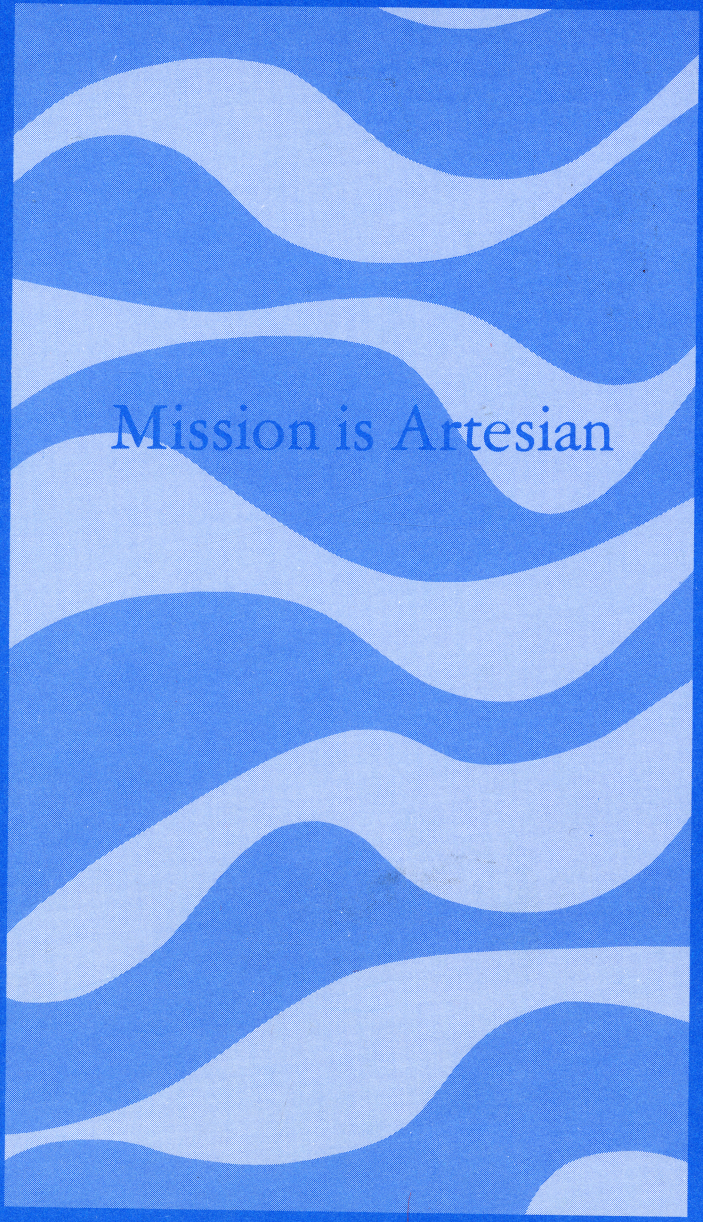
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CURRENTS

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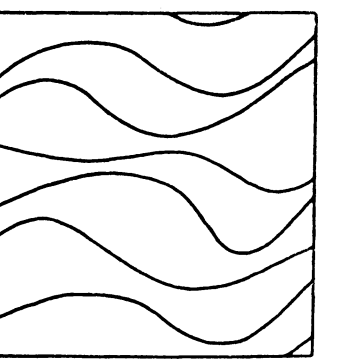
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Mission is Artesian

An artesian well is made by boring into the earth till water is reached which, from internal pressure, flows up like a fountain. And so we hope, in the church and in its seminaries, that the Spirit will nurture an internal pressure in ourselves and others that will bubble forth with witness to the great and ongoing deeds of God, of which we have been eyewitnesses.

Each year we have "exit interviews" with the Senior class, asking them how it went and how might it have been better. My, how they grow! Credit it to the faculty, the curriculum, the worship, the community life. Credit it to the gifted people they are, their varied and rich experiences, and their life in an ELCA congregation. No, credit it to the Spirit, who takes raw recruits and transforms them into church leaders, ready to equip our own ministry. The artesian power of the Spirit means that one of my students now becomes my pastor.

Go, Chris, go!

Wartburg Theological Seminary has just completed a strategic planning process that identified a new theme for their work: where learning leads to mission. The eight essays in this issue are first fruits of that theme, with much more to come.

Go, Spirit, go!

L. Shannon Jung writes that the purpose of globalization is to enable North American Christians to encounter other people's reality experientially, so that they can see their own more vividly. He reflects on trips to Southern Africa and Latin America that have shown that the other's future is tied together with our own. Globalization means an encounter with the power dimensions of other people's realities, seen now in very earthly terms. It is not we and they, but we all who are citizens in the one community of God.

Peter Kjeseth responds to a seminal work by Albert Nolan on the South African situation, that has ramifications for all of us in North America. We are disturbed that the growing underclasses find little in our message or common life to attract them, but we are reluctant to call into question the way we articulate the truth. The status quo churches in South Africa repeat the content of the gospel from an earlier age, but it no longer takes on the indispensable shape the gospel needs in that context—good news for the poor. Sin is anything which causes human suffering; the struggle for freedom is a gift of grace. Are we ready to challenge our own national idolatry?

Howard S. Olson reflects on Bible translation, particularly in Tanzania and in the New Revised Standard Version. Nothing improves by translation, he notes, except bishops, and the reading process is incredibly complex. Yet translators are sustained by the promise that the divine Word shall not return to God empty. They dare to be literal, to use dynamic equivalence, and even to paraphrase. The Word brings up fresh water constantly into dynamic languages that never stop changing. From the beginning God has been on the quest to bring the Word into words.

Ralph F. Smith sees worship as a place for transformation, where we present our bodies as living sacrifices. Worship is a safe learning environment to discover what it means to be human: God became one with us in Jesus Christ so that we might know what it means to be in self-giving relationships. Worship is experiential learning, rooted in the word of God. Diversity in worship is welcomed because it takes place under confessional commonality. We need spirit and the Spirit. We need good planning and flexibility. Worship is saying "I love you" to God and reflecting upon the richness and ambiguity of language about God.

Norma Cook Everist knows that learning can lead nowhere, or it can lead to incredible competition. She also knows that God creates us for interdependence and reconciles us to each other in Christ for community and for service. While our beliefs shape our actions, our actions also give shape to the ongoing formulation of our beliefs. When all the people of God are engaged in mission in the arenas of their daily lives, when their work for justice is intricately connected with justification, they bring back to the gathered community, questions, insights,

ethical dilemmas, and systems of theology which beg for communal discernment.

James Fish affirms that we teach as we preach. To teach is to convey the ethical instructions and doctrine that come with the breaking in of God's kingdom. He provides a series of examples where what and how we teach may actually weaken the church. He suggests that we depart occasionally from the lectionary so that we can preach for weeks on a given book, discuss current societal questions, or preach sermons with educational content. He advocates "memorizing the parish" by walking and talking one's way through the geographic community in which our congregations are located. There are only two real goals for preaching: to call the church into existence and to build up the church that now exists.

Frank L. Benz takes us back to perhaps the oldest missionary document, the Yahwist source in the Pentateuch. J asked what the Davidic and Solomonic success might mean to the larger world since the promises to the ancestors of land, name, and nation had now been fulfilled. By examining the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph he shows that the nation of Solomon was gifted and indeed empowered to extend blessings to others.

In the presidential column, **Roger W. Fjeld** notes that curricular change throughout the ELCA focuses increasingly on mission. The Christian church is not the preserver of Christendom, but it is called to be leaven and witness. Wartburg intends to shape a curriculum and life together which is more intentionally devoted to preparing leaders for the mission of the church.

When my new pastor arrives, she will be nurtured and watered by some artesian saints of incredible depth. None is more bubbly than ninety-eight-year-old Sena, who has the congregation's longest prayer list, and who seems to call up almost everyone on their birthday or at their time of special need. This summer she got ready for more mission by getting a hip replacement—the one inserted forty years ago had finally worn out.

Go, Sena, go!

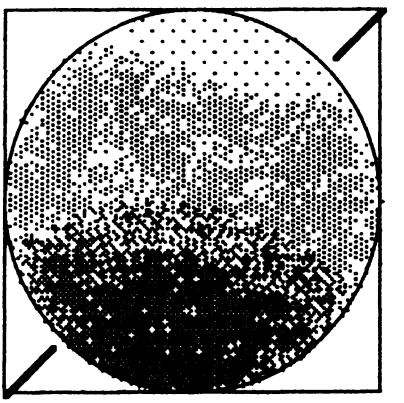
Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Why Globalization?

L. Shannon Jung
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What is the purpose of globalization?

U.S. and Canadian seminaries are sending their faculty and students around the world from Brazil to Zimbabwe in the name of globalizing theological education. The Association of Theological Schools urges its members to be globalized. Countless expeditions are organized to safari college students to cross-cultural experiences. Many denominations and many local churches likewise arrange international trips for their members. What is the point of the church's globalmania? Are there specifically Christian motives which lift those trips beyond being mere junkets or tourist vacations?



Let me offer one answer: The purpose of globalization is to enable North American Christians to encounter other people's reality experientially, so that they can see their own more vividly.

One such encounter for me was to spend the night in Soweto, South Africa, where the sight of a white face is so conspicuous that it arouses suspicion, curiosity, welcome, and appreciation—in that order. My hosts were a black South African family one of whose sons is unjustly imprisoned, awaiting execution or having already been executed; they know not which.

I also spent the night with one of the leaders of the Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs in a rural village in Nicaragua, a woman with a second grade education who speaks with great precision about the political motives of the Sandinistas and Contras. I was awakened in that same mountain house by chickens fighting with each other under my bed.

Those experiences will generate reflections about one's own context and situation. The more nearly we experience the reality of other people's lives, the more clearly we perceive our own lived values and beliefs, the more nearly we realize the purpose of globalization.

Quite a bit is condensed in stating that the purpose of globalization is to encounter other peoples' reality. Putting forward six theses about that purpose may clarify the promise of globalization and stimulate your reflection.

