Christian sacrifice is basic to a proper understanding of Christianity itself.... [W]e find the early Christians from the New Testament onward understanding the Christ-event as a sacrificial event, looking upon the Eucharist... as sacrifice, and speaking of the practical living of the Christian life as sacrificial.[9]

Daly claimed:

> For the New Testament church, Christian sacrifice was not a cultic but rather an ethical idea, an idea that could include prayer and worship in the formal sense, but was not constituted by them.... [It] was the everyday practical life of Christian virtue, in the apostolic and charitable work of being a good Christian, of being "for others" as Christ was "for us." It was a totally free and loving response, carried out on the practical level of human existence, to Christ's act of self giving love.... Thus no matter how similarly or differently we might understand the institutional or ecclesiological ramification of celebrating the Eucharist, unless we do so with the fully spiritualized (=christologized) dispositions of Christian sacrifice, we call upon ourselves the stern rebuke Paul leveled against the Corinthians: "It is not the Lord's Supper which you celebrate" (1 Cor 11:20).[10]

Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., one of Asia's foremost Christian theologians and native of Sri Lanka, therefore, might be interpreting correctly the Lord's *anamnesis*. "Do this in memory of me," he claimed, refers to Jesus' mandate to Christian communities. According to this venerated Christian tradition, Jesus said these words while sharing a meal with his friends and, at the same time, sharing with them the secret of his life: that his life was one lived for the sake of integral human liberation and fulfillment (as the next forty-eight hours of his life, during which he would be arrested, tried, and crucified, clearly demonstrated); that his life was truly a sacrificial life. During his life, Jesus "courageously opposed every form of oppression and injustice. His obedience to God... [consisted] in [the] service [of human liberation] to humanity." And by the words: "Do this in memory of me," Jesus called his followers to do likewise.[11]

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[8] Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord*, 34.

[9] Daly, *The Origins*, 135.

[10] Daly, *The Origins*, 140.

[11] Tissa Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 1.

Throughout the centuries, numerous followers of Jesus distinguished themselves by celebrating the Eucharistic meal, and they did so under various conditions: in Roman catacombs, as a persecuted community; in Roman basilicas, as a triumphant community; in medieval monasteries, as a devotional community; in all the corners of the earth, as an accomplice community with the colonizers of the world; during the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Counter Reformation, as a community divided and entangled in wars of religion; and in modern times—in churches, homes, and prisons, on the seas and in the air—still as a divided community. Thus, in so many ways, even in clashing and sinful ways, throughout their history, Christians have 'remembered' Jesus.[12]

In so many ways, even in clashing and sinful ways, throughout their history, Christians have 'remembered' Jesus.

"Do this in memory of me," which for Jesus meant the *sacrifice of self* for the liberation of the oppressed, came to mean the *sacrifice of the oppressed* for the well-being of the rich. As a result, politically, economically, and sociologically, the Eucharist itself has been conditioned. Through eras of imperialism, feudalism, capitalism, colonialism, racism, and sexism, the Eucharist was enslaved and domesticated in order to suit the need of dominant social classes.[13]

Equally—in order to preserve church and sacramental unity even at the price of condoning social inequalities—theologically, the Eucharist has been domesticated. Masses continued to be 'said' while the oppression of the poor and the latter's quest for liberation went unnoticed. Masses were 'said' to implore personal sanctification rather than to celebrate the gospel imperative of human liberation: for the attainment of heaven rather than for the just transformation of the earth. For the sake of theological unity despite the needs of the poor, whom Jesus instructed his followers to remember ("Do this in memory of me"), Masses have had to follow the same rites, use prescribed scriptural readings, and celebrate yearly the same feasts.[14] Thus in 1972, Christmas masses throughout the U.S.—with themes of "peace on earth" and "a child is born unto us, the Prince of Peace"—were being celebrated while, under President Nixon, U.S. military air operations were redoubling the bombing of North Vietnam in an attempt to wipe the latter out of the world map.

Furthermore, historically and 'churchly' speaking, the Eucharist got to be clericalized. By the year 1100 C.E. the ordained priest was the all-important functionary of the Eucharist. At mass, he recited prayers silently, in a foreign tongue (Latin), and with his back turned away from the people. Especially at mass, the ordained priest was regarded as the intermediary, the mediator between God and the people: Moses on the mountain conversing with

[12] Balasuriya, 1-2.
[13] Balasuriya, 2.
[14] Balasuriya, 3.

God. People did not participate in the mass. Rather, they meditated on the passion and death of Jesus or on the lives of the saints.[15] The Eucharist then became totally dependent on the priest. He alone could make Christ become present in the bread and wine. At the consecration of the mass, the priest came to be seen as acting not only in the name of Christ, but in his person—*in persona Christi*. He alone could touch the hosts and distribute them, but only on the tongue of the faithful. Priests, with or without a congregation, were obliged to 'say' mass every day, and only during the morning.[16] And, since marital intercourse was prohibited prior to receiving the Eucharist while mass had to be 'said' daily, celibacy was prescribed for priests.[17]

Finally, due to their alienation from the Eucharist, people received communion only with great fear and very rarely—so rarely that the church had to prescribe that communion had to be received once a year. For many Christians, the reception of communion was replaced by the adoration of the host. Thus, on the part of the people, adoration of Jesus in the host replaced the sharing of Jesus' self and of his followers with the oppressed, and on the part of the religious leaders, the clericalization and domestication of the Eucharist came to mean power over the laity, even the colonialization of the oppressed.[18]

Ironically, while at the beginning the Eucharist was meant to be a symbol, a remembrance (a memorial/sacrament/sacrifice) of Jesus' liberative action, now—alienated from the people and allied to the powers of domination—the Eucharist meant 'preserving the status quo'; namely, preserving the unity of the church aligned with world powers which, at the same time, meant the oppression of the poor.[19]

At the beginning, the early Christians believed that the meaning of the bread for Jesus was his body, "This is my body." Thus, the bread meant or sacramentalized the real presence of Jesus: his total self sacrificed unto death for the liberation of the oppressed. Similarly, they believed that the meaning of the cup of wine for Jesus was the blood of the covenant: "This is my blood of the covenant." Thus, the cup meant or sacramentalized the promises of God in the covenant of old made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey," not a land divinely apportioned to a single nation, but the earth itself totally liberated from oppression, the ultimate transformation of the world through Jesus' blood which was shed: his life sacrificed unto death for the liberation of the oppressed of the world.

As described in the synoptic Gospels and in Paul, all of Jesus' meals[20] celebrated—as Balasuriya expressed it—one's fundamental decision to die rather than to live in compromise with the religious and political leaders of one's era, with those who lorded it over the little people. To all the oppressed—women, children and elderly, tax collectors, possessed and sinners, paralyzed, hemophiliacs and lepers (today's PWA's), physically, emotionally, and mentally handicapped, the dying, even the dead (the daughter of a Jewish widow and the son of a Roman centurion)—to all the marginalized, Jesus brought healing, reconciliation, and life: human liberation. But the

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15 Balasuriya, 28.

16 Balasuriya, 28-38.

17 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 86-87 (regarding *lex continentiae*).

18 Balasuriya, 29-38.

19 Balasuriya, 6.

20 See, for example, Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord*, 4-5.

religious leaders of the time insisted that Jesus halt his liberating work. In fact, they considered his ministry to the oppressed the work of the devil. "He is possessed by Beelzebub. He drives out devils by the prince of devils," they claimed (Mk 3, 22). But Jesus, through his liberating presence, words, and deeds, continued "to announce the good news of liberation to the poor; to proclaim the release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to let the broken victims go free; to proclaim God's liberation" (Lk 4:18-19). And rather than submit to the powers that be and compromise his dedication to the oppressed, Jesus accepted to die.[21]

Eucharist: memorial of the sacrifice of Christ

Jesus' death reveals the ultimate meaning of the sacrament of the Eucharist: the *sacrifice* of one's life *unto death* for the liberation of the oppressed. Thus the Christian understanding of 'sacrifice' pivots around what *God revealed in Jesus* [*sola gratia*] about the meaning of human liberation and, as a result, the Eucharist is the Christian existential and celebratory expression of one's commitment to human liberation: to die rather than to live in compromise with oppressing powers, be they religious, political, economic, or military. For that reason alone, for one to participate in the *Memorial of the Christian Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Cross* is not primarily a matter of ecclesiastical order or canon (who's got the 'right' succession and the proper gender to preside over it), nor is it a matter of one's personal devotion. It is first and foremost a matter of life (liberation) or death (oppression).

Balasuriya asserted: "The Eucharist is in captivity. It is dominated by persons who do not experience oppression [death] in their own daily life. Even within the poor countries, church leaders generally belong to and side with the affluent elite. [Consequently,] the Eucharist will not be liberated to be true to its mission [as the celebration of self-sacrifice] as long as churches are captive within the world's power establishment. The Eucharist has to be liberated and liberative; it should lead to sharing and genuine love. But in its social impact [at the present] it fails to do so.... [Only] when Christians make a fundamental option against oppression, and struggle against it... [will] the Eucharist itself be liberated"[22] and again become truly sacrificial.

> The Eucharist is the Christian existential and celebratory expression of one's commitment to human liberation.

Such an understanding of sacrifice might refocus the ecumenical dialogue about the Eucharist on a basis of faith (life) rather than on one of order (theology/ministry); on the sacrificial life of the priestly people rather than on the sacrifice of the priestly people to safeguard hierarchical concerns about which church expresses 'correctly' eucharistic doctrines; on Christ and the

21 Balasuriya, 16-17.
22 Balasuriya, 62.

christifideles[23] rather than on Paul, Apollo, or Cephas (the leaders). In the words of Balasuriya, "[E]ucharistic gatherings would then be among the vanguard of the building of the new world in hard work, real sharing, and justice. As the churches begin to relate to these issues, they will forget their petty concerns with rubrics and ritualism and enter the heart of the human search today. They will then be among the foremost harbingers of the real new international economic order, which has to be a foretaste of the ultimate kingdom of peace and justice promised by God in Jesus Christ."[24]

Or in Daly's words: "Thus no matter how similarly or differently we might understand the institutional or ecclesiological ramifications of celebrating the Eucharist [whether from Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or other denominational perspectives] unless we do so with the fully spiritualized[25] (=christologized) dispositions of Christian sacrifice, we call upon ourselves the stern rebuke Paul leveled against the Corinthians: 'It is not the Lord's Supper which you celebrate' (1 Cor 11:20)."[26]

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[23] In *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), Edward Schillebeeckx states that the content of the concept 'laity' (often defined as 'non-clergy') finds its positive content in the expression *christifidelis* (157).

[24] Balasuriya, 145.

[25] Regarding the concept of 'spiritualization,' see Daly, *The Origins*, 6-10, 135-40, and 147.

[26] Daly, *The Origins*, 140.

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Transferences for the Health of the Pastor

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"Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres...." Thus Caesar began his *Gallic Wars*, and many Latin students have memorized these lines as an elementary entry toward a deeper understanding of the language. Heinz Kohut, the pioneer in the psychology of the self, might well have chosen Caesar's line as an elementary entry into the language of the dynamic of self psychology. Kohut theorized that the self functions at a more elementary level than is expressed by the notion of "defenses." While Freud identified the root cause of the defenses to be located in the sexual and aggressive drives, Kohut sensed that even these two components are derivatives, not constituents, of the self. "Self Psychology... states that we are dealing with drive experiences and not with drives; that, if the self is healthy, the drives are experienced not in an isolated fashion but as an immanent modality of this healthy self."[1]

Though at times Kohut speaks of each person having several selves, nonetheless he believes that there is a prime self, a directing self, which is a whole. Caesar's "all of Gaul" is the equivalent of Kohut's understanding of the cohesiveness of this self. As a unit, the self actively integrates environmental objects and intrapsychic selfobjects in order to seek an equilibrium or homeostasis. Sexual and aggressive drives are tools which the self uses to reach for that satisfactory level, and the defenses are the secondary instruments utilized by the drives. In order to remain in contact with objects in its environment and to achieve some semblance of balance intrapsychically the self organizes the drives and defenses. The evidence for this processing appears as transferences. To understand that activity it is important to return to the unity of the self and to realize that Kohut would teach that the "self" is divided into three parts, or better, three poles. The self monitors the flow of input and output among these three poles and is in constant change so that each will be sufficiently tended to. This one self is named by Kohut with the

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[1] Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 208.

following terms: 1) the pole of ambition, 2) the pole of ideals, and 3) the pole of intermediating talents and skills.[2]

Transference is simply an activity which the self does to mediate intrapsychically among these three poles or interpersonally with objects in the environment. It is an attempt by the self to make contact with objects externally and with selfobjects internally in order to bring into balance the needs which any of these three poles of the self might sense. It is what the self does in order to maintain a human capability to function in an environment.

Looked at interpersonally, a transference is the method in which people relate to one another. Without the use of transference a person would be cast adrift in a meaningless, contact-less chaos of non-existence. A transference is an attempt to keep chaos at bay.