1. *Encountering other people's reality provokes the recognition that the other's future is tied together with our own.*

Practically this takes a variety of forms, from seeing that replays of "Dallas" are being broadcast on Zimbabwean television to the structure of international corporations. Environmental interdependence

The purpose of globalization is to enable... Christians to encounter other people's reality experientially, so that they can see their own more vividly.

makes the point most graphically; encountering the environment microscopically, through the eyes of those on the margin, brings home the effete way comfortable people take natural resources for granted. To those in poverty, care for the environment may have low priority status when compared with food for one's children. Nevertheless, how people of each income level treat the environment affects the future of all planetary creatures.

My point is not to accuse low-income people or to flagellate affluent ones. Rather it is to indicate that the way our environmental future is tied together is a corollary of our economic interdependence. Ultimately whoever is doing better economically today will not matter much if we die from poisoning our environment tomorrow.

The Persian Gulf war underscored the negative possibilities of encountering other people's reality; fear, misunderstanding, and evil can feed into our perception of others. Not just any type of encounter is positive. Nevertheless, even in this case the encounter clarifies that our futures are related.

Other people's realities include peoples not so distant as Africa or even Central America. African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian-American, and Native Americans all come to mind. Even closer, for white males, is other female peoples' reality. In all these cases our futures are tied together in easily imagined ways.

Theologically, other people's realities remind us of our need for reconciliation and cooperation with them.

The way in which Zimbabwe has integrated former antagonists into its economic and legislative life gives empirical evidence of this doctrine. Who are the antagonists of the white middle class in the U.S.; how might we be reconciled with them?

It also raises other questions: What does salvation mean to the Salvadoran family which lives under threat from both government and FMLN forces? Perhaps redemption in that context involves a freedom from fear, and some hope of stability. Perhaps, realistically, the best one can work for is a measure of freedom and stability for one's children. How does that compare with the U.S. church's understanding of salvation? What does that mean?

2. *Encountering others' reality promotes a humility about what we know and an inquisitiveness about what we can discover.*

Meeting people from different cultures highlights our interrelatedness by contrast and comparison. One of the profound realizations for me was just how little I know about their reality. I was humbled. In retrospect it is clear that such humility was fostered by intelligent and sensitive guidance and planning on the part of sponsoring organizations. Not every trip penetrates (or cares to penetrate) the official, scrubbed-up exterior of a country. From humility about what one knows can be born a spirit eager to understand the reality of other's lives. As one discovers more about the culture of strangers, one's own context becomes both stranger and more translucent. We realize that we have deceived ourselves into thinking we know what our beliefs and values are. Rather than only alienating us from it, however, this enables us to rethink what our place is and what we want it to be.

How open the rural peoples of Nicaragua are; how privatized I am (we are). The encounter promotes genuine insight—indeed revelation. What does it take to be able to see? How does God break through/speak through this meeting?

A question that deserves to be raised in this context is whether poverty and human suffering have become the new tourist attractions for North American Christians. Not discounting that possibility and also realizing that this question deserves extended discussion, I nevertheless want to suggest that global poverty and suffering are the issues for North American Christians for two reasons: (1) we *fear* those two experiences because we don't know whether we deal with them practically or theologically, and (2) affluent lifestyles and freedom from discomfort have become our idols. Being able to deal with poverty and suffering are hermeneutic keys for us.

3. *Globalization promotes an encounter with others' reality, especially their sensitivity to place.*

The reality of black and white South Africans' lives was marked by so great a sensitivity to place and boundaries that it permeated their existence. It cast in vivid relief the ways that physical location and its human definition and impact play into our spiritual and moral formation.

High walls and fences surround the houses of white Afrikaners and also of Nicaraguan elite families. Though they are

continents apart, their appearance and "feel" were strikingly similar. Their manifest purpose is to protect their inhabitants from the envy-inspired crimes of the poor. They seem, instead, to trap and misshape their residents whose movements are confined by their own fear. Meanwhile many of the Christian poor seemed both hopeful and strangely free in their poverty. Many were building communal places—a church on one side, a clinic on the other.

What feelings do our places engender? How do they express the values we intend to make permanent? What other values creep into those places latently shaping us beyond our intentions? I have become very aware of how the places I live tend to be populated by those of similar race-class-education-sexual orientation. Being in touch, in place, with other realities has made me aware of the places I live in and that live in me.

4. *Globalization promotes an encounter with the power dimension of other people's realities.* Such an encounter can promote genuine empowerment in rural and inner city contexts.

I certainly had not thought myself oblivious to the web of political power relations in which I am placed and place myself. The range of my own depoliticization was made vivid by experiences in Managua, Capetown, and San José. The golden arches of McDonald's rising out of the midst of a market in Costa Rica hit me with a jolt. The Big Mac was not just two all-beef patties on a sesame seed bun; it was a dose of economic infiltration. I had acquiesced in my own narcoticization. Even my awareness of that is subtly absorbed; I am seduced by a level of comfort that threatens constantly to nudge me back into a stupor concerning political realities.

It is clear in retrospect that I am far more sensitive to economic than to political power as a North American. The violence, repression, structural injustice, and brutalization that Christians in South Africa, Vietnam, and El Salvador experience has made them far more politically astute. The juxtaposition of cultures made me aware of the areas to which I am alert and to which I am numb. The encounter reawakened me to the inevitable intermixture of politics and economics.

The temptation is to settle for individual material well-being with little awareness of the personal loss involved in a loss of corporate political life. Politics is constant, ongoing, and exciting. It is part of being alive. In rural and inner city contexts, whether domestic or international—and these two contexts are often very similar—the price of depoliticization is high. Neighborhoods in decline cannot afford the luxury of privatization; public life is so tenuous there that it threatens and does invade private life.

Globalization alerts us to power and powerlessness. The two are not abstract but are part of the theological agenda.

5. *The sort of encounter with otherness that globalization provides calls us back to an ability to see reality in very earthy terms.* It bids us recover a very concrete, material theology like that of the Old Testament. It reminds us of the attractiveness of a theology that is not timid about saying, "Lo, God is present here."

I am not sure why my encounter with other people's realities breaks through an insensitivity to place, a depoliticized sense of my routine, and also an abstract level of theological discourse. Perhaps it was their pain and suffering that cut through those blinders. It is hard to be abstract about war with mothers whose sons have been killed in action; hard to ignore politics when state police follow your group around; hard to be

Insensitive to place when the beauty of the land hides soldiers and corpses and death.

In Africa particularly there seems little break between material and spiritual reality. It is not as though God were being demeaned by being located in the world; rather the world is being resacralized. A theology which returned to the concreteness of Moses, Amos, and Jesus would conceive of many things differently. How, I wonder, would the moves represented by the doctrines of justification and sanctification be maintained? There is an anticipatory richness in the muddling of those movements, a confluence of salvific action. Christ would be located in culture; we would have to locate the presence of God in the world. We could not hide behind some abstract desire to save God's transcendence, nor could we evoke a fear of idolatry as a substitute for courageous faith.

A theology which returned to the concreteness of Moses, Amos, and Jesus would conceive of many things differently.

6. *Globalization might help us not only hear the cry of the poor, it might also help us hear the cry of the affluent.*

I fear that too little attention has been directed to those whose actions, if they do not promote poverty and oppression, benignly allow such sin to continue. The wealthy seem to benefit from a selective blindness which circumvents any encounter with the poor. Or, in depoliticized insensitivity, we find ways to ignore our connections with the misery of international and domestic peoples. The church is an accomplice in allowing the wealthy (both the exotic and the garden-variety wealthy) to fail to see the consequences of our action.

I do not think such blindness contributes to the salvation of the affluent. If the affluent must live in such a way as to maintain structures that blind them to their accountability, then their wholistic health is jeopardized. Avoidance becomes key to living abundantly. I find myself shifting between third and first person subjects here because on the one hand I (we) occupy a privileged position, and also because the church does not address those who are the most wealthy (top 5%).

For affluent North American Christians, I have suggested, coping with pain is the special hermeneutic key. Can we deal with pain, suffering, decline, or failure? Can our God deal with pain? We just are not sure. If we can face our pain (with the aid of other peoples, other Christian peoples, who do so daily), then perhaps we the affluent can be saved. We might manifest God's salvation by being present to each other.

From what do we need to be saved? From being caught in matrices of oppression, from the abstractions behind which we hide, from loneliness, from the pretense of a lack of accountability, from the pretense of a lack of power, from struggling alone, from a realization that the rest of the world can't live on the level we expect as normal.

And, to what do we need to be saved? A Tanzanian theologian and friend maintains that *salaam* (shalom in Swahili) has the same qualities whether that salvation is

here and now or in the future. What is salvation for the affluent? Part of that is being "enabled into being." Other people care for us, especially at birth, when we are totally and legitimately dependent. God's care is evident in that care. During the course of our lives we are enabled more and more (or less and less) into being complete women and men who care for others. We never outgrow our need to be enabled or to enable others. We enable others into being, thus carrying on the work of God.

We create each other through our encounters with them. For the affluent this relation can be curtailed or attenuated, but only to their/our detriment. They may not be able to encounter others whose difference speaks to and enlarges them, enabling them into being whole. For us garden-variety wealthy the game of bashing those who have more than us is really good exercise. And it allows us to avoid our own accountability at the same time! Encountering those people's realities reminds us of the similarity of our sin, and our own need for salvation.

There are further dimensions to the encounter with other people' reality which invite discovery. My point is modest. Being clear about the purpose of "globalization" will enable seminaries, colleges, and churches to structure international experiences to realize that purpose. It is not easy to promote a genuine encounter; one cannot be an accidental tourist. Rather one is forced to seek out those who can deal with pain and suffering, whether that is Bedford-Stuyvesant or Brazil, in our back yard or around the world.

Finally we are called to an ever-increasing intimacy of encounter with other peoples, whether those peoples are domestic or international. The reality is that "we" and "they" lose their hermetic boundaries and we realize that we are all citizens in the community of God.

An Invitation from South Africa: Albert Nolan's *God in South Africa*

Peter L. Kjeseth
Wartburg Theological Seminary

The sordid, empty drama of operation Desert Storm and the reaction of our nation to our heroic "victory" should force us to seek clarity about our context and the theological implications of our nation "under God." For us Albert Nolan's work can serve as a model and challenge to be about the business of contextual theology in the United States as we face (or refuse to face) the notion that the world has become unipolar and that the U.S. stands virtually unchallenged as the greatest military power in the world. Albert Nolan's *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel*, published in 1988, deserves serious attention.[1] It is one fruit of the contextual theology movement in South Africa and must be understood as part of the same grass roots theological enterprise that produced the 1985 *Kairos Document.*

Douglas John Hall, in *Lighten our Darkness* (1976) and *Thinking the Faith* (1989), has eloquently called us in the North American churches to explore the heart of our unique darkness in this officially optimistic society. He has warned us against simplistically borrowing and recasting for our use theological positions and confessions hammered out on the anvils of Europe or in the base communities of Latin America.[2] This caution would hold for South African Kairos theology and Nolan's work as well. We cannot simply transfer theological integrity and community vitality from their situation to ours. But what Nolan and his contemporaries have done is to serve as a voice articulating a steadily emerging grass roots theology. Their work can encourage us to see, think, and act in our context as they have done in theirs. Part of the challenge is to recognize packets of similarity between their situation and ours and, more impor-

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[2]Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988).

[1]Douglas John Hall, *Thinking The Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 19.

tantly, the towering differences between their unflinching analysis of their context and our reluctance to face the gravity of our situation.

Albert Nolan is a Dominican priest who lives in a small monastic community in a multi-racial ghetto of Johannesburg. He was elected Master General of the Dominican Order in Rome in 1983. The day after his election he resigned to return to his apostolate in South Africa. He has worked with Christian student movements and has for a long time been associated with the Institute for Contextual Theology in Johannesburg. It is claimed that the overall frame and outline of the *Kairos Document* go back to him. What he has done in *God in South Africa* stands in clear continuity with his best-selling *Jesus before Christianity* which was published in 1978. One of the great strengths of his enterprise is that he matches a contextually understood Jesus movement of the Gospels with the present liberation movements in South Africa.

Nolan sees his effort in continuity with that of the Gospel writers. *God in South Africa* is an essay in evangelization rather than theology. "It is an attempt to *preach* the gospel in South Africa rather than to *speculate* about its universal meaning" (xi).

Nolan recasts for his place and time what Christian preaching might mean by truth, gospel, sin, and grace. In the process we are led to a deeper understanding of God revealed in the cross. Nolan defines the mission of the church in South Africa in a way that could help us redefine our mission.

Finally, Nolan dares to talk about God in South Africa. He finds the ancient biblical impulse to this thoroughly contemporary task in Psalm 42:3, "I hear it said all day long, "Where is your God?" The God to whom Nolan bears witness is God-in-action-in-history. It is this God at work in South Africa to whom the Scriptures point. When Nolan has finished reexamining the great words of the Christian tradition, that is, when he has come full circle in rethinking the faith, he returns to the cross as the place of revelation:

> Where is God in South Africa today? God can be seen in the face of the starving black child.... God speaks through the mouth of a person whose face has been disfigured by the policeman's boot. It is not their innocence, their holiness, their virtue, their religious perfection that make them look like God. It is their suffering.... The suffering of the people of South Africa is one of the great signs of our times. It is the sign of God's presence as the crucified Christ. It is the sign of the cross. (67)

The signs of the times

Essential to the theological project reflected in *God in South Africa* is the challenge to the Christian community to read the signs of the times. A clear reading of the situation in South Africa is the foundation of the *Kairos Document* and the point of departure for Nolan's book.[3]

Without any hedging or debilitating qualifications Nolan names the *total system* of apartheid as the monster of tyranny, oppression, and murder which must be eradicated. Neither reform nor liberalization of the present system will do. The total system—from presupposition to policy and

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[3]*The Kairos Document* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, second edition, 1986). The introduction of *The Kairos Document*, "The Moment of Truth," and the main constructive section, "Towards a Prophetic Theology," are devoted to a reading of the signs of the times by way of a return to the biblical tradition.



practice—must be challenged, destroyed and replaced. Nolan's book itself illustrates how hope can give power to face and define reality. The hope which surges from his Christian faith underlies and motivates his whole enterprise and gives him the courage to read the positive as well as the negative signs of the times.

> God is doing a new thing here. We who are privileged to be South Africans, painful as that may be at the moment, have a calling or vocation that is of historical significance for Africa and indeed for the whole world. One day we shall be a united nation that is thoroughly non-racial, democratic at every level, liberated from political oppression and economically independent, a nation that develops new forms of economic justice, new cultural values.... (220)

Nolan discovers in his concrete historical situation in South Africa certain approximate parallels with the situation of John the Baptist and Jesus. In reading the signs of the times John the Baptist fixed his eyes on the sins of the rich and the powerful and their collaborators. John denounced the "brood of vipers" (Mt 3:7) and saw his society plunging headlong to its destruction (134). Jesus also read his times this way. But he saw something that John did not see. Jesus discerned what was happening among the outcasts and sinners, among the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 15:24), among the common crowd who knew nothing of the law (Jn 7:49), and even among Romans and other ethnic outsiders. He found faith, a powerful sign of hope (136). Jesus' proclamation called the people to believe that they could be healed and freed. The powerful sign of hope, for Jesus and his followers, was that "God was at work in an unexpected place, outside the system of purity and holiness" which buttressed the status quo (139).

Nolan sees similar signs of hope in the South African context. What he calls "extraparliamentary politics"—the trade unions, local federations, student organizations, councils of churches, protest groups, support groups—all together constitute a groundswell of people's power. People's power is another word for grass roots democracy. Like the power of God, people's power cannot be stopped (166).

Few would argue that the Christian/religious community in the United States has found consensus on reading the signs of our times. True, the leadership of virtually every major denomination pleaded publicly with President Bush not to begin the killing war in the Persian Gulf. Billy Graham, however, was easily co-opted as a media symbol which would give theological legitimation to the war. In the euphoric aftermath of the "victory," few voices have been raised to challenge the deep-seated national idolatry that the Desert Shield/Desert Storm phenomena has revealed.

We have not yet found the language or the courage to name the pathology of our use of power (to use Norman Cousins'

phrase),[4] nor to hear what the underside of our once-proud democracy has to say.

Here again the difference between Nolan's context and ours is revealing. Nolan believes that God works today as God has always worked in the past, to bring people out of slavery and bondage and into a life of justice and peace. He sees this happening in his country.

In spite of some dramatic starts among the alienated subgroups of our society—Native Americans, poor Blacks and Hispanics, women on welfare, gays and lesbians, farmers who have lost their land, economically threatened blue collar workers—there is as yet no groundswell of people's power in the U.S. comparable to what Nolan documents for South Africa. The rainbow coalition has not yet coalesced. Nor has the theological community yet come together to act and think in solidarity.

Truth. Nolan's contextual theology enterprise illustrates what Douglas John Hall insists upon: theological truth is not abstract and universally applicable. Truth, in the Christian understanding of truth, must always be concrete, local, contemporary. Yesterday's truth is not today's truth. It *may* be; but yesterday's truth may also be today's lie. This is what the *Kairos* document affirmed with respect to Christian talk about governmental legitimacy (Rom 13:1-7) and the New Testament notion of reconciliation in the South African context.[5]

We do not appear to have come this far in church theology in the U.S. We are disturbed that the growing underclass find little in our message or in our common life and worship that would attract them, but we are reluctant to call into question our articulation of truth. There are moments, not our best, when we are clearly fighting to establish the validity of yesterday's formulations forged in the context of significant struggles in Northern Europe, formulations and positions clearly not false but no longer powerfully true either. Scripture tells us what to do with truth that has lost its savor.

Gospel. Defining what the gospel is and must be is at the core of Nolan's enterprise. The *shape* of the gospel is given to us once and for all in the tradition of Jesus: it must always and in every situation be good news, first for the poor and then, eventually, for all. The *content* of this good news in the name of Jesus will be different for every time and place.

In South Africa today the good news is that the oppressed are now in great numbers willing to die for their freedom and dignity. The gospel has given them hope. Their struggle for freedom and dignity is God's struggle. The new day is dawning. Liberation is near.

In claiming to preach the gospel the South African churches who support the status quo are actually preaching heresy and promoting idolatry. They mouth the traditional orthodox formulations which, in the concrete lived reality of South Africa, become abstractions which produce the opposite of what they purport to proclaim. In Nolan's terminology, the status quo churches repeat the content of the gospel which comes from an earlier age but which no longer fits the indispensable shape of the gospel for South Africa; it must be good news for the poor, otherwise it is not the gospel.

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[4]Norman Cousins, *The Pathology of Power* (New York: Norton, 1987); see the introduction.

[5]*The Kairos Document* deals with the issue of governmental legitimacy in the section "Critique of 'State Theology'" and with reconciliation in the section "Critique of 'Church Theology'."

If Nolan (and the vast movement he represents) is correct, and the indispensable shape of the gospel is that the poor actually *experience* good news, not just rhetorical mouthings that "God loves you," the mainline U.S. churches are in trouble. Is any really good news experienced in our old line denominations by reservation Indians, gay men dying of AIDS, pregnant teenagers addicted to crack, the newly homeless couple struggling to raise three children on two minimum wage incomes, or by the one third of Americans who live without medical benefits? Clearly there are bright exceptions, but generally these people are ignored by us and do not feel comfortable with us.

Class reigns. When we work at it at all, "evangelism" still brings into our fellowship people like us who know our way of talking about the gospel and who blend with us in terms of class and ideology. Even our programs of charity and advocacy for the U.S. underclasses have not yet moved us to rethink the content of the gospel for our context.

Nolan's insistence on the *shape* of the gospel is rigorous: if the poor do not hear good news, no one hears good news. If this is true also for us, then the famine of hearing the word of God has already set in for the U.S.

Sin. If the content of the gospel needs re-articulation and reenactment for every period and every society, the same is true for the biblical concept of sin.