There are multiple layers of communication, intent, and interpretation involved with each transference. The surface transference is what is observable by any spectator. However, an astute pastor or counselor, through the disciplined techniques of empathy and introspection, mines the deeper functioning of each transference and utilizes the implication of each layer to assist in reaching satisfaction in the balancing of the needs of the self. Kohut considers that this working through transference is the main instrumentality of therapy.[3]

When the self is damaged and senses that one or more of its poles is not stabilized, it utilizes a transference in an attempt to restore the homeostasis. This is a perpetual, life-long movement in which the self is constantly seeking sustenance. One of those needs is acceptance, another is the need to experience merger with greatness, strength, and calmness, and a third is the need to experience the presence of essential alikeness.[4]

Kohut develops a program to describe how a transference works when a reasonably healthy adult is functioning. He attaches a label to three forms of transference: a *mirroring* transference, an *idealizing* transference, and an alter ego or *twinning* transference.

When the pole of ambition flags a need, the self begins a search for an object upon which the transference of mirroring can occur. "The mirror transference is rooted in the grandiose self and demands confirming, approving, echoing responses with a strong need to be looked at and admired."[5] The object is to be a reflecting agent for the person's self. The transference is directed toward a refilling of the flagging dread of loss which poses dangerously near to the grandiose self. When stabilization occurs in sufficient force, a person can be ambitiously engaged with the environment and can sufficiently achieve some semblance of rest within his or her psychic self structure. When not stabilized, this pole of the self seeks out a potential mirroring object in whose reflection there rests the possibility for restoration of the grandiose self.

At other times the self detects a deficit in the pole of ideals and begins seeking an object toward which it can direct an idealizing transference. "The idealizing transference is characterized by a tendency to idealize the other as a powerful figure with

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[2] Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 193. See an earlier classification of a bi-polar self in Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), 171-219.

[3] Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 210.

[4] Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 194.

[5] Lynn Greenlee, Jr., "Kohut's Self Psychology and Theory of Narcissism: Some Implications Regarding the Fall and Restoration of Humanity" in *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 12:2 (1986), 113.

whom the individual can merge, thus deriving and sharing in the experience of perfection and strength."[6] The perception of the object brings with it almost mystical qualities into which the person can sink and then withdraw, charged with transferred energy. In this transference of idealization the pole of ideals senses a loss of confidence and seeks revitalization through contact with this admired object.

The "twinning transference" or "alter ego transference" results from the need to feel what Kohut calls a sense of being human among humans, of a seeking after essential alikeness with the object.[7] In this transference there is neither the desire to pull identification from a mirroring object nor to suck strength from an idealized object. Rather, there is a sense of "belonging," of "sameness" with the object. When this pole is not in a depleted condition, the person is capable of developing skills and utilizing talents as expressions of intrapsychic satisfaction. When this pole is in a state of unfulfillment, it asks from the object only that it be there and act as a nonintrusive twin through whom sustenance can be experienced.

These forms of transference are expressions of felt needs flowing among the three poles of the self, and they are attempts of the self to reach a satisfactory balance for those needs. Through transferences a self transacts with the environment in order to be alive and reasonably healthy.

The working of a transference can prove to be an ally of the self when an imbalance, over-stimulation, or desertion occurs in the formative years. Through these transferences, a self overcomes many deficiencies by utilizing them to pull identification, strength, or support from real objects and to incorporate them onto the pole which is threatened with exhaustion. The loss of satisfaction and balance in one pole can be offset by providing an option for fulfillment through one of the other poles. The switching mechanism is established via the transferences.

It is helpful for pastors to recognize the activity of these transference processes not only for counseling but also in the daily, normal interchanges and interactions which occur in relationships with people in the parish. We will now turn to each of the three forms of transference and sketch them in the flow from the pastor toward the parish and/or the parishioner.

Despite pleas of humility to the contrary, the pastor has a pole of ambition which needs some degree of satisfaction. The pastor's grandiose self asserts its expectations toward objects in the environment from which it might receive replenishment for the deficit felt in the grandiose self. It accomplishes, or seeks to accomplish, this through a mirroring transference. When the pastor just happens to look tired in the presence of a member and just happens to mention that the schedule has been especially busy that week, he or she may be soliciting support for the grandiose self through a mirroring transference with the parishioner. When he expects the church council to follow his suggestions, and when he is pleased that they do or angry that they don't, his mirroring transference might be the agent through which he is processing those sensations. When he seeks out a friend in the parish with whom he can complain about the stress load and from whom he receives reassuring signals that he is, in fact, doing a good job, this is an example of a mirroring transference doing its work. When she rushes to the hospital

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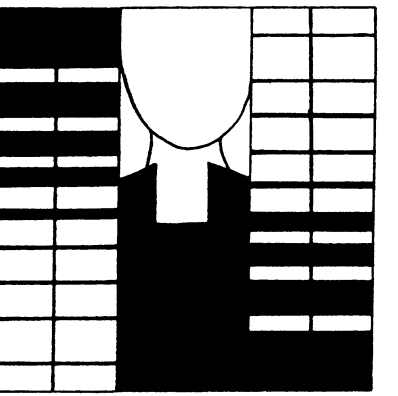
[6] Greenlee, Jr., "Kohut's Self Psychology," 113.

[7] Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 197.

because of an emergency call and is greeted with a favored reception, her pole of ambition is being tended to; when she preaches an excellent sermon and accepts praise for it from the filing-out folk, the grandiose self feels secured in those transactions. When the need is met in a satisfying fashion it becomes the method by which interaction, both intrapsychically and interpersonally, can be performed.

Likewise, the pole of ideals reaches out toward objects when it senses a loss of fulfillment and does so through an idealizing transference. This need in a pastor may be a bit harder to identify because of the very nature of a pastor's role. It is expected that she will be idealized, not do the idealizing. However, when her internal idealized images are in a deficit condition, she also needs to seek a balance for them and does so by searching to make an idealizing transference upon a person or group in her environment. Perhaps this is most evident when a pastor projects this transference upon a bishop or other hierarchical figure in the church body. It might show itself through identification with a specific cause or heroic, saintly figure who dominates and leads that cause. Another example of this idealizing transference might occur when the pastor seeks out a colleague whom she admires and places herself in that person's shadow. The desire in this transference is to gain strength and a sense of moral value during a time when her own pole of ideals is fearing a vacuum. When the need is met in a satisfying fashion it becomes the method by which interaction, both intrapsychically and interpersonally, can be performed.

The pastor also has a need for a twinning or alter ego transference. A pastor who feels a companionable yoking with other pastors is probably depending on a twinning transference. Likewise, when he feels satisfied that, along with the organist and choir, the worship service has been conducted by him in a hearty manner, this pole of his self is being fulfilled. When there is a sensation of being understood by a member in the parish, when she feels capable of the tasks stretching out before her with the presence of a parishioner, when she gathers strength from within a committee of the church, the force of these interactions addresses itself toward this pole of talents and



skills. The ability to receive encouragement and to share it, to be vulnerable to the needs at hand with an accompanying exhibition of openness, to be stabilized in the midst of intense stress because there is the feeling that another member or the whole parish as a unit is linked in tandem with her—all of this might well be the outflow and intake transacted by a twinning transference.

The unhealthy side to these transferences is exposed when they are not met adequately. A fixation may well occur and the demands of the need become so powerful that the self will assert itself in a fixated fashion through a stagnated transference. For example, should a pastor in an attempt

to tend to his pole of ambition through a mirroring transference sense that this is being done in a non-satisfying quest, he might then focus upon the transference and fixate demands upon it. This quest could then be carried to unhealthy extremes in the attempt to restore this need in the grandiose self. This might explain the compulsion to have a sexual relationship with a member of the parish, to demand inordinate salary raises, to expect applause to follow each act of ministerial care, to decree unquestioning loyalty from the parish. These are cases of a mirroring transference gone awry.

In a similar way a fixation upon the idealizing transference might occur when the pole of idealization within the pastor's self has become unbalanced. It could be that clergy burnout is evidence of this process. The pastor has a need to make an idealizing transference but cannot find a person within the congregation from whom she can receive satisfactory strength. In order to position herself so that she can legitimately yield her own pole of ideals (while remaining as the pastor ideal) to another person or to the congregation as a whole, she accomplishes this by "getting sick" or "being burned out." In this condition it will be necessary for the church council to function for her, for the congregation to break through and minister to her, for various members to assume roles and job activities. In so doing, they can become idealized objects, and she can be free to transfer her need for idealized objects to them.

When a pastor feels alone in the midst of parishioners, or when he feels isolated at a clergy conference, this is perhaps a signal that his pole of intermediating skills and talents is running on empty. The pastor needs sturdy companionable reinforcements to meet these needs. If they are not available, a fixation upon the twinning transference could result. The rush for the alter ego function could lead to a total enmeshment with the parish so that no discernible difference between the pastor and the parishioners could be made. Or, he might seek fulfillment for this third pole by an unhealthy alliance with a favored parishioner to the point of neglecting every other person within his parish. Or, this distortion might seek some semblance of restoration by rejecting its own need for twinning companionship. In this case, the pastor might well turn his attention totally away from the parish, abandoning it for whatever diversions might seem satisfactory: sports, drinking, reading, hobbies.

When a transference in any of these three modes becomes its own endpoint, difficulties arise. When any of the transferences acts as a viaduct through which one of the poles of the self can be stabilized, they are then essential processes for good health. Once this flow is recognized, identified, and understood, it can alert the pastor to a deeper appreciation and use of this quality interchange. Awareness of these transactions allows for an insightful opportunity for development and growth.

In the relationship between pastor and people a valuable symbiotic exchange is available. When pastors can be empathic with parishioners and introspective about their own needs, they can accept the transference from/toward a member and live with it in a productive manner. When parishioners can be empathic with the pastor and introspective about their needs, the pastor can then safely and confidently share the self's polar's deficits via a transference with the members. There is an alive-ness about such transaction; it is not static nor constant. It is a way of being human among humans.

"God Blew Her Lines"

Patrick Hansel
Bronx, New York

Two nights before the World Premiere of "Christ is Born in the South Bronx," an original play written by South Bronx teenagers, we had to kick the lead actress out of the play. Bernadette, a girl of 13 who was playing Mary, the Mother of God, had been goofing off all through dress rehearsal, didn't know her lines, wouldn't take direction from the director, and the play was in a shambles. We were less than 48 hours from opening, and we didn't have a Mary.

What to do? The staff quickly decided to ask Cheryl, the quietest and most disciplined of the group, to take the lead of Mary. She learned the lines in one day, and with only one rehearsal did a marvelous job—she and Joseph had their baby in an abandoned building, the holy family escaped from the plot of the mayor to kill the child, and the play went off without a hitch on opening night.

Well, almost. Cheryl had been playing the smaller part of God, and when she stepped up (stepped down?) to take the part of Mary, a shy young woman named Iris stepped in to take God's part. By opening night, she knew her lines backwards and forwards, but when she stepped out onto the stage she froze. God simply froze and was speechless, and the merely human characters had to ad lib, had to cover for God. As one of the kids said later, "God blew her lines!"

Working as one of the pastors of that group of South Bronx teenagers, sometimes I thought God *was* speechless. In the midst of all the violence and poverty and loss in those young people's lives, God seemed to be pretty quiet—not giving clear direction to me, to these teenage boys and girls, to any of us. Often it felt that in spite of our work with these children (a loving worshipping community, Sunday school, counseling, prevention programs, etc.) many of them would fall victim to the forces that threaten to destroy their lives: violence, drug abuse, poverty, racism, and despair. Despite the courage and faith of these young people, and the love and commitment of their congregation, often it felt as if we were merely spinning our wheels.

Why doesn't God speak more directly? Why doesn't God fulfill God's promise to free the people? Or perhaps the question is: Why isn't God's Word powerful enough in the face of oppression and violence and poverty? I'm not alone in asking these questions. I imagine every pastor, particularly those who work in poor communities, asks himself or herself why God has seemingly abandoned God's own people to despair. And when our questions seem to go unanswered, it is not hard to wonder if all our work is in vain.

When I look at the Bible, I encounter many people of faith who struggled with the same questions: Where is God? Why does God not speak? Why does God not act to end injustice? From the cries of Job to the cries of the people in exile, we encounter

voices—faithful, God-fearing voices—crying out to God, pleading that God be faithful to the promises *God* made. These questions are asked whenever people who are struggling to be faithful are confronted with unfair, unjust treatment from life, and when the forces against them seem absolutely insurmountable.

In the play the kids and I wrote, Joseph struggles with whether or not to dump Mary. The word on the street is that Mary slept with some other guy. Joey is mad, he's ready to kill the other guy (and maybe Mary, too). He still loves Mary, but his faith in her has been shattered, and what's worse, he's played by the rules this time. He hasn't had sex with Mary, he's been faithful to commandments he doesn't always believe in, he's been cool, he hasn't had his cake, he hasn't eaten—and in spite of all that, life deals him an unfair blow. If Joseph accepts this blow that life has given him, if he stays faithful to Mary, his whole life is changed. He becomes an instant father, he may have to quit school to work to support his wife and (someone else's) baby.