Nolan refuses to be sidetracked into a simplistic either/or debate on the relation between personal and societal sin, but he correctly points out that the prophets and Jesus were chiefly concerned with the structural injustices of the system. In Jesus' day it was the purity and holiness system, perpetuated and defended by the Jewish establishment and used by the Romans—each for their own ends. This system produced suffering and victims at every point—economic, political, social, and religious. Victims of the system crowd the Gospel accounts: the aging parents neglected by their children who have given *corban* contributions to the temple;[6] the Samaritans with whom the Jews should have no dealings; the tax collectors, sinners, demon-possessed, lepers, and other blemished outcasts from the purity system who were Jesus' primary beneficiaries. It was to the despised *Am-Ha Arez*, the rejected little people who did not know the law, that Jesus promised special status.

In promoting and elevating these people, in promising the poor good things (and flinging "woes" at the rich, Lk 6:20 ff.), in changing the notion of clean and unclean, in humanizing sabbath observance, in taking prayer into the streets, in going beyond the letter of the law to a new vision of what it meant to live under God's rule, Jesus challenged the whole system, piece by piece. He called for something totally new. He was revolutionary in his attack on systemic sin.

The Romans and the Jewish power people saw this clearly. Therefore they cooperated in the execution of Jesus.

Nolan's understanding of sin is clear and unflinching: sin is what causes human suffering.

Nolan insists that apartheid as a total system in South Africa is as all-pervasive and oppressive as the holiness and purity system of Jesus' day. He further argues that sin, both corporate and individual, must be defined in relation to the demonic system of apartheid which causes so much human

[6]Cf. Mk 7:11 and Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man* (New York: Orbis, 1980, 221-23.

Nolan's understanding of sin is clear and unflinching: sin is what causes human suffering.

suffering and death. The either/or cuts decisively. Anything which does not work for the total overthrow of the apartheid system as Jesus worked for the total, piece by piece overthrow of the holiness and purity system is aiding and abetting the system which causes appalling suffering, and comes under the name of sin. In this either/or, individual sin loses its moralistic definition, and things like collaboration, profiteering, and manipulation find their proper name. In this stringent either/or, all simply reformist movements are named as part of the system and, therefore, part of the structure of sin.

An honest look at what most U.S. Lutherans (most U.S. Christians!) understand as sin would suggest that we are still caught in moralistic, personalistic, individualistic definitions of sin. In our inherited theological lexicon we still have few resources for naming the victimization and suffering at home and around the world caused by the U.S. system of optimism, power, and success.

Grace. Nolan and the Christian community which he represents have learned to trust their analysis of the situation, their understanding of the Jesus movement in the Gospels, and the validity of their own experience. Therefore Nolan can confidently assert, "Grace is in the struggle."

Nolan calls it a distortion of the meaning of grace to assume that we can do nothing but sit back, pray, and wait for God to send us liberation as a free gift. A genuine gift, argues Nolan, comes to us from outside any system of buying and selling, bartering and bargaining. A genuine gift is free, has no strings attached. "It does not arise out of the system and there is no place for it within the system... a totally free gift contradicts the system and transcends it." (189)

Says Nolan, "Now this is precisely how we experience the struggle. It is grace... a completely voluntary undertaking. It has nothing to do with the obligations and duties of the system." (190)

Nolan defines the struggle as "the yearning for liberation translated into action." The struggle is the opposite of the system.

Those who know the struggle only through the media and in terms of their ideological presuppositions, see it as suffering, violence, and sacrifice. Nolan grants that these are also characteristics of the struggle. But for him and for others on the inside, the most characteristic manifestation of the struggle are singing and dancing.

What the singing and dancing most profoundly express is "the joy of hopefulness, the indestructible conviction that victory is certain." (158) Yet the singing and dancing celebrate more than hope; they celebrate solidarity and unity. "The struggle rescues people from alienation, isolation and individualism. It restores *ubuntu* (humanness) and the experience of being a living member of a living body." (159)

How many U.S. Christians today would say, "Grace is in the struggle"? For some, there might be the nostalgic memory of the singing, marching, and dancing of the civil-

rights movement or the anti-war movement of the 60s. Feminists, womanists, Hispanics, blacks, gays and lesbians, and other groups who see themselves as alienated and oppressed may understand the solidarity, the tears, the singing and the dancing, but no unified "struggle" against the all-of-a-piece system itself has yet found focus in the religious community of the U.S.

What Douglas John Hall has challenged us to do for our situation Albert Nolan and the contextual theology movement have actually done, unleashing great streams of vitality.

Even this sketchy survey of Nolan's work tells us how far away we are from where they are in the South African Christian community.

For whom in our situation would such a recasting of the content of traditional theological concepts be important? Not for the majority of Lutheran Church members who fear newness and will fight to preserve the familiar and safe. Nor for the bulk of the U.S. population for whom theology is as baffling as it is irrelevant; nor for the slick practitioners of civil religion who, like Presidents Reagan and Bush, easily purchase the enthusiasm of our nominally Christian nation with devalued theological coinage. Teachers and defenders of denominational, historical theology are not demanding contextual reconstruction of our theological language.

For whom, then, would a Nolan-like enterprise for the U.S. be important? Anyone who finds the tradition of Jesus inadequately reflected in any of our denominational theological traditions, and anyone who takes seriously the mission of the church to those in U.S. society who suffer most and to those around the world who continue to suffer from the unrestrained exercise of U.S. economic and military power.

Only a part of the Christian community in the U.S., and only part of each denomination, is even interested in the task of rethinking its mission, that is, in building its future on the poor, oppressed, and alienated, and linking the future of the Christian community with them. Such a move would be sheer foolishness from the viewpoint of secular wisdom in the U.S. and of most ecclesiastic wisdom as well. Never mind that it would be strangely reminiscent of the Jesus movement and of Paul's word that "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:27).

Yet this is what has happened in South Africa. The weak have banned together, and plan to re-inherit their turf. Nolan is clear about the split in the Christian community. Only a part of the church in South Africa (a "remnant"!) understands the gospel as good news, first for the poor, and only then, for all. Only a part understands sin as anything which causes the innocent to suffer. Only a part sees the struggle as a gift of grace.

But the struggle cannot be avoided if the church (or part of it) is to be used in God's mission. Nolan has not forgotten that Jesus made Judaism into a site of struggle. And the struggle was so intense that families and households were divided (Lk 12:51-53). (215) He affirms further that "for the sake of the good news and the urging of its challenge to us today in South Africa, the church will have to become a site of the struggle." (215)

In the U.S. today it would seem that only the church, or part of the church, is positioned to challenge the rampant idolatry revealed in our national rejoicing and self-congratulation connected with our "victory" in Desert Storm. To challenge this national idolatry powerfully and effectively will make the church a site of the struggle.

Are we ready to do this?

The Word in Quest of Words

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This article is a reflection on the elusive and challenging task of Bible translation. My experience for over four decades of working with Bantu languages in Tanzania will inform the treatment of this subject, but the underlying principles are applicable to Bible translation anywhere.

A quest with a precedent

Giving words to the Word finds its warrant in the divine initiative. The incarnation made the Invisible visible, the Inaccessible accessible, and the Inaudible audible. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory" (Jn 1:1, 14). The Holy Scriptures are the written record of God's self-revealing intention. Consequently scriptural translators in every age thereafter have felt justified and obligated to assist in this incarnational pursuit of the Word in quest of words.

My own experience in Bible translation has been mainly with two Tanzanian languages, Kinyaturu (Kirimi) and Kiswahili. Kinyaturu is the language of the tenth largest ethnic group among Tanzania's 125 languages. Publications in Kinyaturu for the very first time include the Gospels of Mark and John, a scriptural account of the life of Jesus, and a first draft translation of the entire New Testament. Based on the number of its speakers Kiswahili is the world's fifteenth largest language. It is the national language of Tanzania and one of the official languages of Kenya, and is spoken in countries contiguous to Tanzania. Kiswahili is also the only ethnic African language of the official languages of the Organization For African Unity. It was in an advisory capacity that I served the committee which produced a modern Kiswahili version, *Habari Njema Kwa Watu Wote*.

A necessary quest

The complexity of words within any language, and the even more complex relationship between words of the source and receptor languages, makes the quest for

meaning necessary. In the title of this article "words" are used in a broader sense than as simple lexical units. Words do not stand in isolation—they are always in a relationship. Eugene Nida and Johannes Louw recognized this fact when they created a Greek-English lexicon based on semantic domain. It is the translator's task to discern a variety of relationships within a text. These relationships might include those between words, etymological origin, cultural ambiance, historical development, and cultural particularity.

What is true of individual words is true also of languages. Marjorie Suchocki points out, "Language is not reducible to itself; it reflects a broader reality that it always tries to capture with-in borders."[1]

A dictionary of synonyms is a handy tool to avoid monotony and to introduce freshness in one's communication. Synonyms are words which share a large measure of semantic similarity, but synonyms are not words which are equal. Even with the copulative verb "to be" the subject and the predicate nominative are not identical. If they were identical, then, apart from Greek grammatical constraints, it would not matter if one translated 1 Jn 4:8,16 as "God is Love" or as "Love is God." However, it is God who defines love, and not love that defines God. We say glibly that one plus one *equals* two, as though two were the same as one plus one. Two has a cohesive unity that is not found in the exclusive singularity of one and one. The whole, then, is obviously more than, and different from, the sum of its parts.

It is idle to assume that a translation in a receptor language could or should equal the original source language. Even within the same language, while a word may be the name of a thing, it is no more the thing itself than a photograph is the actual person. The word is essentially a metaphor of the object. How privileged Adam was to name the newly created animals, but neither Adam's animal nomenclature nor Linnaeus' binominal taxonomic classification makes a hippopotamus a river horse. In fact, "That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." Exactitude, much less improvement, is beyond the capacity of translation. Approximation is perhaps the most one can expect. Grand'combe is quoted as having quipped, "Nothing improves by translation, except bishops."