To top off Joseph's struggle, Mary has the nerve to tell him it's a real blessing, it's God's will. When Mary tells him God is responsible for the pregnancy, Joseph explodes:

"God! God ain't like that! God is supposed to heal the sick and punish the wicked. God is supposed to answer your prayers. God is not supposed to get your girlfriend pregnant!"

Joseph refuses to accept that God would cause him pain, cause him to suffer. He refuses to accept Mary's word that God is being faithful in all this. God is not supposed to act like this.

God is not supposed to act like this. God is supposed to protect her faithful ones in communities like the South Bronx, particularly the most vulnerable. God is not supposed to allow a racist mob to cut down a bright young student. God is supposed to protect young women from the rapist's, the murderer's fury. God is supposed to answer our prayers. We don't expect paradise, we don't expect a life free from pain and struggle, but, Good Lord, enough is enough! Say something, God! Do something!

Maybe (as Joseph found out) God *is* talking, God *is* acting—but we don't like what God has to say. In the play, God finally gets a chance to talk to Joseph ("God" remembered her lines in the rest of the performances, thank God!). She tells Joseph:

"Chill out. I got things under control."

"You got things under control!" screams Joseph. "My girlfriend is pregnant and we ain't even had sex yet and she says *you* got her pregnant, and you tell me everything is under control!"

"Yeah," God says, "everything's under control. Trust me."

God makes it clear to Joseph that he cannot expect a miracle cure. There will be no return to "an easier life." God is not going to make Mary un-pregnant. God is not going to "rescue" Joseph from his decision or its consequences, even though it indeed may be totally unfair that the decision was forced on Joseph. Rather, God is going to stand by Joseph, and God expects Joseph to stand by God, and stand by his woman.

As it turns out, Joseph learns to trust God. Is it because he has nowhere else to turn, and out of his desperation hope is born? Or is it because he keeps getting surprised by God's love, how it won't play by the rules, how it won't quit: Mary's old cousin Liz has a child at 62. Jesus is born in an abandoned building, but his birth causes an outpouring of joy and peace in the neighborhood. The mayor tries to kill the child for calling attention to the city's housing

> God's love is not limited to those who make the right decisions prior to their troubles.

crisis, but Joseph is tipped off and escapes with his family intact.

That's pretty much the end of the play, but not the end of the story, either for Joseph or for any of the young people who were in the play. During the time of the play, and after, each of the young people had to discover God's love in the midst of situations that are often extremely difficult. They had to discover *how* God would be faithful to them, and how they would respond.

Two completely different examples of the young people's struggles come to my mind. The mother of one of the actresses was taken to court by the child's grandmother, who accused the mother of selling her teenage daughter's clothes to buy drugs. The young child was caught in a tug-of-war between two parts of her family, her school work suffered, she began to exhibit serious anti-social behavior. The likelihood of serious problems later in her life grew dramatically.

Another of the young girls became pregnant at the age of 16, left school (she had only completed the sixth grade), and decided to have and keep her baby even though it was clear that the young father would not stand by her. Without a good education, with lack of skills and the heavy burden of raising a child alone, this young woman will face incredible obstacles for most of her life.

I chose these two young women as examples, because they both face similar challenges. They both have been treated unfairly by life, they both are believing Christians, they both have been worked with extensively by the pastors and staff of St. John Lutheran Church in the Bronx. Chances are, both of them will have difficult lives even if they make the right choices, get support, find ways to survive and grow. For both of them, God's promise to stand by them remains unshaken, firm, *and* open to testing by them.

You may say that the two girls are radically different in that the first had her problem forced upon her by others, while the second *chose* to get pregnant, or at least have sex with her boyfriend. I could counter that, given the dynamics of her life—a poor educational system, few economic resources, few real options for self-expression or advancement, a local culture that accepts unmarried teen pregnancy, the irresponsibility of the young man—her "choice" was perhaps as determined as the first girl's. We could argue over which factors make or break a decision—whether the pregnant girl should have to "live with the consequences."

But finally, the answer from God is the same to both young women: "I will stand by you, I will be with you through the unfair and difficult decisions. Trust me." God's love is not limited to those who make the right decisions prior to their troubles. The young Jesus born in a stable, that same Christ born over and over again in abandoned tenement buildings in the South Bronx, does not ask people in need of salvation what decisions they made to get to their state. That God stands with them.

The grown Jesus we encounter in the Gospels is often accused of associating with

people who don't deserve God's love: tax collectors, prostitutes, blind men, Samaritans. And whether or not they "chose" their lot (Does a prostitute choose to be humiliated? Do the poor who work for an occupying army choose to be traitors?), the critique of Jesus' enemies was always the same: these people don't deserve God's love, why is Jesus wasting it on them?

Jesus' reply is nearly always the same. He doesn't ask Zacchaeus why he became a rich crook, he doesn't demand that the woman taken in adultery renounce her past life before he deals with her, he doesn't seem to care why someone is sick, or beaten down, or a sinner. He just says: "Get up! Salvation is come! Your sins are forgiven! Go and sin no more!"

The people most able to hear that good news were those most in need of it. When I look at the Matthew and Luke stories of the birth of Christ, I see that most of the people who respond to the joyful liberation visited upon the earth are outcasts, in need, in danger, on the edge. Mary and Joseph and the child become political refugees. The Magi are in danger of being condemned as spies and subversives. The shepherds are on the lowest rung of the economic ladder. All these people have been treated as castoffs, losers. All are severely tested to lose their relationship with God and one another by what life dishes out to them. Yet somehow they struggle to remain faithful—because God struggles to remain faithful to them.

After working with these young people, many of whom will never have an easy life, I realize how much my faith has been affected. It would be easy for these kids to give up on God and God's church, to give up on the life God gave them, because that life mistreats them so often. And yet, thank God, many of them don't. I believe that even when they don't realize it, faith is living in them—God's faith in them. God's hope for them. God's love.

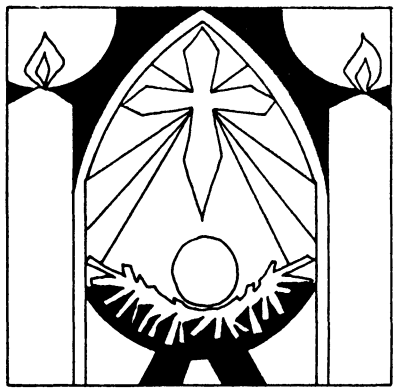
I still believe God does and will act to change the conditions of life that cause the hurts these young people face. I believe God does and will act through us to change the South Bronx. But I also believe that even in the seeming silence or absence of a liberating God, God still is present, hoping and believing in us.

On the last night of the play—the kids were pros now, they had it down cold—God kept her mouth shut again. This time it was the fault of the black Cabbage Patch doll playing the part of baby Jesus. (This was in itself a major theological fight among the cast. Some believed that Jesus *had* to be white, because he's that way in all the pictures. Others believed that Jesus is born "in the South Bronx," and Mary is black, and Joseph is, too, and God was latina, so Jesus *better* be black!) Anyway, baby Jesus was on the left side of the stage during the next to the last scene, and Mary and Joseph were waiting in the right wing to make their entrance at the final scene.

What to do? I picked up baby Jesus and motioned to his parents that I would throw him to them during the few seconds blackout between the scenes. It was a good throw—nice arc, not too hard—but I didn't count on one of the stage lights being in the way. Jesus' head hit the light, and he landed on the stage with a soft thud. I simply froze. I didn't know what to do. And then I saw Joseph, crawling on her belly (we used a young woman for the part, having a lack of male actors), exposing herself to ridicule if the lights came up too soon. Joseph got the baby in time, dusted it off, and gave it to Mary to carry in the final scene. I couldn't see baby Jesus' face, but I didn't hear a peep or a cry out of him. I think there was a smile a mile wide on that blessed little head.

The Gift List

Michael Sherer
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Elida, Ohio



A man named Eric spent Christmas Eve at home, watching old movies on cable television, waiting for his wife and children to return from worship so they could open their gifts. He had never been one to go to church, and in recent years he had even given up going on special occasions like Christmas. He had decided he might as well be honest about things and eliminate the hypocrisy about going just because it was the seasonal thing to do.

So he sat at home and waited. Eventually they returned. They came bursting in the door with the icy wind of near-midnight. The kids were full of excitement about how the church had been completely dark for the singing of "Silent Night," except for the candles in the windows and in their hands and on the altar. The man couldn't for the life of him understand why they kept getting excited about that every, every year. They did the same thing in that church every single Christmas Eve, and his wife and kids never seemed to miss.

But he nodded and seemed to acknowledge their enthusiasm, all the while trying to get the last five minutes of the movie which by now he had gotten completely wrapped up in. His wife dropped her purse and some papers on the kitchen table and went into the living room to make sure everything was ready for the ceremony of opening the gifts.

As he walked through the kitchen he noticed that there were five worship folders there. All were identical. Since he had three children he was a little puzzled. He said to his wife, "How come you took so many bulletins?

"Oh," she replied, "one of them is for you."

"What? Sounds a little dumb. I wasn't there, you know."

"I know," she said, ignoring what she thought was a slightly arrogant tone in his voice. "The church office printed extras so we could take copies to people who couldn't be there."

"What for?" he asked. "So we can have church at home?" He realized as soon as he said it that it sounded more sarcastic than he had meant it to. His wife picked up on the edge in his voice.

"Oh, just forget it. Throw your copy away."

He didn't like the turn things were taking. They were supposed to have a good time on Christmas Eve. After all, wasn't fun and joviality what Christmas was all about? Now he'd made her mad. Her tone was icy. And they hadn't even gotten to the presents yet.

The next morning, stumbling around the kitchen in his slippers and bathrobe before the rest of the family was up, he noticed that there was only one worship folder left lying on the table. He picked it up and looked inside. It was just the order of service for the worship service. There were a couple of prayers and the usual stuff you find in worship folders.

He dropped it on the table again. He went to the refrigerator to get some juice. There was something new on the door, underneath one of those little magnets his wife kept putting there. It was a half-sheet of paper. At the top was the title, "Christmas gifts to receive and share." Underneath were three columns of words. "Faithfulness... encouragement... longsuffering..." the list went on and on. There were twenty-four different words.

"Hmmpf," he said to himself, "probably some handout Alice picked up at church last night." He sipped on his orange juice while he picked up the worship folder still lying on the table, looking for a waste basket to deposit it. He absent-mindedly turned it over and for the first time noticed what he hadn't seen the night before. The same list he had just seen under a magnet on the refrigerator door was also on the back of this worship folder.

In fact, that was where Alice had gotten the list she had put on the refrigerator. That was her copy of the folder. This was his copy. Evidently all three of the kids had this list in their rooms or somewhere since last night.

Instead of throwing the folder away, he slipped it into the desk drawer where he kept his car keys and his billfold. He didn't know why he did it.

On Wednesday he went back to work. As he loaded his keys and his billfold into his suit pockets, he found the list again. He tucked it into his suit pocket and forgot about it.

He didn't see it again until the next time he wore the suit. He took the list out and left it lying on his dresser. It lay there for three weeks, staring at him every morning when he found a comb to run through his hair.

Finally one day in April he said to his wife, quite casually, "What exactly was the idea with that list of gifts you keep on the refrigerator door?"

His wife replied, "My, I thought you'd never ask."

At least there wasn't any ice in her voice. It had melted away with the coming of Spring.

She said, "The pastor said in his Christmas Eve sermon that the real gift of Christmas takes a lot of forms. Like all the different gifts on that sheet of paper. He told us to look to see how many of them are already at work in our lives. Maybe we will only find one or two. Maybe we have all twenty-four. Different people have different gifts."

"Hmmmm," he said, half grunting.

She went on. "He also said that we should keep the list where we will see it for a while, maybe for a whole year, and keep track of times and opportunities we find to pass the gifts we have on to other people. I think he connected it to the idea that this was what we should do with the gift we receive at the manger at Christmas. Find a way to pass it on."

"Well," he replied, "I'll say one thing for you... and maybe for the pastor. He certainly succeeded in getting you to remember that sermon for a long time."

"The interesting thing is," his wife said, "all three of our children have those lists on bulletin boards or pinned to walls or taped to doors in their rooms. They must have taken the idea seriously, too."

That evening, when he was home alone, he took a moment to peek into the three rooms where his children kept their treasures and usually didn't remember to make their beds. He glanced about in each room until he spotted the list he and his wife had been talking about. Sure enough, there was one list in each room. He wondered if his children actually referred to the lists, and what they did about it when they did.

He went into his own bedroom, took the list that was still lying on his dresser, and, opening the medicine cabinet, slid it into the back, behind where the razor and the deodorant stood. That way he could see it if he wanted to, but it wasn't really in his way.

One day several months later he happened to be in his oldest son's bedroom, replacing a burned-out light bulb in the ceiling fixture. As he climbed down from the chair on which he's been standing, he noticed that Shawn had marked on his gift list. He had names of some of his school friends written beneath some of the gift names. He studied the names of the kids and the names of the gifts. He found himself saying, "Yeah, Tony could probably use some honesty. Or needs to learn to have some.... Yeah, Doug could use some patience... if it's the Doug I think it is."

Then he noticed that Shawn had written "Mom" under one of the gifts. Her name was underneath "Love." He studied the list some more. Finally he found his name. It was under the word "Hope."

Why on earth? What did his son mean by that?

A couple weeks later he and Shawn were working on Shawn's bike. He said to his son, "Say, I accidentally noticed when I was working in your room a while ago that you put my name under the word 'hope' on your gift list. How come?"

Shawn didn't say anything for a minute. Then he replied, "You know, Dad, I think I have a lot of hope. That's one of my gifts. I want to give some of it to you."

"You don't think I'm a hopeful person?"

"Oh... well... yeah, I guess you are."

"Well, then, what's the story?"

"Well... I guess I keep hoping you will change your mind about things."

"What kinds of things?"

"Well... I don't really want to get into it."

"Come on, Shawn. Tell me."

His son looked at him. He looked as though he wasn't sure he wanted to say anything. Then he said, "I hope you can come to church with us. And get more interested in God. Things like that. Before I grow up and leave home. You know?"

The next Sunday, as usual, the family went to church while Dad stayed home and slept in, waiting for the arrival of the Sunday newspaper and the pre-game football program on television.

But the Saturday after that, when she went to brush her teeth at bedtime, Alice noticed that her husband had pulled the gift list out of the back of the medicine cabinet and had taped it to the corner of the mirror. When she slipped into bed beside him he said, "I think I'll wear my brown suit to church tomorrow." And he did. And every week thereafter he was with his family in the pew.

On the next Christmas Eve he gave his wife a fancy card, on the inside flap of which he wrote, "Thanks for giving me that gift list." It's one of the most useful things I've ever gotten for Christmas.

On Preaching

Ken Storck
Trinity Lutheran Church
Rockford, Illinois

What difference will these words flung out
Beating against your eardrums make?
Low tones or volumes that shout
Will they speak Life into play?

The Word bottled up in words
Blocked and filtered, edited, stayed
Will trickle like dew drops in soil, unheard,
And penetrate deep in souls today.

There are no words without the Word
Speech is muted, ears are deaf.
But when God speaks a voice is heard
And life is new—the Word is Flesh.

Dare we be silent or give It speech?
My bones like wax, my heart burns full.
I cannot help but voice and preach
The Truth no matter what I do.

Flung on eardrums far and wide
Beat words vibrant in the air.
Will they *ex nihilo* create
fleshed-out Love Incarnate?

Preaching Helps

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany—Good Friday, Series C

The Exodus Pattern

The studies in this issue of *Preaching Helps* cover the end of Epiphany and the whole of the Lenten season. Our Church Year displays serially these two realities—first Epiphany and then Lent. But they belong inseparably together. So it works well to have them bound together in this one issue.

The Gospel for Transfiguration shows Jesus in conversation with God (prayer) and in consultation with Moses and Elijah at a critical turning point in his ministry. He has been healing and teaching and casting out demons throughout Galilee, displaying impressive power. But now he is setting his face to Jerusalem and suffering.

I imagine Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah concerning what it takes to produce a genuine "exodus." What will it take for him to move through life to the end of life in such a way that death and evil have no claim on him, so that finally death will be compelled to give him up as he mounts to God's right hand by means of resurrection? And like Moses and Elijah his struggle is no merely personal quest. All three of them labored to free the people of God from old tyrannies and win them for redeemed life.

So Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah about all the difficulties in the path ahead. Meanwhile his enemies put their heads together, intent on getting rid of him, preserving the status quo, and preventing the world's transfiguration.

Struggle is an inevitable part of whole and holy life in a fallen world. Wholeness and holiness do not simply follow struggle but are located in, with, and under struggle. The glory of God always shines through the good fight.

The Rev. Michael Cooper-White is Bishop's Associate in the Sierra-Pacific Synod. I am happy to welcome him back to these pages for a second appearance. He contributes the Pastoral Reflections for the final Sundays of Epiphany.

Author of First Readings for Lent is the Rev. Kathryn Kleinhans, fifth generation Lutheran pastor on her father's side, pastor's spouse, mother of a two-year-old, and Ph.D. candidate at Emory University in Atlanta, writing on Luther's *Bondage of the Will.* In her spare time she put on her preacher's cap and here shares with us her homiletical perspectives on the Lenten texts.

The Rev. Richard Rollefson, author of the Lenten Reflections, was installed as pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Berkeley, California, last September. A Ph.D. candidate in systematic theology at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, he is a theologian and the spouse of a theologian. He is furthermore a disciplined meditator, weight-lifter, and reader of Wittgenstein, all in the service of pastoring.

Thanks to them for putting their heads together on behalf of Epiphanic Lenten preaching.

I wish all of you,

a most revealing Lent!

Robert H. Smith
Editor of Preaching Helps

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 9, 1992

Psalm 85:8-13
Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13)
1 Corinthians 14:12b-20
Luke 5:1-11

FIRST READING

In 1 Corinthians Paul talks about talk. The church, just like the whole world, is full of words, and it is not always easy to discipline our speaking as preachers or to discern God's speech in the midst of all the other speeches that assault our ears.

The criterion which Paul applies to talk within the church is edification. Does the talk build up community? Does it engage believers and unbelievers alike so that people are bound together in a fellowship praising God?

Paul says that in church he would prefer to speak five words (a handful, one for each finger on his hand) that make sense to others, rather than speak ten thousand words (*myrioi logoi*; a myriad was the largest number in the Greek vocabulary) in a tongue.

Isaiah's call included the lament that his words would meet with stiffest opposition, not because he spoke in tongues but because of the hardheartedness of his hearers.

Peter had a hard time twice in the Gospel for this Sunday. He had worked all night and was packing up his gear. Why should he let down his nets now in broad daylight? But (reluctantly? grouchily? eagerly? hopefully?) he did it. "At your word," he said to Jesus.

The catch was nearly too great. The nets were tearing, and two boats working together began to sink from the weight of the fish they had taken at "the word" of Jesus.

Jesus with his word ripped the ordinary categories of teacher, prophet, sage, rabbi, healer. Peter felt his world with its presuppositions begin to sink. Jesus with his word is an intrusion of awesome proportions, and Peter thought it spelled his ruin (cf. Isaiah's cry, "Woe is me!"). But the word of Jesus is gracious, inviting to new life, new work, new community: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be netting and connecting human beings in new fellowship." RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

It was a long night on the lake. Like the fishermen of Gennesaret, we fished all night and caught nothing. Had it been my decision, by midnight the boat would have been loaded on the trailer and we would have gone home to fish again another day. But the boat belonged to my companion, and he was a far more patient and persistent fisherman than I. So we fished on till dawn. We were comfortable in a modern boat with soft cushions; plenty of coffee and snacks had been carted along. Unlike the fishers of Galilee, our livelihood did not depend on selling our catch. All that was at stake was a little pride in facing our families fishless and empty-handed.

All in all, my one experience of night-long fishing is a pleasant memory. Some fifteen years later, however, I can still remember the fatigue and tiredness as dawn finally came. I recall gaining a new appreciation of Peter's early morning protests: "What do you mean, stranger, put out into the deep? We have fished all night, and we're beat. Besides, the best fishing hours have passed. The only wise decision is to get some rest now and try again this evening."

"Put out into the deep," commanded the lakeside stranger. "Go fishing again!" Mysteriously driven, the Galilean fishermen ventured back onto the lake, let down their net, and made a great catch.

The catch, though great, is clearly secondary. The Gospel writer ignores what happened to all those fish left to rot in the afternoon sun when the fishers followed Jesus. The great catch was the catch of imagination and dedication and devotion. Jesus caught the first disciples! They were caught up in his movement, and in turn they, like Isaiah, were called to point others the way toward God.

Troublesome indeed are some aspects of this fishing business. Luring people with tantalizing bait, then hooking or netting them into our boat to be dragged off against their will is not the mean-

ing of evangelism! Also troublesome can be the implication that following Jesus means leaving a stinking, rotting mess behind in the sun! Discipleship need not necessarily mean abandoning vocation and going off somewhere to do something new and different. For some, following Jesus means staying in their boats with a new sense of mission. In any case following Jesus means the end to business as usual.

The size of the catch can discourage. Not all lakes may have the potential of Lake Gennesaret! Don't you sometimes wish that the Gospel writers' claims were more modest? Wouldn't it be refreshing to learn that some recent manuscript discoveries revealed the text really said: "They went fishing again; and the fish were biting, but they didn't catch their limit." Your parish may have the potential for net-breaking growth. But just maybe all your faithful fishing efforts will result in very modest catches. And sometimes there will be long nights of faithful fishing when you return to shore with an empty boat.

Called to put out into the deep places of life: that was the destiny of Isaiah, of the Gennesaret fisher-folk, of all who hear the voice of the Triune God. Called in the midst of our weariness. Called to speak for the God of justice and shalom. Called to adoration. Called to service. Called to launch out. MCW

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany February 16, 1992

Psalm 1
Jeremiah 17:5-8
1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20
Luke 6:17-26

FIRST READING

Both Jeremiah and Jesus in the lessons for this day utter a series of curses and blessings. Both are designed to catch hearers up short and make us take stock of our lives with all their entanglements. What are our fundamental commitments? What is our orientation and direction?

Luke portrays Jesus as attracting to himself a vast multitude of people. Described as flowing to Jesus "from all Judea and Jerusalem" on the one hand and from "the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon" on the other, they seem to represent an international and interfaith crowd, both Jews and Gentiles, a foretaste of the harvest to come which Luke celebrates in the Book of Acts.

"Power came forth" from Jesus, and they were all healed. Healed both from their physical ills but also from deeper and more resistant ills, ills of the heart. They were healed so that they could at least begin to understand Jesus as he spoke to them "the Sermon on the Plain."

If the present world is in the grip of demonic powers, and if you are rich and full in such a world, and if those who are in charge in such a world speak well of you, then woe to you.

But if in such a world you are poor, and you hunger and weep, and you are widely held to be of no account, then blessed are you.

Worlds are colliding. A new world is being born in Jesus, in Jesus' ministry and in Jesus' word. The new world is spiritually discerned, and not all have eyes to see it. It makes its epiphany known to the eyes of faith.

In Corinth some Christians subjected Christ to the power of this old world. They believed that Christ gave power only to escape this world. Jesus and Paul, however, announce the epiphany of a total new reality entirely eclipsing the present order.

The new world of God is far more than a private retreat in the individual psyche. It is a world every bit as real and comprehensive as the one issuing from Adam and Eve in the first place. It is on the way. It is coming. Its power reaches us already, and at its full epiphany God will be everything to everyone. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"And all were trying to touch him, for power came out of him."

Contemporary power-seekers also try to touch their heroes. Batting practice in every major league ballpark finds a thousand young

hands clutching pen and pad or baseball card, calling out the names of their favorites: "Hey, José, how about an autograph?" "Yo, Kirby, over here!" As if their multi-million dollar salaries were not sufficient, many major leaguers these days will only sign at special high price-tag events, and then for a fee! But still, the ever-hopeful idolizers crowd behind the dugout before the game, hoping to get the sluggers' scribbled marks.

A recent visit to the set of television's "Beverly Hills 90210" offered me a glimpse into the dressing room of teen idol Luke Perry. Bulging sacks of unopened fan mail filled an entire corner of his tiny quarters. Notes from thousands of teenagers scribbled with all the passion of adolescent fervor pleaded for his attention. "Please send me your picture!" "Would you sign this card for my friend?" "I just adore you and the show!" My own teenager's envy when I told him I met the cast of "90210" confirmed my re-discovery of how we are all in one way or another attracted to those who are perceived as having fame, fortune, or power.

From miles around came the Judean power-seekers, trying desperately to get Jesus' autograph. The nature of his claim remains elusive. But in the towns and villages of Judea his reputation was gaining momentum. "He heals people. He's really a great preacher. He's one awesome dude!" The Judean gossip chain produced power-seekers by the hundreds and thousands. They came in person, seeking the mark of Jesus on their lives.

And Jesus responded. He left his mark inscribed on their very souls. Jesus signed their lives in strokes of healing. Jesus granted interviews and spoke of radical love: self-giving, poor-embracing, justice-seeking love. Jesus' signature became woven into the very fabric of history. At his cross he made his final mark, signing "redeemed" on all creation.

Paul points to the autograph of Jesus on history's record: "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are to be pitied!" The Jesus mark is for us the indelible sign of baptism into his death and resurrection. Our very selves are signed with eternity. MCW

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany
February 23, 1992

Psalm 103:1-13
Genesis 45:3-8a,15
1 Corinthians 15:35-38a,42-50
Luke 6:27-38

FIRST READING

Joseph dealing in such an unexpectedly (and undeservedly) gracious fashion with his brothers foreshadows Jesus' forgiving manner with his disciples after his resurrection. Every act of forgiveness is an epiphany of the new creation, a foretaste of the feast to come.