In one language words may have a different connotation than in others. In contrast to each other, languages may appear overdifferentiated or under-differentiated depending on which is one's native tongue. In Kinyaturu the English words "hear" and "obey" are expressed by the same word. The assumption is that heeding is an integral part of hearing, and if one does not obey it is obvious that one has not heard. Again in Kinyaturu the English words "wrist and "ankle" are expressed by the same word, for they both serve parallel functions; the wrist is to the hand what the ankle is to the foot. In Kiswahili the English words "hand" and "arm" are expressed by the same word.

On the other hand, there are many examples from Scripture where both Greek and Kiswahili differentiate with precision, whereas English subsumes these differences in a single word. For example, the English word "life" is used in Mk 8:35, Lk 8:14, and Jn 3:16. The Greek words are *psyche, bios,* and *zoe,* and the Kiswahili words are *nafsi, maisha,* and *uzima* respectively.

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[1] Marjorie Suchocki, "Theological Foundations for Ethnic and Gender Diversity in Faculties," *Theological Education* (Spring 1990):48.

Cultural behavior also conditions the repertoire and utilization of words. In Zulu where a pedestrian role is customary there are 120 words for different kinds of walking. Among the Nilotic Shilluk people a stingy person is described as having a big heart. Conversely a generous person is said to have a small heart. The reasoning behind these metaphoric conventions is that a big heart acquires and hoards, whereas a small heart is so because it has shared all it has with others.

A principled quest

If a translation cannot be exact, by what criteria should a version be measured? The Common Kiswahili Version and the New Revised Standard Version used as their canons: accuracy, clarity, euphony, and current usage. To attain these goals the translator must be concerned with both meaning and form, the *what* and the *how* of the message. Consequently for the sake of meaning, the form may have to be altered in the receptor language. This is the principle known as dynamic equivalence, where translation is as literal as possible but as free as necessary. Word-for-word literalism, as in the Authorized Version (King James), is avoided. Likewise unwarranted paraphrasing, as in the Living Bible, is eschewed. Both literalism and paraphrasing are summarized well in the statement, "Those who translate literally are liars, but those who add to the text are blasphemers." The principle of dynamic equivalence is safeguarded by insisting on no addition, do deletion, and no distortion.

The NRSV is essentially a literal translation, but one which utilizes dynamic equivalence as well. Of the 51 other New Testament translations which have appeared in the 44 years since the publication of the RSV, Walter Wink says of the NRSV that it is "the finest American translation yet."[2]

The TEV is a translation of the United Bible Societies which employs the dynamic equivalent method. It aims to be a faithful reflection of the meaning of the original languages of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Although a careful study of the original cultural setting was undertaken, no attempt was made to modernize the text itself. The TEV employs language which is "natural, clear, simple and unambiguous."

The Living Bible is a self-designated paraphrase with an admitted amplification which "exceeds the responsibilities of a strict translation." Kenneth Taylor states that the "theological lodestar (of the LB) has been a rigid evangelical position."

An example of translations from the original Greek will be taken from Gal 6:1 to show the methodologies employed by the New Revised Standard Version, the Today's English Version (The Good News Bible) and the Living Bible.

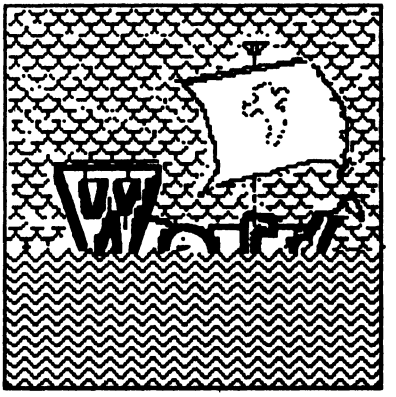
Greek (Lit.): Brothers, if indeed is overtaken a man in some trespass, you the spiritual (ones) restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest also you are tempted.

NRSV: My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted.

TEV: My brothers, if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are spiritual should set him right; but you must do it in a gentle way. And keep an eye on yourselves, so that you will not be tempted too.

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2 Walter Wink, "The New RSV, the Best Translation Halfway There," *Christian Century* 107 (Sept. 19-26, 1990):829.



LB: Dear brothers, if a Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help him back onto the right path, remembering that next time it might be one of you who is wrong.

The canon of accuracy. Obviously fidelity to the original text is strongly affected by whether one translates with rigid literalism, dynamic equivalence, or paraphrase. In the beatitudes when the Greek word *makarioi* is used as in Mt 5:5, it is hardly conceivable that all three different translations are equally accurate: blessed (NRSV), fortunate (LB), and happy (TEV).

About the NRSV, Walter Wink again says, "I was astonished by the almost unerring precision and appropriateness of not just some but virtually all its changes."[3] A few examples of greater accuracy in the NRSV are cited here: Mt 10:29, "Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father;" Jn 2:10, "...after the guests are drunk;" 1 Cor 9:5, "believing wife;" Song of Solomon 1:5, "...black and beautiful."

But occasionally this canon fails in the NRSV. When the RSV New Testament was published in 1946, the new rendering of Rom 8:28 was heralded as being grammatically correct and theologically sound. Articles were written in praise of this one change. In the RSV it read, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him...." It is hard to understand the rationale which convinced the translators of the NRSV to go back to the former reading, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God."

The canon of euphony. A good example of euphony in the Kiswahili Union Version is found in Acts 3:6. Here Peter tells the crippled beggar that he has neither silver or gold, "But what I have I give you." Even though Kiswahili may be strange to an American ear, one can still delight to the sound of this translation, "Nilicho nacho ndicho nikupacho."

Wherever possible the NRSV has attempted to retain the English literary tradition of the Authorized Version while still employing current usage.

The canon of clarity. Sometimes making explicit what was implicit heightens clarity. The use of the passive to avoid pronouncing the name of God was readily understood by Jews. For us it may need to be made explicit. In Mt 7:1 although the Greek simply says, "Do not judge that you may not be judged," the TEV gives it greater clarity by putting it this way: "Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you."

The canon of current usage. While some anachronisms like "thee," "thou," and "ye" may still be understood, their continued employment is unnecessary and may tend to turn readers away. Current language, on the other hand, is not to be confused with

[3] Wink, "The New RSV," 829.

ephemeral linguistic fads. Colloquial language should be utilized which seems to have an enduring quality.

One important improvement has been the effort in NRSV to eliminate linguistic sexism. "To use 'men' when women are clearly included is not just insensitive, it is incorrect."[4] NRSV has made a significant breakthrough in inclusivity, and could have gone even further by substituting "God" where "he" refers to the divinity.

Kiswahili is fortunate in that this problem does not exist in that language. Kiswahili personal pronouns and pronominal verbal prefixes are inclusive and not sexist.

Reading is a form of translation. In the uncertainties which reading generates, reading in fact transforms the text.

A reader-oriented quest

In the historical evolution of hermeneutical methodology the importance of the reader in interpreting a text was emphasized in structuralism, canonical criticism, and reader-oriented criticism. Terence J. Keegan says, "It is the reader who makes meaning of the biblical text."[5] He uses the analogy of sound, which depends ultimately on a hearer. Without aural perception what would otherwise be sound is merely a movement of condensed and rarefied air. Edgar V. McKnight shares this understanding that reading is a form of translation. In the uncertainties which reading generates, reading in fact transforms the text. The reader, then, is the touchstone of the schema in which meaning is sought.[6]

There are far-reaching consequences from the reader's interpretation of a text. Augsburg Fortress Press advertises the NRSV as being a "theologically balanced translation." While I find this an odd description, I presume it means that it is a translation without theological bias. Although the translated text may be balanced it does not necessarily follow that the reader will interpret it in the same balanced way. Three examples will illustrate how complex the reading process becomes.

1. The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa for many years had read the Old Testament in such a way as to find the system of apartheid justified scripturally. Finally on Nov. 9, 1980, the white Dutch Reformed Church joined with 90 Christian churches in supporting their Rustenberg Declaration. It said in part, "We confess our own sin and acknowledge our heretical part in the policy of apartheid in its intention, its implementation, and its consequences as an evil policy." This was an obviously revolutionary rereading of Scripture which now allowed the Scriptures to speak for themselves without bias.

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[4] Wink, "The New RSV," 831.

[5] Terence J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible, A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 11.

[6] Edgar V. McKnight, *Post-Modern Use of the Bible, The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 60-61.

2. When a word occurs only once in the Greek New Testament and is without a parallel reference in the Septuagint the translator and the reader face a great challenge. One such word is *harpagmos* in Phil 2:6. Three different translations of it are as follows:

RSV: "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped."

NRSV: "did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited."

TEV: "did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God." *Harpagmos* does have the idea of force, but is it a force which retains or obtains? The TEV acknowledges this ambiguity by a footnote which suggests two possibilities of *become* or *remain*. The ultimate interpretation is left to the reader.

3. In Jn 4:10 the Greek words *hydor zon* are used in Jesus' answer to the Samaritan woman. *Zon* is the participial form of *zao*. The words have basically two meanings: spring water or running water. It is obvious from v. 12 that the Samaritan woman thought it to mean spring water. The *Didache* in reference to baptism uses *zon* as running water. This is also the way it is used in the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia. From v. 14 it is clear that Jesus uses the expression to mean not living water as in RSV and NRSV, but as life-giving water as in TEV. Again the reader must decide.

An endless quest

Gregory Rabassa writes a word which is both frustrating and challenging:

> Translation is a disturbing craft because there is precious little certainty about what we are doing.... The translator can never be sure of himself, he must never be. He must always be dissatisfied with what he does, because ideally, platonically, there is a perfect solution, but he will never find it.[8]

The quest of the Word for words is endless, not only by virtue of the fact that the Word is artesian bringing up fresh water constantly, but also because of the dynamic nature of all living languages. There is a sense in which the Word itself always invites and compels new translations. My forebears spoke in Swedish of "Ordet's makt över tankarna," the power of the Word over thoughts. Because languages are not static, new translations are a perennial necessity. Some words have taken on new meanings since the publication of the RSV. 2 Cor 11:25 which read, "Once I was stoned," now needs to be "Once I received a stoning." Psalm 50:9 previously was "I will not accept no bull from your house." Now it is altered to "I will not accept a bull from your house." Words which emerge in various languages also may not reflect their origin. How many English speakers are aware of the fact that the word "dunce" has its origin from the name of Duns Scotus, a very wise man in his day?