Paul strains to find language to describe the resurrection bodies of the redeemed. It seems an oxymoron to speak of "a spiritual body," but Paul presses ahead anyway. He is the visionary in this passage, sharing in nearly ecstatic fashion the grandeur of the vision that has captured his imagination and his allegiance. He foresees a time coming when every particle of the universe, every atom and molecule, every body, will be the perfect vehicle of the Spirit of God, open to the working of God, no longer resisting and fleeing from the voice of God, as Adam fled in the garden.

Verses 50 and 51 really belong together. Otherwise we will stumble on v. 50. "Flesh and blood" means people alive at the final epiphany of the Christ. "The perishable" are the saints who have died before that epiphany. "All" will be changed, says Paul. All must undergo a transformation like that of the kernel of wheat (v. 37). That transformation and life in the new world of God are nearly unimaginable but can be glimpsed and held by faith. The redemption of the world will not be the rejection of the world and of bodies but their transfiguration.

Love (Luke 6) is the spiritual power of God's new creation at work even now in the midst of the old order. Love means having a loose grip on the things of this old world, the ability therefore to share things with others, share self with others, even if the others are strangers or enemies.

The fundamental reality of God, celebrated by Luke everywhere in his story of Jesus, is mercy. Luke had experienced mercy in his own encounter with the message of the Christ, and he wrote his whole narrative of the Gospel from the birth of Jesus to Paul's entry into Rome (Acts 28) as a doxology praising that mercy, embracing saints and sinners, Jews and Gentiles, in a single divine love. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The late Edmund Steimle led Bible studies at the Lutheran World Federation assembly in 1963. In one of the sessions, he commented on the meaning of salvation: "The root meaning of that old word, salvation... means room—room for a soul to move around in. This is what Christ offers you" ("The Extravagant Kindness," in *Are You Looking for God?* p. 154). Exploring this same theme of salvation as making room is a little book by José Miguez Bonino, *Room to be People* (Fortress, 1979.)

One of the great challenges in our church today is to make room for people with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and lifestyles. No, we cannot be all things to all people. No, the gospel's witness cannot be compromised or clouded by accommodating every fad or embracing every new idea. And yet, a roomy church will exhibit generosity of spirit, openness to receive those who are different from ourselves, willingness to listen and be stretched in our understandings and perspectives.

A theme of making room, of hospitality, of generosity of spirit runs through this Sunday's pericopes. The reunion of Joseph and his brothers is a story full of pathos. If you, like I, have experienced powerful feelings at family reunions, imagine the emotional overload at this one! Surely Joseph demonstrated an incredible generosity with his long-estranged brothers.

Joseph went beyond forgiveness and attending to his brothers' physical needs. His concern extended to their personal, psychological, and spiritual healing: "Now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here" (v. 5). Joseph was concerned about that most powerful and poignant of human emotions, guilt or regret.

Jesus' sayings in today's Gospel from the Sermon on the Plain are likewise oriented toward generosity of spirit and the creation of room in the community. What would a community look like where retribution and retaliation give way to enemy-loving compassion? Do Jesus' words, "lend, expecting nothing in return," bear some practical implications for low- or no-interest loans being made available in economically desperate communities? Might they also have significance for congregations blessed with generous real estate holdings or reserve funds? Or how about generosity in personal stewardship? What issues of roominess and generosity need to be addressed in your place of ministry?

Depending on your context, it may be important to explore also the limits of generosity and forgiveness. Too often in the past, Jesus' saying about turning the other cheek has been heard by victims of abuse as a mandate to stay in life-threatening situations. Surely, Jesus' words do not mean that victims must continue to suffer silently at the hands of abusers. Together in Christian community we can struggle to find the balance wherein we are open to others, yet maintain our personal boundaries.

In the second lesson, one can imagine St. Paul at the old word-processor writing and rewriting, using the "delete" key over and over again. How to capture the essence of God's incredible generosity of the resurrection life for us humans and for all creatures? Finally, St. Paul declares there is room for each and every one of us in God's present and future household. MCW

The Transfiguration of Our Lord March 1, 1992

Psalm 99:1-5
Deuteronomy 34:1-12
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Luke 9:28-36

FIRST READING

Did Moses die? The last chapter of Deuteronomy says that he did, and yet the story is full of mysterious overtones. The Lord buried Moses and "no one knows the place of his burial to this day" (34:6). His end is as awesome as that of Elijah, who mounted up to God by means of a chariot of fire and horses of fire in the midst of a whirlwind (2 Kgs 2).

Those two ancient worthies, Moses and Elijah, appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Jesus about his departure, literally the "exodus" which he was going to work at Jerusalem. Luke emphasizes that the scene occurred as Jesus was praying. It was by means of prayer that Jesus entered into conversation with these two representatives of the heavenly order (cf. Lk 3:20-21; Acts 10-11).

The preceding scene, in which Peter confessed Jesus as "the Christ of God" and Jesus called the disciples to take up their cross (9:18-27), also features prayer (v. 18).

Luke everywhere portrays Jesus and the church entering into communion with the heavenly world by means of prayer: learning the will of God, guided into new paths by God, nurtured and strengthened for witness by God.

Empowered by the Spirit, Jesus' ministry up to this point has been a triumphal procession. He has been moving through the villages and towns of Galilee healing, teaching, and casting out demons. Now he converses with Moses and Elijah, battle-scarred veterans of the struggle to win for God a faithful servant-people.

The Transfiguration is a pause in Jesus' ministry, and it is a turning point. It is not hard to imagine that as he catches his breath, so his enemies also take stock of the situation. Jesus puts his head together with Moses and Elijah. Who are the precedents for Jesus' enemies? With whom do they consult and strategize?

Jesus girds himself for the struggles ahead, knowing that the way is hard. But he also knows that it truly is the path to "exodus" and freedom. By means of his power and his weakness, his healings and his sufferings, he is "the one to redeem Israel" (Lk 24:21).

Our culture seems to despise sufferings, hardships, difficulties, delays in gratification, discipline, sacrifices. The Bible understands that difficulties and limitations, suffering and discipline are not the whole of life but are integral to spiritual growth and wholeness. Because the gospel involves not only power but also suffering, it is perceived as a hard word. It is "veiled," says Paul, but only to those who are perishing. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The 1990s apparently will be an era of frequent summit meetings of the world's political leaders. Presidents, prime ministers, and their high-level aides come together at the summits to negotiate terms and treaties. Perhaps even more important are personal relationships forged at these economic conferences and political meetings.

The Scriptures for Transfiguration Sunday give glimpses into holy summits. At the top of Mount Nebo, Moses met with God in the final summit session of his life. No stranger to the mountaintop, Moses had previously experienced both the terror and glory of the summit. In his final meeting with Yahweh, Moses must have felt both joy and sadness—joy as it was revealed the people would finally enter the promised land after their four decades of wilderness wandering; sadness that he would not complete the journey with them. While the place of his final resting is unknown "to this day," Moses' place in the history of God's people is fixed for all time: "And there has not arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses."

On the mountain of the Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John joined Jesus at another summit with the Holy. In that high hour, God declared Jesus' place in time and eternity. The disciples remained partially uncomprehending;

Peter wanted to build booths, preserve a revelatory moment which was unique and unrepeatable.

For God's faithful people of any time and place, mountain moments must be followed by mission momentum! Surely we wish for ourselves and our people some mountaintop experiences—high moments when there is visceral and emotional encounter with the reality of God's power and presence. But just as certainly we are called to inspire and stimulate mission momentum. Having occasional emotional faith experiences is not enough; indeed, some of us may never enter fully into them. Joseph Sittler's sermon, "The View from Mt. Nebo" (from *Care of the Earth*, Fortress, 1964) has been helpful to many of us whose faith tends to be more cerebral than emotional. Mission momentum is generated by a deep commitment to find summit encounters with the Holy in ordinary places and low moments too.

Martin Luther King, Jr., in his final message in Memphis on the eve of his assassination, declared: "I've been to the mountaintop... God's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land." Dr. King understood the profound relationship between mountaintop moments and the mission momentum which flows from them. High hours of inspiration and communion with God energize us for engagement in life's daily struggles. MCW

Ash Wednesday
March 4, 1992

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

FIRST READING

The first two lessons begin with calls to action: "Return" (Joel 2:12,13) and "Be reconciled" (2 Cor 5:20b). Nevertheless, in each case the real initiative is God's. God's revealed character—"gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Joel 2:13, quoting Ex 34:6)—is the motivation for Israel's return; the call to "return to the Lord" is grounded in the hope that the Lord will "repent" of the punishment Israel deserves (vv. 13f.). Similarly, Paul's appeal, "Be reconciled to God," is grounded in the immediately prior proclamation that through Christ God has reconciled us (v. 18) and is reconciling the world (v. 19) to himself.

Since God has taken the initiative in establishing a salutary relationship with people, the point of our response is not to win God's favor but to receive the benefits God offers. Joel envisions a "blessing" (*berakhah*) as a result of Israel's return (v. 14). The blessing is the restoration of the land's fertility after plague and drought, satisfying Israel herself (v. 19) and enabling her to make appropriate offerings to God (v. 14). For Paul, the benefit resulting from our reconciliation with God is that in Christ "we might become the righteousness of God" (1 Cor 5:21). This righteousness is not limited to justification (our sin in exchange for Christ's righteousness) but is meant to bear ethical fruit in the life of the believer; thus, Paul warns against receiving the grace of God "in vain" (*kenos*, literally "empty, without content," 6:1).

It is because, in Christ, we ourselves are/are becoming the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21) that we do not need to "practice our righteousness" (*dikaiosyne*, translated "piety" in RSV and NRSV) in such a way that it may be seen by others (Mt 6:1). Almsgiving, fasting, and prayer do not establish our righteousness before God; rather, being made righteous in Christ, we are free to give alms, fast, and pray without worrying about merit. Being precedes doing.

Why, then, does Jesus say that the Father will reward us (vv. 4, 6, 18)? As in the first two lessons, benefits do result from being in right relationship with God. (Consider Luther's emphasis, in both Large and Small Catechisms, on the benefits we receive from the sacraments.) Translation obscures the difference between Jesus' description of God's rewarding the faithful and the reward of the hypocrites. For "your Father ... will reward you" (vv. 4, 6, 18), the verb is

apodidomi, which refers to divine reward or punishment but has its root in the verb *didomi*, "to give." The "reward" that the hypocrites "have received" (vv. 2, 5, 16), however, implies compensation (*misthos*) for which they have signed a receipt (*apechein*). Why bargain with God to receive the law's limited reward when unlimited treasures will be given to those who are in Christ? KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

On this night which begins the season of Lent, we walk to the altar to be marked by ashes traced in the sign of the cross. Spoken over us, as the shadowy cross is drawn, is a kind of pronouncement of death: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return." There is a darkness to this season as we stand beneath the shadow of the cross.

Ancient peoples knew the burden of the darkness as the winter wore on. The larders of harvest provisions grew smaller with each day, and still the sun set early in the west. The "dead of winter" we call it, for death feels near. Lent begins in darkness.

And yet, for eyes open to perceive it, a change is at hand. Little by little, the sun rises earlier in the sky and there are hidden signs of life on the barren trees and bushes. Deep within the darkness and death of winter, something new is astir. For ears attuned to the stillness, a word of hope is spoken.

The same is true of Ash Wednesday itself. For there is a paradoxical character to an ashen cross and the pronouncement of mortality. The marking on our forehead is the sign of a cross not our own; hidden within the statement "remember that you are dust," is the gospel.

Although Ash Wednesday begins a season of Lenten repentance and fasting, it also prefigures the resurrection of our Lord. The sign we bear on our foreheads is a light burden—light as the ashes of which it is made—a shadow image of the heavy burden already borne by Christ. Because it is borne in remembrance of Christ's cross it is a sign not only of mortification but of redemption. So it is also that the words of death, "you are dust," help us to perceive the One who alone brings new life.

Lent begins with the sign of the cross. But the cross is now a sign of healing, hope, and new life. There is darkness and death we must still confront in our own lives, but we do so in light of One who has overcome death and darkness. There is a need for repentance, conversion, and new life, but all this is in response to the prior gift of God's grace in Christ.

Lent begins with the gospel, for it begins with Christ. RGR

First Sunday in Lent
March 8, 1992

Psalm 91
Deuteronomy 26:5-10
Romans 10:8b-13
Luke 4:1-13

FIRST READING

Luke's account of Jesus' temptation foreshadows the drama of Holy Week. Luke reorders the three exchanges between Jesus and the devil so that the climax takes place not on a mountain, as in Matthew, but in Jerusalem. At the end of the temptations, the devil departs from Jesus "until an opportune time" (*kairos*, v. 13). The opportunity comes in 22:3, when Satan enters into Judas Iscariot to tempt him (successfully!) to betray Jesus.

But the foreshadowing points already beyond Lent to the post-resurrection witness of the disciples. The devil claims authority over "all the kingdoms of the world" (but *oikoumene* in Luke 4:5, rather than *kosmos* in Matthew 4:8); it is this very *oikoumene* that is "turned upside down" by the proclamation of the gospel (Acts 17:6, 24:5). Jesus is the one who has the authority and the glory over "all the kingdoms of the world" after all, obtained not by worshiping the devil but by defeating him.

The first lesson is also forward-looking. Moses teaches the people a liturgical response for the offering of first fruits, but this instruction

takes place before the people enter into the promised "land flowing with milk and honey" (v. 9). This proleptic confession of gratitude suggests a fullness of faith in those still wandering in the wilderness, without any first fruits to offer yet. Similarly, Jesus is "full of the Holy Spirit" (Lk 4:1) during his wilderness wandering, even though his stomach is empty. One does not live by bread (or milk and honey) alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deut 8:3).

Paul stresses the Romans' own words of response to God's word, echoing Deut 30:14: "The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe." One lives by the word of the Lord, Moses said. Paul is more specific: one is "justified" by belief in that word and "saved" by confessing and calling upon Jesus as Lord (vv. 10, 13). Tempting the Lord is forbidden; calling upon the Lord for help is commended, even necessary. The Israelites were saved when they "cried to the Lord the God of our fathers" (Deut 26:7); the same Lord is now, in Jesus Christ, known to be Lord of both Jew and Greek (Rom 10:12). The one with authority over "all the kingdoms of the world" must be preached to all the inhabitants of the world (vv. 14f). Paul calls Christians to words both of confession and of proclamation: those who live by the word of the Lord are the channels through whom others may come to live by the word of the Lord.

Psalm 91 reinforces the theme of calling upon God for help (v. 15) and provides the original context for the words of the devil's third temptation of Jesus (vv. 11f.). Angelic protection is for those whose dwelling is with the Lord ("Because...," v. 9). It is not an independent guarantee. KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

If Lent begins with the sign of the cross on Ash Wednesday, the whole of Lent may be seen as "the way of the cross." This way or path leads through a wilderness of temptation. It is in the wilderness that Jesus first confronts the meaning of the cross.

Jesus prepares for his ministry and all that is to follow by journeying alone to a wild place. It is here, in the wilderness, that Jesus confronts the seductive temptation to take another path than that which leads to the cross. Each temptation Jesus faces poses an attractive alternative to the challenging path of faith, compassion, and vulnerability.

There is a "wildness" to all temptation. In a wilderness the great danger is that we will become lost and wander alone and aimless. The real wilderness is, of course, the human heart, that wild place deep within each one of us. In this lonely wilderness fear and distrust reign supreme without the presence of the One who is sovereign over all. At its heart all temptation is the temptation not to trust in God. The wilderness is that place within our lives where we directly and unambiguously confront the challenge of faith in God.

Like Jesus, we must each somehow enter the depths of this untamed wilderness if we are fully to understand the lengths to which God will go to find us. Without an experience of the wilderness we cannot fully comprehend what it means to trust in God.

The temptations we face take many forms. They vary from the petty to the profound. But chief among them is the temptation not to bear the mark of the cross in our lives. The sign of the cross that we receive on Ash Wednesday is the outward marking of something that must be borne within. To bear the cross is to follow Christ's own way.

The way of Christ's cross is the way of compassion, vulnerability, and trust: it is an openness literally to "suffer with" those in need by holding fast to God's promise that there is no place so wild or lonely that God is not there with us.

Once again, it is the gospel which makes it possible for us to follow the way of the cross. It is the good news that there is no temptation which God, in Christ, has not overcome, the promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, the assurance that there is no depth of the human heart that God will not reach. For in the end, to bear the sign of the cross is to lead a life marked by the Christ who dwells within the wilderness of our own hearts. RGR

Second Sunday in Lent March 15, 1992

Psalm 42:1-7, 11-15
Jeremiah 26:8-15
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Luke 13:31-35

FIRST READING

The common themes of the day's lessons are enemies and destruction. Jeremiah makes enemies and receives death threats when he prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus is threatened with death by Herod, if he stays in Galilee, and with a prophet's death if he journeys on to Jerusalem. Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, "Behold, your house is forsaken" (Lk 13:35), echoes Jeremiah's pronouncement, "This house/city shall be desolate" (Jer 22:5, 26:9). Jeremiah's prophecy is rejected not only because he speaks against Jerusalem but because he dares to do so "in the name of the Lord" and by the Lord's authority (Jer 26:9). After Jesus enters Jerusalem "in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38), he will also be rejected after prophesying the desolation of Jerusalem (Lk 21:20).

At the heart of the problem is a conflict of will. No current English translation reflects the occurrence of the same Greek verb (*thelein*) for Herod's will to kill Jesus (v. 31), Jesus' will to gather the Jerusalemites (v. 34) and their will to reject him (v. 34). Jesus' will is grounded in the divine will to save—in spite of (even because of) opposition by human wills. It is because human beings continually reject God's will that Jesus "must" (the eschatological *dei*, a Lukan motif) go to Jerusalem to be killed (v. 33). Jesus submits his will not only to God but also to those whose will is to reject him and to kill him; his rejection and death are precisely the means by which he accomplishes God's will to save. Thus the strange development in the Gospel text: The Pharisees warn Jesus, "Leave Galilee. Herod wants to kill you." Jesus responds, "I'll go to Jerusalem; they can kill me there."

Paul states the enmity theme most concisely: it is those who "live as enemies of the cross of Christ" whose "end is destruction" (Phil 3:18f.). Paul also states the solution to the conflict of wills most concisely. His sole use of *thelein* in Philippians occurs at 2:13: "it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Human wills are brought into line with the divine will when we have the mind of Christ (2:5); only then can we "join in imitating" Paul (3:17) as we wait for the coming of the Savior who will transform us in/into his glory (3:20f).

The psalmist's abuse at the hands of his enemies leads him to question God (42:11), but, despite his depression (vv. 6, 14), he trusts God (vv. 7, 15) and longs for God's presence (vv. 1f.). KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The way of the cross leads Jesus to Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the "holy city," is also known as the city which kills prophets who bring God's message. Jerusalem is the place where, in the name of God, God's Word is rejected.

That's how it was for Jeremiah—someone whose very name has become synonymous with "bad news." In the name of God, Jeremiah spoke out against the people of Israel with a message of coming destruction and desolation. When Jeremiah got through speaking God's message the religious leaders wanted to kill him. Sometimes the messenger gets blamed for the message he or she bears. And sometimes—often—God's Word is not a message that people want to hear.

The same was true for Jesus and his message. It, too, met with opposition from the political and religious establishment. For the truth is that the message from God that has come to be called "the good news" is bad news for some. It is bad news for those who, in the name of tradition and authority, oppose the new thing that God seeks to bring about.

But if the opposition to Jeremiah had to do with a case of mistaken identification of the message and its bearer, the same is not true for Jesus. For Jesus did not simply bring a message from God, but in a deeper sense, Jesus himself *is* the message from God. The opposition Jesus

faces is ultimately opposition not only to what he says but to who he is. Jesus is the "Word made flesh." In Christ, message and messenger are one.

If Jerusalem is the place where God's message is opposed, then the cross is the place where this message—incarnate in the "Word made flesh"—is, for all appearances, decisively defeated. The cross is the human word enacted in opposition to God's Word. But the cross was not and is not the final word.

The "way of the cross" which led to Jerusalem, to opposition and to death, does not end there. For Jesus, the way of the cross leads to but also beyond the cross. That is, it leads to God. The identification of the message and messenger, of Jesus as God's Word incarnate and of the cross as the locus of God's victory over all human opposition, is possible only in light of the resurrection.

If Jerusalem is the city which kills God's prophets, it is also the "holy city," the place made sacred by the death and resurrection of God's Incarnate Word. RGR

Third Sunday in Lent
March 22, 1992

Psalm 126
Exodus 3:1-8b, 10-15
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

FIRST READING

The Gospel is clearly a warning: repent (vv. 1-5; Fitzmyer translates *metanoia* as reform) and bear fruit (vv. 6-9) or perish. Jesus shifts the focus of attention—and the focus of judgment—away from others to his own hearers and thus to us. The warning suggests that there is still time for change; the threat of violent death (Pilate's victims) or accidental death (the tower of Siloam) or death at the end of one's own unproductive life (the fig tree) need not be the last word. But judgment is a very real possibility! Unless we repent, we will also perish (vv. 3, 5); *apollumi* bears the meaning "to be lost" as well as "to perish" and is often used figuratively in the New Testament to imply being lost eternally (cf. Lk 17:33 and parallels). With this threat of eternal lostness fresh from his lips, Jesus tells the parable of a vineyard owner seeking repeatedly to find fruit on a fig tree and not finding it. The parable is left unresolved. Will the fig tree finally bear fruit next year? If not, will it really be cut down or will it once again be given a reprieve? The tone of this parable of not-finding is in striking contrast to the three parables of finding-the-lost in Luke 15.

The second lesson is also a warning, although RSV's translation of *typos* as "warning" in 1 Cor 10:6,11 is heavy-handed. The Corinthians were overconfident of their spiritual standing. Paul argues that sharing in "spiritual" food and drink (NRSV corrects the RSV translation of *pneumatikos* as "supernatural" in vv. 3-4) is no guarantee against God's displeasure (v. 5). Idolatry (v. 7), immorality (v. 8), testing the Lord (v. 9) and grumbling (v. 10) all call for repentance and reform. Those who think they are safe (and saved!) may still fall (v. 12), just as those who survived Pilate's wrath and the accident at Siloam are not yet home free.

The good news in today's texts is rooted in the Exodus account of the call of Moses. Over against the warnings in the other texts, we find here God's promise of Israel's deliverance from bondage (Ex 3:7-10). The promise was fulfilled, as Paul confirms by recounting the elements of cloud, sea, manna, and spring from later in the drama of the exodus from Egypt. God reveals to Moses the divine name, *yhwh*, "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be" (v. 14). What God "will be," God promises to Moses, is "with you" (v. 12). The fulfillment of God's identity and the promised deliverance are recorded in the New Testament, where Jesus identifies himself with the divine "I am" (Jn 8:58) and after the resurrection promises his disciples that he "will be with you" always (Mt 28:20). KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Jerusalem is sometimes called the holy city, a place set apart and made sacred by God. But before Jerusalem there was another holy place. It

was in a wilderness, on a mountain called Sinai where Moses heard a voice speaking from a burning bush. And the voice told Moses to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground.

To be "holy" means to "be set apart." For a place to be holy means that it is set apart from other places because something extraordinary is taking place there. A voice from a bush which burns without being consumed is extraordinary, but that's not what made the little patch of ground where Moses stood on Mount Sinai holy.

As Frederick Buechner writes in his theological dictionary *Wishful Thinking*: "Only God is holy.... To speak of anything else as holy is to say that it has something of God's mark on it. Times, places, things, and people can all be holy." Even more than the burning bush that Moses saw and the invisible voice which Moses heard, it was what the voice said that had God's special mark upon it. What Moses heard on Mount Sinai was that the Creator of the universe felt compassion for the plight of some slaves held in bondage in Egypt. While that is extraordinary enough, the voice went on to say that God was planning to do something about it. And even more extraordinary—at least from Moses' perspective—was that God said that Moses was the one he was going to use to accomplish the task. In other words, like it or not, Moses had God's mark upon him, set apart by God for a special task.

In another part of the Bible—the part called the New Testament or new covenant to distinguish it from the old covenant made with Moses and the people of Israel on Mt. Sinai—God sets another person apart and gives to him a holy and extraordinary task. The person set aside is Jesus of Nazareth, and the extraordinary task he is given is to set free from slavery not just one small group of people, but the whole world. Because the same God is involved, it is not a revocation of the old covenant but instead its extension to all people.

On Mount Sinai Moses was told to take his shoes off as he walked on holy ground. On the little hill called Golgotha, Jesus was stripped naked. This time there was no miraculous burning bush, no invisible voice, just a man dying alone on a cross. The contrast couldn't be more pronounced. And yet given the man and the sacred task for which he had been set apart, the garbage heap where the cross stood was holy ground as well. It was a place, despite all evidence to the contrary, with God's mark upon it. Or as those who believe in what happened a few days later say, it was holy ground because it was somehow God himself who was there on the cross.

If being holy means to be set apart for an extraordinary task and to have God's mark upon you, then we who follow Christ are holy too. Not better or more competent—like Moses we're rightly amazed that God should choose the likes of us—but set apart to do God's work in the world. But in this case the extraordinary task we are given is to proclaim, in words and actions, what God has already done in Christ. It's what walking the way and bearing the sign of the cross—the holy mark of God—is all about. RGR

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 29, 1992

Psalm 32
Isaiah 12:1-6
1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

FIRST READING

Paul's theology of the cross is dynamic. Christ is "the power (*dynamis*) of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24) These are not abstract qualities; they describe not the preexistent second person of the Trinity but the crucified Christ. The crucified Christ is the power of God *to save*, the power of God that is efficacious for "us" through "the word of the cross" (v. 18). Christ as the Wisdom of God is not some higher revelation about God than the world can attain through its wisdom but is a gift to the elect: God has made Christ Jesus to be "our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (v. 30). One is reminded of Martin Luther's description of his central Reformation insight, based on the study of

another Pauline text, Rom 1:17: "There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith.... I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God" ("Preface to the Latin Writings," LW 34:337).