The endless quest is a continuing linkage of indebtedness. Each new translation is beholden to previous translations. Benjamin A. Ntreh, a Ghanian theologian, writes, "Every translation is, by itself, an interpretive tool."[9] The translation is an

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[7] Howard S. Olson, "The Kiswahili Common Language Version of the New Testament," *Africa Theological Journal* 9 (1980): 84.

[8] Gregory Rabassa, "No Two Snowflakes Alike; Translation as Metaphor," in *The Craft of Translation*, eds. John Biquenet and Rainer Schulte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 12.

[9] Benjamin A. Ntreh, "Towards an African Biblical Hermeneutical," *Africa Theological Journal* 19 (1990):249.

There is a sense in which the Word itself always invites and compels new translations.

interpretive achievement in itself and continues to serve as such a tool for those who follow. When the translation committee of the NRSV was honored at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting at New Orleans in 1990, Harry Orlinsky, one of its Jewish translators, told Bruce Metzger that more recognition should be given to previous translations and their translators. Then he added, "All Bible translators are thieves, but you have to be trained in what is worth stealing."

The quest is endless because both the text and the reader are indeterminate. When Martin Luther had completed his translation of the German Bible he set about at once to correct and improve it. Even today the German Bible Society is still updating the Luther Bible. Walter Wink in commending the translators of the NRSV reminds them that they are halfway there—and urges them to "finish the job." The job in fact is never finished, and though this awareness seems to make the quest Sisyphan, yet there is a rich blessing stemming from this kind of penultimate effort. Because the translation is not dependent alone on the sagacity and virtuosity of a committee of talented wordsmiths, but on the Holy Spirit, there is ample evidence that the word even in our translations continues to liberate, heal, and transform. In this always-uncompleted task the translator is sustained by the promise that the divine Word shall not return to God empty, but shall accomplish the purpose for which it was sent (Isa 55:11).

Worship as Transformation

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"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:1-2).

With these powerful words Paul invites his hearers to a new life. He makes connections between body and spirit, worship and world, faith and action, learning and mission. The key to this marvelous appeal is in the word "transformed." The possibility of bearing witness to the will of God, of being able to make known what is "good, acceptable and perfect" resides in God's desire to transform us. By being transformed we are enabled to bear witness to the power of God set loose in the world.

To be transformed means to be changed deeply, perhaps dramatically. Paul is specific: be transformed by the renewal of your mind. This does not mean simply our intellect, as if ideas or information were all that mattered. Our whole bodies are to be presented to God. The transformation to which Paul invites us is all-embracing, and it has the potential to put us at odds with the world.

The foundation for this risky business of being transformed is baptism. The Christian community builds on that foundation to provide what educators call a "safe learning environment" where the process of transformation can be both celebrated and experienced. The event of Christian worship is one way in which this safe learning environment is realized. In the public gathering of worship we live by our baptismal identities as we learn what it means to be part of the body of Christ. We are free to risk our selves because God has claimed us and has promised to be there with us.

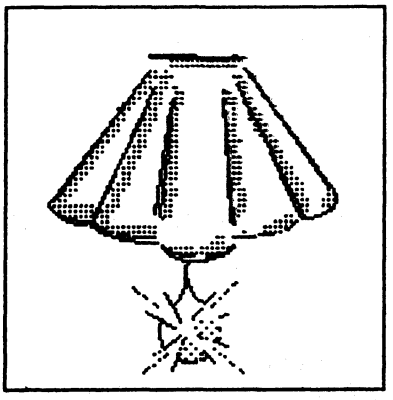
To say that the Christian community is a safe learning environment does not mean that it is safe from the world. The persecution of Christians throughout the centuries, including many being killed while they worshipped, indicates that Christians are no more safe from the evils of the world than anyone else. Nor does it mean that we will not be troubled, challenged, or confronted as we live within the community of the baptized.

It is precisely in a safe learning environment that we can be led to transformation—the renewal of our inner being, as Paul says in Romans. In such a context we know that we will not be rejected for what we say or do. The fact that we so often make the church a less than safe environment is, of course, a sign of our brokenness. But this cannot compromise the fact that the gospel which animates the church's life will always be present to break down the walls we build and bring life from death.

Worship is a safe learning environment because the Word of God has primary place in this gathering. It controls us; we do not control it. There is a surrendering of self implicit in all Christian worship. No one is there to oppress another person or to impose a personal point of view on them. The hostility and violence which so often characterize our relationships in the world have no place in worship. All people are to be welcomed as they are. All are accepted as they are in order that God might speak through them. Transformation can occur when God takes this diversity and uses it to teach us the way of life.

What do we learn?

Yet the primary purpose of worship is not to give information about God. Worship is our corporate prayer. In this praying we clearly learn about God. We do receive information about who God is. We tell the story (made up of facts, people, places—all information) of how God has been known in the past. We tell the story of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. In all of this we are giving and receiving knowledge that is accessible to anyone who is willing to listen. In the church, just as in the world, such knowledge is power. When we talk about empowering others for mission, however,



we are suggesting more than passing on information about God in Jesus Christ.

Mission is a way of life that embodies the will of God. That is why Paul said that we present our whole selves as a "living sacrifice." Our worship as Christians is the mutual presenting of ourselves before God in the act of gathering around Word and sacrament. Whenever we do this we open ourselves to the possibility of transformation and renewal. We learn in our experience of God present in Word and sacrament what it means to be human. God became one with us in Jesus Christ so that we might know what it means to be in self-giving relationships. In worship such self-giving is celebrated, expressed, and experienced. We *learn* there what God intends for us.

An example of how this occurs is in the act of confession and absolution. We are asked to name our sins, the barriers that divide us from God and one another. Our confession is both personal and communal: we speak as individuals in the pew and as a gathered community that recognizes its corporate sin. The word of forgiveness spoken to us is both an affirmation of God's faithful care and a call to live free from bondage to

our sin. Because God is loving and just, we are able to see the possibilities for love and justice among us.

The transformation that occurs in our baptism is the foundation for the ongoing transformation symbolized in the act of confession and forgiveness. Baptismal identity is a daily reality, not an event in our past. As Luther put it, based on Paul's language in Romans 6, we die each day to sin and rise to new life. This is why the debate between those who advocate either infant or adult baptism is somewhat misplaced. Being baptized as an infant does not compromise the learned responsibility of living out that identity daily. Being baptized as an adult does not remove the learned responsibility of living out that identity daily.

How do we learn?

Worship is one context in which we learn what this baptismal identity means. The rich sources of that renewal are the unique mixture of people, words, actions, tastes, sights, and sounds experienced in a given place and time in the light of the gospel. To those who want us to share the significance of such experience one can finally only say, "You had to be there." If worship were only the words on a page we could hand people a book and exclaim, "This is what it means!" But words alone do not convey the experience of worship, just as textbooks alone do not convey the experience of good education in the classroom. Genuine engagement in each case is transformative because it is experiential learning rooted in the Word of God.

Worship invites this engagement when it gives everyone a voice, allows each person to be recognized and heard. This does not mean that each individual must "say something." Rather it is a case of the whole community and its worship leaders saying and doing things in such a way that each person is able to see themselves, to recognize that they are embraced by these words and these signs.

Sometimes this happens because the roles of leadership are shared by many, or exercised by the "least" in the community. It can also happen because we take care with our language, mindful to include those who are often demeaned by carelessly chosen words and images; or because we touch the roots of another's identity with words and music drawn from their ethnic heritage; or simply because we are silently attentive to the pain of the moment. In all of this we are teaching and learning what it means to be children of God in a world that seeks to divide and conquer.

Richness and ambiguity

Worship shapes us in a variety of ways. When we pass the peace, for example, it does not necessarily mean that we are all friends living peaceably with each other. Yet our act of passing the peace demonstrates that we are somehow all one in Christ. The transforming power of worship is set loose by the richness and ambiguity of such enacted invitations to community. Worship is not satisfied with definitions and answers, as if a word or action will always mean only one specific thing. When the lawyer asks Jesus who his neighbor is, Jesus certainly answers the question—but not with a definition or a statement of facts. He tells a parable, the story of the Good Samaritan. In doing so Jesus invites the lawyer to see more in his question and its "answer" than he ever dreamed of. Worship is like a parable.

In an information oriented culture, this is unsettling. We tend to want "the facts" so

In our theological reflection we strive for clarity. We seek to explain, to understand. In worship we are able to let go of this striving a bit and live with the mystery.

that we can "make up our minds" about believing or not. We think that the facts alone will transform us. But the parabolic, or story-like character of worship means that it gives indirect theological information. The language of our praying and the language of our reflection and teaching are not interchangeable. For example, in our talking about God with each other we might find various ways to discuss the identity of God as triune. Yet we do not pray, "O great triune identity." The personal language of our prayer is rarely so abstract or objective. We use images and metaphors in worship more than statements of fact. In our theological reflection we strive for clarity. We seek to explain, to understand. In worship we are able to let go of this striving a bit and live with the mystery.

Liturgical texts and actions do not provide exact verification of what it is they are supposed to demonstrate. When we "confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves," we voice a truth given to us by the Christian tradition about the human condition. Without God in Jesus Christ we are bound by the limitations of creatures unable to recognize their Creator. That is not something we can prove scientifically; it is an affirmation of faith. Yet we also know that in Jesus Christ we are "new creations" set free to choose the way of love and life rather than death. We are the ones who sing, "This is the feast of victory for our God"! So we are free and in bondage at the same time.

Part of Paul's warning about not being conformed to this world can, in our day, be applied to the contemporary desire to define everything in either/or terms. Our reliance on scientific method, on proving hypotheses or demanding verification, is not always helpful. Some facets of life do not submit to such control. This is not to imply that everything is relative or that are no answers to the dilemmas of life. If the gospel does not speak to our human condition it does not speak at all.