The "foolishness" of the cross is twofold, then: not just that the Son of God should die a criminal's death, but that he should do it, in the words of the Nicene Creed, "for us and for our salvation." That the Corinthian Christians dare to believe this foolishness/Good News *about themselves* (vv. 26ff.) is as scandalous to non-believers as is the crucified Christ himself (cf. v. 23, *skandalon*).

The older son in today's Gospel is scandalized by the father's acceptance of the returning prodigal. Throwing a big welcome-home party for the ne'er-do-well seems to him the height of folly. The older son prefers to live by the law: bitterly obedient, resentful of anyone who gets away with less than obedience. Had he been in charge, the younger son's wish to be treated as a hired servant would have been honored as the appropriate response to one who had forfeited his rights as a member of the family. But the older son has failed to exercise his own rights as a member of the family by seeing himself as a slave (v. 29) and by failing to enjoy himself (v. 31).

The younger son "came to himself" with the realization that he was "perishing" (v. 17) and returned home. Perhaps the father's compassion seemed folly to him, too, when he was welcomed with so much more than he either expected or deserved. But, like the word of the cross in 1 Cor., the folly of the father's compassion is precisely the power to save those who are, without it, perishing. Psalm 32 is a confession of one who knows himself to be perishing in sin, who yet trusts in the Lord. Similarly, Isaiah looks forward to a day when those who deserve God's anger are comforted and rejoice in God's salvation. KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The story that Jesus told known to us as the "parable of the prodigal son" might be alternately entitled "the story of the loving father" or "the parable of the two sons." Which title you prefer all depends on which part of the story seems most important to you.

When the emphasis is put on the younger son who took off with his inheritance, the point of the story is usually seen to be his repentance, his "change of heart" and his return home. All of these are important themes and in keeping with the story, but sometimes—at least the way some of us end up using the story—it sounds more like something out of Aesop's fables than the gospel of Jesus Christ. What I mean is that when the emphasis is only on the younger son and his supposed change of heart the tale sounds like a story with a moral—about how young sons should stay home where they're supposed to be in the first place, but that when they do run off, if enough bad things happen to them, maybe they'll wise up and go back to where they should've stayed in the first place. It may be an important lesson, but somehow I don't think "there's no place like home" is what Jesus had in mind.

To focus on the younger son and his "repentance" might seem to be a good Lenten theme; the only problem is there's no real evidence that it was anything but his growling stomach that led the boy back home. The stomach and the heart aren't all that far apart, but they have different functions in stories just as they do in bodies. The words he rehearses as he walks along with his tail between his legs have the outward sound of repentance, but since he barely has the chance to get them out before his father runs down the road to grab him, I don't think we should make too much of it. Better to focus on Dad.

If there's a hero in this story it's the father. He's had his heart broken, let alone his billfold lightened, but still when he sees the boy coming down the road it's as if all is forgotten. He's home and it's reason to celebrate. Not much of a moral, hardly a lesson to be learned, but somehow you sense that, given how crazy Jesus' other stories are, this is somewhere closer to the truth: God is like the loving father who welcomes us back, no matter what.

The only problem is that other son. What are we supposed to make of him? He's a bit of a priss and a party-pooper to boot. Still, he's been working on the old homestead the whole time, and you can't really blame him for being mad at both his brother and his old man. Parties might be a great thing, but if you only get one thrown for you after you've run off and spent all your money on women and wine, what am I still doing on the back 40? It's a question some of us in the church can't help but ask as well. Grace is a great thing, but younger brother types are still jerks.

When you come right down to it, since the story has three characters it's most likely that whatever point it's supposed to have needs to involve all of them. That is, the point of the parable is what happens among the three of them. Maybe you could even say that it's the part about what happens among them that we *aren't* told that matters most of all. The old man and the boy in the parlor with the elder son stewing out behind the barn. The question is, how are they going to get him to join the celebration? Since Dad had already had a crack at the elder son, it looks like it's going to be up to the prodigal. Maybe that's where the change of heart is going to happen, if it's going to happen at all. This time he's going to have to leave his father not on a quest "to find himself," but to find his brother. And if he's going to get his older brother in on the party, this time the words of repentance will have to ring true. He's going to have to say something like, "Yeah, I was a jerk; I was wrong to run off and leave you with all the work; I was wrong to break the old man's heart. But look, we're going to have a party, whatever the reason, and we can't have one without you." It might not be enough, but it's a start.

Whatever Jesus had in mind when he told the story, if it's really the gospel it can't leave the elder son out. The way of the cross is the path of a forgiveness which leads first to repentance and then on to reconciliation. Another way to put it—although the parable does it better—is to say that the way of the cross, like Lent itself, ends in celebration. RGR

Fifth Sunday in Lent
April 5, 1992

Psalm 28:1-3, 7-11
Isaiah 43:16-21
Philippians 3:8-14
Luke 20:9-19

FIRST READING

In today's prayer of the day, we confess that we have failed to be God's messengers in the world. The parable of the tenants in the vineyard suggests that we may be better off not being God's messengers, given the treatment that the servants and eventually the son of the vineyard owner receive at the hands of the tenants. But *we* are servant-messengers, sent to *follow* the Son rather than to precede him. When we come away from our fields of service "empty-handed" (*kenos*, vv. 10f.), could it be that our emptiness is somehow made fruitful [grounded in, empowered by] by our Servant-Lord who willingly "emptied himself" (the divine *kenosis*, Phil 2:7, next week's second lesson)? It may be that through our service "some of the fruit of the vineyard" is given back to God (Lk 20:10), even though we ourselves are not the ones to carry it.

Inheritance is another theme of the lessons. The psalmist appeals to God: "Save your people and bless your inheritance" (28:11). In last week's Gospel text, an inheritance is wasted by its rightful heir. In this week's Gospel text, the tenants plot to acquire the son's inheritance through violence. The true inheritance for Christians, according to Paul, is righteousness. Such an inheritance is not "from law" (the prodigal son's inheritance) nor something to boast of as one's own (the inheritance the tenants pursued) but is "from God" "through faith in Christ" (Phil 3:9). How do we recognize the true heirs of righteousness? Their identifying marks are the power of Christ's resurrection and the *koinonia* (participation in and/or community) of Christ's sufferings (3:10).

The first lesson is a proclamation of salvation. God who made "a way in the sea" (v. 16) for the exodus from Egypt will "make a way in the wilderness" (v. 19) for the return from exile in

Babylon. The former deliverance is as nothing compared to the "new thing" that God is doing (vv. 18f.). Paul picks up the contrast between old and new in the second lesson, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to" the new thing that God is doing in Christ Jesus (v. 13).

The goal of God's saving action is that God's people may declare God's praise (Isa 43:21). Paul certainly does that, declaring "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8). Luke frequently contrasts the reaction of the people (*laos*) to Jesus with the reaction of the authorities. In this encounter, both responses fall short: the people are shocked by the threat of destruction (20:16), while the scribes and the chief priests seek to fulfill the role of the wicked tenants by seizing Jesus (v. 19). KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In the Gospel reading from Luke for today, Jesus again tells a parable. It's the sort of story that many of us in the church would prefer to give a historical reading. That is, the story refers to Israel and its unjust treatment of God's prophets. From this perspective Jesus is condemning the Jewish religious leaders and their rejection of his own prophetic ministry.

The only problem with such an interpretation is that it forgets that the story is a parable. That is, it's not just a story about something that happened, but rather, it's a story about something that happens. The truth of a parable isn't simply a product of historical accuracy. Its truth has to do with what's always true. And what is always true in this case is that the tenants of God's vineyard reject and even kill God's representatives. What is always true is that religious leaders intent on retaining their own power at all costs are responsible for all sorts of injustice. Even when the tenants happen to be leaders of the religion which bears the name of the story-teller, the same has been true.

And so what are we to do with the parable? One possibility is to interpret it in such a way that its reference remains firmly planted in the past. The other, far more dangerous but also far more appropriate in this season of Lenten repentance, is to take it to heart. RGR

Sunday of the Passion
April 12, 1992

Psalm 31:1-5, 9-16
Deuteronomy 32:36-39
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 19:28-40
Luke 22:1–23:56 *or* Luke 23:1-49

FIRST READING

There are many fruitful connections among today's texts.

In the Gospel for Lent 2, Jesus had ended his lament over Jerusalem with the pronouncement, "You will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (13:35). The quotation, from Ps 118:26, was a traditional pilgrim greeting. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem now, he is so acclaimed, and not just as a pilgrim but as a king (19:38).

According to Luke, the disciples "rejoice and praise God with a loud voice" as Jesus approaches (19:37). Psalm 31 offers the Passion Sunday counterpoint to the Palm Sunday accolades: the crowd is "whispering" and "fear is all around" as "they plot to take my life" (v. 13).

In the processional Gospel, Jesus sends two disciples ahead to obtain a colt for his use (19:29f.). In the passion narrative, Jesus sends Peter and John ahead to prepare the Passover for the disciples (22:7f.). The two episodes reinforce the theme of Jesus' foreknowledge and control of events as Luke's Gospel builds to its climax.

At his arrest, Jesus asks the chief priests and officials, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?" (22:52) How ironic, following Lent 5's parable of robbing tenants who rise up to kill the lawful heir (20:14)!

Satan, who had failed to seduce Jesus at the beginning of his ministry (Lk 4:1-13, Lent 1), now enters into Judas Iscariot for a final showdown with Jesus (22:3). Although Judas will betray Jesus and hand him over to his enemies, Jesus himself remains in control of his destiny (22:22a). (Note that, in Luke, Jesus does not predict his betrayal until *after* the institution nar-

rative; the implication is that Judas has shared in the Supper along with the other disciples.)

Interpreting Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection as a showdown with Satan picks up nicely on the theme of the first lesson: other so-called gods may challenge God's power, but God alone will prevail (cf. "A Mighty Fortress," third stanza). Israel had been seduced into worshiping false gods (Deut 32:15-18). Yahweh "will vindicate his people" (v. 36) by exposing the impotence of other "gods" (vv. 37f.) and revealing his own omnipotence which extends even over life and death (v. 39).

The psalmist acknowledges Yahweh's reputation and power when he appeals to Yahweh for deliverance "for the sake of your name (*shem*)" (31:3), with its connotations of honor and glory. At his exaltation, Jesus receives "the name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9). The reason for this highest of honors is Jesus' self-emptying, humiliation, and death (vv. 7-8). God's own glory, henceforth, is identified by the saving work—and name—of Jesus (v. 11). KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

I know a woman. Her mother died when she was only twelve. As the oldest daughter it was her responsibility to clean and cook and look after the other children. Her younger brother was killed in World War I, just a few weeks after her own wedding. She lost a baby daughter back in 1921, her first-born. It was a hard life on the old sandy-soil farm, especially those dry depression years. With the quarry closing down and three little ones to feed, how would they ever get by on egg money alone? But somehow they did get by. The girls grew up and had families of their own. And then, just when it was time to retire and enjoy their time together, her husband died, so unexpected, so hard. It was too lonely at the old place, so she came to live with one of her daughters to help raise another family. They were a wild bunch, but now they too are grown. Last year there was a blood clot, and she never did get over it completely. Now that she can't help with the work anymore, sometimes she just feels like staying in bed.

But today is a special day: a great-grandson is visiting. And even though the arthritis is especially bad she knows he loves to bounce on her knee. As she looks at the boy she remembers her own babies; with that shock of red hair he looks just like his great-grandpa, and for a moment she thinks she might begin to cry. But then he makes that funny face by rolling up his eyes. And as she's pulled away from her thoughts, she laughs. Today is a special day. Today is a day to celebrate.

Human life moves between two darknesses: we begin life out of the darkness that precedes our birth, and we end life with the darkness of death. Life is what happens in that brief space between these two, and all along the way there are other dark times as well. And so the question, given this darkness that surrounds us: how do we live in the light? With two great question marks bracketing our lives, how do we live in the here and now? With suffering all around us and death looming ahead, how do we celebrate the present?

Jesus must have experienced something akin to this on the day we remember as Palm Sunday. On a commandeered donkey he bounces along; the crowds shout, pull branches from the trees, and throw their clothes on the ground. He knows the authorities will be watching and plotting, thinking "riot!" and "he must be stopped!" And as he approaches the city gates a shadow looms over him and a chill pierces his heart like a knife. It is the shadow of a hill called Golgotha, the place of the skull. He knows where all this is going to lead. But then he sees the faces of the people, his rag-tag honor guard, sees their joy and their deep longing. Despite it all, he smiles and waves to people. Suffering and death lie just a bit ahead, but he celebrates this present joy.

Perhaps more than Easter, Palm Sunday is the paradigm of our own lives. As a people living between life and death, we too are called to celebrate even though suffering abounds and death is just a bit ahead. And it is the story of Jesus of Nazareth, the story of his passion, which makes it possible for us to celebrate life even in the face of death.

For as Henri Nouwen reflects, it is on the cross—in the midst of death—that Jesus became the celebrant of life in the fullest sense. It was here that death was conquered and life regained.