No single facet of Christian life—worship, doctrine, social action, stewardship, ethics—functions in isolation from the others. Only when they are in dialogue with each other do the "answers" we seek emerge, but they emerge as we go on living life in the context of the faith community. Again, mission is a way of life, not a doctrine to be asserted or a feeling to be shared. Worship is a context for integrating our thinking about God and our prayer. Whether we recognize it or not, worship is always in the process of transforming us.

The primary place of worship in Christian life should not lead to isolating it from other forms of religious witness. Private devotion, family prayer, Bible study, classes, even finding God in nature are not lesser or greater moments of revelation than public worship. Transformation can and does occur in all of them. Christians simply claim that these various ways of knowing God

cannot be fully understood apart from the reality of Word and sacrament that celebrates the story of Jesus. Neither can worship stand isolated and uninformed by the richness of other experiences.

"Experience is the best teacher." When we are thinking about things, as in a classroom setting, we rightly break them down into component parts. We analyze and probe, ponder and question. We "unpack" experience in order to better understand it. Worship packs rather than unpacks. Worship is the equivalent of saying "I love you." Theological reflection in the broader educational ministries of the church is our attempt to take a step back from that experience and talk about what such love means for us. In each case the transforming power of God's Spirit is at work, but in different ways.

If worship is so central to our ongoing transformation as believers, why is "going to church" such a burden for many people? Is it possible to learn if we are not interested? A study of Lutherans revealed that fifty percent of those questioned thought that Sunday worship was boring. If that is true, why is it so and what can be done about it? Gathering to praise and thank God should not be boring, but it should be work. Engagement and commitment in worship are part of what transformation is. We are "converted." Sometimes this is signalled by a powerful moment (a "conversion experience"). Often it occurs over a long period of time in which our hearts and minds are "persuaded" by the truth of the story we are living.

Worship will engage us, speak to us, inspire and challenge us; it will sometimes genuinely entertain us. But in our entertainment culture, where we often allow ourselves to be passive consumers of much that is superficial, we need to be wary of expecting worship to be instantly understandable and accessible. Like anything that has lasting value and substance, worship invites participation that goes beyond the surface. It requires an investment of ourselves, our attentiveness, and the needs and desires we bring.

Diversity and Spirit

Diversity in worshipping communities is a challenging gift. Going into a Christian community for worship for the first time should be something like going into another person's kitchen. The surroundings are sufficiently familiar for us to recognize that it is a kitchen. But things are not quite in the same place. The main symbols are evident: sink, stove, refrigerator. But the subtleties at first escape us. Which cupboard has the glasses, what drawer holds the silverware? Where are the pots, pans, and utensils for cooking?

The academic shorthand for discussing these kinds of differences in worship is "inculturation" or "indigenization." It means that each worshipping community is unique, with local traditions that are the result of its own life and history. No worshipping community should be exactly like another. Each church should be radically local.

I once visited a church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where the chancel contained a huge stainless steel altar table. At first my reaction was negative—it was too big, too shiny, too modern. Yet a bit of reflection made me realize how appropriate such an altar table was for this congregation, where most of the members' jobs were connected with the steel industry. In worship we are called both to delight in what we are, as individuals and communities, as well as to see what we might become.

How can we be local, culturally relevant, and at the same time remain true to

the traditions of the church? Because our worship is generated by a story that is given to us by those who have gone before us, respecting the traditions of the church is essential. Those traditions are the only access we have to the truth of the story. We are not free simply to abandon what has gone before us because we do not like it or because it troubles us. We are, however, required to interpret and change those traditions in light of the gospel's claim on our own culture. Transformation works on cultures and traditions just as on people, for people are the source of traditions and cultures.

Thus there is no one right way to worship God, but in any given time and place some ways are more faithful to the gospel than others. There are limits to what is appropriate in Christian worship. Lutherans say that our confessional identity demands that "justification by grace through faith" function as an interpretive and evaluative key for whatever Christians say or do in the name of Jesus. If worship does not "convey Christ" as Luther expressed it, it is inappropriate. All that we say and do in worship should help, not hinder, the voice of the gospel. Diversity in such a confessional context is not a threat to faithfulness to the gospel. Respecting diversity is the way to be faithful! Diversity is God's gift, and it opens ever new windows on the world to stretch us beyond the limits of our own horizons—it can transform us.

The spirit of worshipping communities can also invite participation and lead to transformation. What is it that makes the *Lutheran Book of Worship* come alive in some congregations and not in others? Why is it that in some communities you feel welcomed, a part of the whole, even if no one says anything to you? The spirit of any group is the result of the unique mix of people within it, the context, and all of the things that contribute to people's sense of themselves and the occasion. It is not really definable, but the spirit of an event is definitely tangible—you can "feel" it, sense it. Each of us present contributes to it.

The spirit of Christian worship is, of course, the consequence of the Spirit at work within it. It is this Spirit that "works faith" or transforms us. We seem to err at either end of the spectrum when it comes to allowing this interplay between spirit and the Spirit in worship. At one end, we hope for a kind of spontaneous combustion: we simply get out of the way and let the Spirit do its work: do not use written prayers, go with the flow, do little preparation beforehand. At the other end, we work too hard at controlling the event and fall into an inflexible rubricism that is stifling.

If worship truly is a safe environment for learning, it will be filled with a healthy mixture of good planning and flexibility. We learn best when we allow ourselves to be fully human—warts and all, as they say. We cannot hide from God; we should not try to hide from one another in worship. Because the crucifixion and resurrection (together) animate our faith and worship, both the sadness of pain and death and the joyful celebration of new life will play a role in our gatherings. No single model can suffice to tell us ahead of time how we ought to worship, for our gathering, too, is constantly being transformed as are we within it.

The words of Jesus remind us what will happen because two or three are gathered in his name: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:31-32).

Learning leads to mission leads to learning leads to mission... and it will continue.

From Learning to Mission to Learning

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Learning can lead elsewhere than to mission; learning can lead nowhere. We may admire academic pursuit for the sheer joy of learning, a worthy goal which delights in God's gifts of curiosity, knowledge, and skill. But when the learner is buried beneath the weight of acquired treasures of learning, God's grace cannot be multiplied among God's people. Likewise, when learners have as their ultimate goal winning what they perceive as educational competition, their own accomplishment becomes their mission. This is often at the expense of their brothers and sisters in Christ in the learning community.

On the other hand, and perhaps this is more frequently the case, there are Christians who rue learning, anxious only to perform. They close their minds and hearts to the stored wisdom of the ages and to God's guidance. They may be engaged in doing, but it may not be God's mission they pursue. They may be highly motivated and even adequately effective for a while, but their ministry will be shallow. They will thirst for wisdom and not even recognize that thirst.

We should not be surprised when the Christian learning community fails to connect learning with Christ's mission of reconciliation because our society measures educational success individualistically. The objective, at least tacitly, is to get an "A," to be the best. Such an environment, like capitalistic society itself, is obsessed by competition. A cause for concern, in this writer's judgment, is the component of President George Bush's education agenda which calls for private industry to become increasingly involved in education in this country. Some businesses have already become involved in the public schools, some for the practical motive to prepare workers for jobs. But the ideology of competitive, individual gain is also propagated in such schools, unnoticed as a belief system, even while the Supreme Court once again debates the place of "religion" in public schools. The same national agenda is moving in the direction of competition among schools. On the drawing board are private "schools for profit." This leaves in doubt the future of free, quality, public education for all. the mission of such education is individual

achievement. Any other goal or subject matter (music and the arts, for example) which is not for this mission is thought to be superfluous and inadequate for aggressive participation in the "hard," "cold," public world.

In this atmosphere, Christian education, too, is considered peripheral, "soft," less than real, as any congregation can attest when having to convince parents of the core necessity of catechetical instruction. Confirmation ministry competes with the "necessity" of sports and other demands so that children will be able to compete in the "real" world. The role of the church in this milieu is not a prophetic mission.

Christian communities may be tempted to believe that the church, even Christianity itself, is not only an anachronism, but inadequate for the public world today. This stance, adopted in frustration, will produce apathy or a heretical mission which competes with, in order to conquer, the outside world.

Implementation of a mission statement that "learning leads to mission" begins by believing in the radically good news that we dare not compete to conquer. Rather, we believe God creates us for interdependence and reconciles us to each other in Christ for community and for service. We therefore expect that all members of the body of Christ will engage in life-long learning as the only way to center their lives in the midst of alternative missions of demanding demigods.

Learning measured in mission

Learning may also be self-centered because it doesn't believe Christ has invited the entire Body to walk, speak, and serve in the world. Education dare not be measured in pages finished, books completed, pupils in attendance. Most people now agree that learning cannot be measured in memorization; learning needs to lead to meaning and understanding. But even the latter, if it is an end in itself, is meaning*less*. Education is measured in mission.

Letty Russell says that education is involved in the whole of church life and ceases to be education when it is taken out of the context of the witnessing community. "When the community is not a witnessing community, those who are being nurtured in the community receive 'miseducation' or a gift of education that has already been turned into a stone."[1] We are called to give our students bread and not a stone. That bread will become part of each person's body, and we together become part of the Body of Christ so that we are energized for witness and service.

The congregation which is not engaged in outreach also will be merely a stone. Fed on the bread of life, stuffed full, but not exercising its energy in ministry, this learning community will no longer hunger for the Word. Unchallenged, people will assume the task of critic, a role which can become habit-forming.

A sponge already filled with water can hold no more. But when a sponge is wrung out, wiping tables, it will soak in fresh water when placed in a basin. So, too, the congregation, cleansed, filled, and serving at all kinds of tables, will be eager to be filled again with the water of life.