In the end, the question posed by Christ's passion and the way of the cross is whether we

will trust in it and let it become the foundation of our own life stories; whether we will let its promise be the defining passion of our own lives. RGR

Maundy Thursday
April 16, 1992

Psalm 116:10-17
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Hebrews 10:15-39
Luke 22:7-20

FIRST READING

What's so new about the "new covenant"?

Because the old (Sinai) covenant (*berith*) with the LORD was broken by the people's lack of obedience and faithfulness, forgiveness is a prerequisite for establishing a renewed covenant (Jer 31:31-34). The content of the covenant, now renewed, is still obedience ("I will put my law within them," v. 33b) and faithfulness (being God's people, v. 33c; knowing the LORD, v. 34). The form of the covenant is new: it is internal (v. 33) and, implicitly, unbreakable.

Luke is the only evangelist to identify the cup/Jesus' blood explicitly as a "new" covenant (22:20; but see also 1 Cor 11:25). This new covenant still has the form of the bread and wine of Passover but has a new content: Jesus' sacrificial death. Jesus will no longer eat the old meal of deliverance (vv. 15-18) because his body will be "given" (*didomenon*, v. 19, has connotations of sacrifice and death; the word is unique to Luke's account) to establish a new meal and a new deliverance. The new covenant is "put within" us most profoundly (Jer 31:33) in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine that are Jesus' body and blood.

The author of Hebrews here quotes Jer 31: 31-34 for the second time (the passage is quoted in full at 8:8-12). In the verses immediately prior to today's text, the newness of the new covenant in Christ is explained: Christ's sacrifice is once for all time, eliminating the need for repeated sacrifices by the priests (10:11-14). Forgiveness is no longer the prerequisite act for establishing a renewed covenant of obedience, as was the case for Jeremiah; rather, forgiveness is the continuing content of a truly new covenant! "The blood of Jesus" is "the new and living way" to fellowship with God (vv. 19f).

Just as the old covenant could be met with obedience or with disobedience, the new covenant of forgiveness in Christ can be met with faith (Heb. 10:22, 38, 39) or with fear (10:27, 31). ("Confidence" [*parrhesia*, vv. 19, 35] is in Greek not related to "faith" [*pistos*], although homiletically one might still wish to play off the common Latin root of the English words.) Those who trust the witness of the Holy Spirit know that their sins are forgiven (vv. 15-18); their faith is in God's own faithfulness (v. 23). Those who deny the Spirit and reject this new covenant in Jesus' blood cut themselves off from the benefits of the covenant; they will face not forgiveness but wrath, by their own choice (vv. 26-31). A Maundy Thursday sermon on the "faith or fear" theme would be well complemented by the nineteenth-century hymn: "An awe-full mystery is here / To challenge faith and waken fear" (*The Lutheran Hymnal* #304).

The psalm is the source of the second of the LBW offertories. It contains references to several themes of the other lessons: "cup of salvation" (v. 11), covenant vows (vv. 12, 16), deliverance from bondage (v. 14), "sacrifice" and "thanksgiving" (v. 15). KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

And he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." (Lk 22:19)

The journey which began alone in the wilderness moves now to an upper room where, gathered with his friends, Jesus shares a meal. "This is my body given for you." As Luke records it, these words were spoken in the context of the Passover meal. In this way Jesus' death is directly connected to God's great act of deliverance for the people of Israel. The new covenant "in his blood" is likened to the blood of the sacrificial lamb which marked the doorposts of the faithful.

But the angel of death will not pass over this firstborn child. One life is offered up for the many. "This is my body given for you." These few, simple words sum up the meaning of the way of the cross. Jesus' body is given up, his life given away, for the sake of love.

Our own Lenten journey which began in darkness with the mark of an ashen cross upon our foreheads ends in darkness with the meal of remembrance and the stripping of the altar. The words of confession spoken on Ash Wednesday now receive their absolution. We leave the sanctuary in silence. But our task is not complete: as in the meal we share in Christ's name we are now called to live "in remembrance" of him.

And how do we live "in remembrance?" There is another traditional text for this night. It comes from John's Gospel. The night of the new covenant is also the night of the "new commandment": "love one another even as I have loved you." It is a commandment not only spoken in words but enacted in love. Jesus wraps a towel around his waist, pours water in a basin and stoops to wash the feet of his disciples. "I have given you an example," he says, "that you should do as I have done for you." To do this is to follow his way.

The word "maundy" comes from the Latin word for "commandment." As with the commandments of the old covenant and the movement of our Lenten journey of repentance, the gift of divine deliverance comes first. The new commandment like the new covenant is God's own gift, enacted and embodied by the One who gave himself for us.

"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." The sacrament we share this night calls for lives which speak our remembrance. RGR

Good Friday
April 17, 1992

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

FIRST READING

Each of the Old Testament texts poses a problem for preaching. Many verses from the fourth servant song (Isa 52:13-53:12) are so familiar, especially to lovers of Handel's *Messiah*, that it is difficult for listeners actually to hear the whole text as it is read. The text is not merely a description of the suffering servant but is a confession by those who have benefited from his suffering! V. 4 marks the turning point: earlier, the "we" of vv. 1-11a had, along with everyone else, rejected and despised the servant as one who was rejected also by God, but now they have come to know that the servant was bearing the punishment for their unrighteousness and not his own. How do they know that their sins have been atoned for and that they have been healed? They "have heard" it (v. 1). How do they dare to believe it? That same question is the challenge to preachers and hearers today.

The Hosea text poses a different problem in that what appears to be the people's confession of faith (6:1-3) is not sincere but a parody. Their love/loyalty (*hesed*, vv. 4, 6) is fleeting (v. 4)—a real foul-weather faith. Suffering from political defeat, which they perceive as divine punishment, the people see repentance as a "sure" thing (v. 3) and Yahweh as a soft touch whose wrath is only of short duration (v. 2). As Hosea takes God's judgment seriously (v. 5), so the Christian preacher must take Good Friday seriously, without lapsing into the superficial proclamation that "everything will be okay again" "on the third day" (v. 2).

Hearing is a thread that connects several of the lessons. The people in Isaiah 53 "have heard" the truth about the suffering servant (v. 1). Jesus "was heard" by God when he prayed (Heb. 5:7),

and now "every one who is of the truth hears [Jesus'] voice" (Jn 18:37). Jesus' "obedience" (Heb 5:8) and the obedience of Christians (v. 9) also result from hearing; the root of *hypakouein*, "to obey," is *akouein*, "to hear," expressing the belief that right hearing leads to action. Paul's question, "How are they to hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14), points to the importance of witnessing to the truth. Thus, the beloved disciple does not just tell the story of Jesus' crucifixion but emphasizes that it is "true" and that it is for "you" (Jn 19:35).

One final Lutheran theme from John's Gospel: The Jews' accusation against Jesus, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die" (19:7), is equally true of us, whom "the law always accuses" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, IV). Yet the death-sentence on Jesus (18:14, cf. 11:50-52) becomes a life-giving sentence for us. KAK

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

On the day we call "Good Friday" we hear the story of Jesus' betrayal, suffering, and death. Without a larger perspective, of course, it would be blasphemous to call this day "good." And although we properly see this day from the perspective of Easter and the resurrection, perhaps it is fitting to let our vision focus here for a time. And in so doing perhaps it is also best to let the story speak for itself.

When it is time for us to speak we might do well to begin by looking not directly at Jesus, but instead at some other characters who are part of the story. Two important ones are friends of Jesus. One of them is named Judas, the other Peter.

Who can understand Judas? What led him to betray Jesus? Was he a disappointed Zealot, hoping that Jesus would be the one to expel the hated Romans? Was he hoping to force Jesus to act? Who knows? But we do know that he was there that last night at the meal where Jesus said the bread was now his body and the wine his blood, broken and shed for them. We know that he waited for the cloak of darkness to hand Jesus over to the soldiers. We know that he betrayed his friend with a kiss, the sign of friendship.

And then there is that other friend, that other betrayer. He is Peter, the one called "the Rock." He was the one who said, "Even if all others leave you, I will not." Like the others, he couldn't stay awake in his friend's great time of need there in the garden. And after Jesus was led away and the interrogation began, Peter stood at a distance keeping warm by a fire. But when a little servant girl began to ask him if he was a friend of the man on trial, he denied it. Three times he denied his friend. And then a rooster crowed at the rising sun and Peter remembered something Jesus had said to him a few hours earlier. That's when he began to cry.

Two friends, two betrayals. But there is one decisive difference. Because if both Judas and Peter betrayed Jesus, somehow Peter came out the other side of his failure. What made the difference? Perhaps it was those tears and the broken heart they represent. Perhaps they were the beginning of something that was finished when Peter talked with the risen Jesus on Easter morning.

The difference between Judas and Peter was that Peter stuck around long enough to receive forgiveness for what he had done. And that's reason enough to look at these two characters. For whatever else the way of the cross is, it is the way of divine forgiveness which makes possible new life for us. Whatever else Lent is, it is a season in which to prepare ourselves to receive this forgiveness and so new life. And whatever else we might say on this "Good Friday," its goodness has to do with Christ's willingness to die that characters like us might live. RGR

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Jennie Bloom Summers

Jerry and Carol Schmalenberger
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Four students, three faculty, and a rented house comprised the beginning of a Lutheran seminary for the West in October 1910 at Portland, Oregon. Classes were held in the Tower Room of St. James Lutheran Church near the city's center with two pastors and a female teacher as professors. The Divinity School of the Pacific Synod, later to become the Pacific Theological Seminary, was born.

Just as the seminary was about to open, the Rev. Walter Eck of Vancouver, Washington, one of three new professors, became ill and incapacitated. Miss Jennie Bloom Summers had been teaching in a nearby college and agreed to serve as a volunteer faculty person that year. In addition to her responsibilities as a teacher that included oversight of the pre-seminary school and professor of languages and psychology, she also became volunteer matron of the school and had charge of the dining room. But as a boarder in the two-story rented dormitory house, she was charged for her meals!

Jennie Bloom Summers thus became the first female to serve on a faculty in a Lutheran seminary in the United States.

The daughter of Wittenberg College graduate Rev. Daniel Summers and Louisa Hine Summers, both natives of Pennsylvania, Jennie was born eighth in a family of nine children on March 23, 1869, at Shelby, Ohio, where her father was pastor of First Lutheran Church. After her graduation from Shelby High School, she attended Ohio Normal School (now Ohio Northern University), graduating in 1898 with a Bachelor of Science degree. She took additional summer courses at Wooster College, Harvard University, and the University of Chicago, and then studied for three years at the University of Berlin in Germany.

Summers' career began at Shelby High School where she soon became Assistant Principal. Later, as professor at Albany College in Oregon, she taught Latin and German. The local newspaper, Albany's *Weekly Herald* of September 17, 1909, announced Jennie's arrival this way: "Miss Jennie B. Summers, who will look after the German and Latin quarters of the school, arrives Saturday from Shelby, Ohio, where they have the faculty of making the very best language professors...."

Ms. Summers lived with the students in a rented home which still stands at 2341 NW Kearny. Minutes of the Pacific Synod of 1911 reported her service to the seminary as follows:

> As a mark of providential guidance, we were surprised and delighted to meet Miss Jennie B. Summers, a teacher of experience, who offered her service gratis for the time being in order to get work started. Miss Summers was given charge of the academic department and taught Latin, German, English, and Psychology. Students and professors roomed in the same quarters. The students were furnished room and board at nominal rates, and Professor Frederick

and wife and Miss Summers paid for their accommodations at the rate of $25 per month. Miss Summers also served in the capacity of matron of the school and showed care and efficiency in the management of the boarding hall.

After using several houses in Portland, in 1914 the young seminary was moved to Seattle, Washington, to be near a university. Of the fifty-three who attended, twenty-three students were graduated from the school before it folded in 1934. After a period of time that property was sold and the assets placed in trust, eventually being used to help purchase the campus of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1950 at Berkeley, California.

The rest of the life of Jennie Summers is yet to be discovered. It appears that she taught for just one year at the fledgling seminary in Portland. The Rev. Joe E. Smith, an alumnus of PLTS who is pastor of St. James Lutheran Church in Portland, reports that Professor Summers was received into that congregation November 9, 1910, and several years later it was noted "transferred out of state." Her obituary states that she came to California in 1915 and spent the last eighteen years of life (from ca. 1919) in Long Beach, California, where she lived in an apartment and taught school, followed by some private tutoring. Her great-nephew, Thomas Wiseman, remembers her being described as stern, serious, and very devout.

Mary K. Summers Helwick believes that Jennie, who never married, was taken care of by a nephew, Thomas West, who was a son of Jennie's sister Lottie, during her last days. Her death certificate from Los Angeles County notes her address at the time of death as 611 E. 7th Street, Long Beach, and simply lists her as "Teacher, Private tutor, spending 45 years in this occupation." She died at home of "chronic myocarditis" on January 9, 1937, and was buried in Westminster Memorial Park in Westminster, a suburb of Los Angeles adjacent to Long Beach.

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