The Christian learning community is grounded in one uniting act—baptism into the incarnation, death, and resurrection of

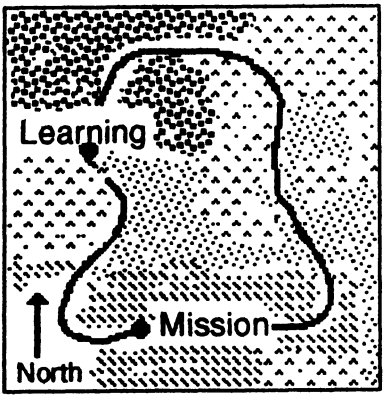
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[1] Letty M. Russell, *Christian Education in Mission* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 13, 37.

Jesus Christ. All enter on the same ground, yet differently gifted. No one has special advantage; no one needs remedial education. Christ gives us the gift of eternal life which means the goal has already been achieved. Being immersed in this living truth permeates every other endeavor, so nothing is irrelevant; the private and public arenas are bridged. What God has already done and is doing cannot be kept secret, so there is no need to prove one knows more than another. The gift is open and for all, so there is no need to push to the head of the line, or win the prize. We are given the ultimate reality of God's unconditional love, and this is always also the gift of Christian community. "We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as fellow members of the body of Christ, children of the same heavenly Father, and workers with us in the kingdom of God." This is the welcome to the learning community confessed during the service of baptism.

New Christians are carried by the community of faith, which confesses with them the Creed. Each new Christian is given the gift of ministry. We often hold the mistaken belief that children are the learners and adults the workers in society and the church. We actually confess that all are already in ministry from the moment of baptism and, therefore, all are life-long learners. The community enters into the cross-shaped mission of Jesus Christ.

We participate in the mission of the living God when we engage as learners in biblical study. Luther says the Scriptures are so shallow a young child can wade in them and so deep a grown person can drown in them. We inquire into the way they functioned for their first community, and we allow the text to nurture, shape, and transform our community. We recognize our own context for mission, realize that we are both interpreted by the text and interpreters of the text. We honor the reciprocity between text and experience, allowing mutual questioning to become the foundation for action.



We are interconnected with the people of God of all times and places. The classroom is always crowded with all the saints. Where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, Christ the teacher is present; also present are all others in whom he incarnates himself. Learning in the Christian community is always global and always historic. The task is to become acquainted with these unknown brothers and sisters in Christ through story, and through vicarious and actual experiential learning.

Curriculum always deals with God and God's people in this time and place. Our task is to set a trustworthy learning environment in which people can be invited to bring their brokenness, their alienation, their grief, and their guilt to this place which is safely bounded by God's and our own unconditional acceptance. The gospel speaks to actual people in response to their actual life. God's mission never misses the mark. Letty Russell notes that Jesus does not say to the

blind person, "You can walk," or to the crippled person, "You can see."

Learning is already God's mission. We who are carried by the Word receive the revealed living God and reflect upon our action in mission during the past week. If we view education as merely leading to mission someday, we are like those who believe in a banking style of education:[2] Those who possess knowledge deposit it in the learner which can be drawn on when needed in life. The mission in learning is to create a trustworthy learning environment where the baptized can gather around the Word, engaging it and being engaged. Learning which is not ministry to the learners is miseducation and shapes people for other than Christian mission.

The ministry of education uses all the gifts of the people of God. We need to be skilled in a wide variety of teaching and learning so that people can engage in ways most helpful to them. We need to be inquisitive about the lives and ministries of the four-year-old and the fifty-four-year-old. I recently worshipped in an urban church in Milwaukee on "Witness Sunday." Nearly one-third of the filled sanctuary was children and youth. Confirmands, understanding well the real, "cold" world, witnessed with vitality, and the adults and children in attendance introduced publicly the unchurched friends they had brought with them to church. Learning which leads to mission equips the saints to articulate their faith.

We also will use the gifts of people outside the room, including, of course, the testimony of books, but treating them as invited guests, offering the same, but no greater honor and hospitality than to the Christians present in the room. We also will seek out the saints whose voices were unheard or unrecorded throughout the centuries.

Mission which leads to learning

What is my mission, and what are the value systems, the beliefs, the very gods on which that mission is based?

If I am a real estate agent, my mission will be to sell houses. It will also be to develop a clientele and be part of an agency which people trust enough to list their property for sale. The types of property listed and the neighborhoods where signs go up advertise the status of the agency. Underlying the furtherance of this mission will be values, judgments concerning class, race, community, and economics. Real estate agents have codes of ethic, either explicit or implicit, and behind those are belief systems. Does every person have the right to own a home? Are communal or private goals more important? Is security now more important than security later? Is inheritance a biblical concept? Does diversity enhance community? While many of these beliefs may never be articulated, they are held. Not only do our beliefs shape our actions, but our actions shape the ongoing formulation of our beliefs. We think of education as preparing us for work, but we need also to give attention to what our work teaches us. In the middle of the night what is it I fear above all things? On a Tuesday afternoon, driving in my car, what is it I trust above all things? As the week progresses, and I say I can't squeeze in another thing but I reschedule appointments, what is it I love above all things? Those, Luther would say, are gods.[3]

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[2] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 57.

[3] Gabriel Moran, "Work, Leisure, and Religious Education" in *Religious Education* 74 No. 2 (March-April 1979), 160.

Mission does lead to learning! Inevitably we act our ways into new ways of believing. People are life-long learners. We must engage the Christian learning community in reflection upon their missions, their beliefs, and their gods so that all are constantly reestablished at the root in the life-giving mission of Jesus Christ in which we have been baptized.

The society in which we live is not a Christendom, but the language of our daily world is deceivingly similar to that of Christianity. The gods and goals are disguised as our Judeo-Christian heritage. The temptation is to hide out in private ghettos of ethnic Christianity abdicating the public world to the civil faith. Our call to mission is exactly the opposite, to realize that God is still out there among those competing gods. People hunger for communal mission; they want to do something, in the name of something, together. Translating this energy to real crying needs is not easy. Our challenge is to call our neighbor to a mission of life rather than to a mission of death.

Rooted in Christ's incarnation, we can send each other forth knowing that Christ already lives in each neighborhood. Reminded of the Creator God's ongoing work, we will seek to replenish the earth, whether that be South Dakota or the South Bronx. Believing that the Spirit is at work in ways beyond our present reality, we can dare to envision people working together who are different in gender, race, and class. This will take no small amount of courage when economic and growth statistics say such neighborhoods don't grow and don't become economically viable. Confessing our belief in the God who creates, redeems, and empowers while creating community, we can be involved in our daily missions, whether that be in the arena of real estate, or the worlds of medicine, computers, agriculture, or social services, creating and caring

People hunger for communal mission; they want to do something, in the name of something, together.

and reconciling and building community in cross-shaped ways. One cannot help but be a learner when one is engaged in Christian mission.

When one is engaged in mission, risking and making decisions, none of which is perfectly righteous, living in forgiveness of sins is absolutely essential; that is what frees one to be engaged in mission tomorrow. But when witness and service are not attempted, the parishioner, as it were, never leaves the pew, or never leaves the pew with the Word. Such Christian communities simply go through the motions. All is pretense.

When faith and life are disconnected, the pretense is to make our missions in the world "nicer." We cheat only a little, kill kindly. Learning is watered down or actually nullified. The discrepancy between our missions and Christian learning grows so strong that we may absent ourselves from the Christian worshipping and learning community altogether.

But many faithful Christians do want to be empowered for mission. It may be articulated, "I try hard to be a good citizen," or "I care about people at work." Leaders short-change people by limiting their mission only to the work of caring for the

When witness and service are not attempted, the parishioner, as it were, never leaves the pew, or never leaves the pew with the Word.

business or political world. The real work of redemption, some say, is left to those entrusted with the public ministry of the gospel. But is not all of ministry and mission entrusted to all the people? Do 98% of the people have only service to the law while only 2% have service to the gospel? We will not preserve the truth by allowing only a small percentage of Christians to speak it. We must take each of these Christians, 100% of them, more seriously. Believing that all the baptized are already gifted with the mission and ministry of Christ's reconciling love, we will treat the entire Christian learning community as the teachers and learners they already are.

The surprise of learning from mission

Who has not been amazed when the Word has come alive in a casual conversation and Christ's love is shared with yet another? Likewise, who has not been awed that the pain and problems we encounter in mission are so much deeper than we had imagined? We cannot comprehend all that we witness; nor do we fully understand the Christ whose witness we bear. In the very act of ministry God is teaching us.

The mission of Jesus Christ is to put to death the power of sin and to fill us with new life. Such love liberates people to use their God-given gifts in new ways, ways that are not death-seeking or self-sacrificing or self-serving. When these gifts are unleashed, the Spirit can build community in places where isolation and alienation existed before. The process of community building, whether it be a block club, or a team of public servants, or a coalition of people from various walks of life who no longer hate but heal, is itself a gift of the Spirit to the entire community. Saints are being added to the Body of Christ, and, therefore, ministry is being multiplied.

Sometimes one hears pastors say, "My goal is to work myself out of a job." Such abdication of pastoral teaching authority, just when it gets difficult and exciting, is inexcusable. It is also false praise of laity. Laity engaged in mission and ministry in the world want to be taken seriously. They don't want the pastor's ministry; they want to be equipped for their mission.

When all the people of God are engaged in mission in the arenas of their daily lives, when their work for justice is intricately connected with justification, and they are able to reflect on that connection, they bring back to the gathered Christian learning community questions, insights, ethical dilemmas, and systems of theology which beg for communal discernment. Teaching in such a learning community is less tidy and less predictable. It is also extraordinarily challenging.

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[4] See Norma Everist and Nelvin Vos, *Connections: Faith and World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1985).

Teaching as We Preach—Education for the Sake of Mission

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"Where Education Leads to Mission" is an appropriate and useful motto for a theological seminary. However, it also prompts us to reconsider preaching as an opportunity to teach for the sake of mission.

That preaching may also be an occasion to teach for the sake of mission may be a serious misuse of the pulpit, if the relationship between proclamation and teaching are not kept clear. It could be argued that the contemporary Protestant pulpit is in serious trouble precisely because the preacher forgets to preach and ends up teaching. The last thing we need, some may suggest, is more of an emphasis on preaching as teaching; we have more than we can use now.

Over the past ten years I have had opportunity to serve as an interim pastor in six congregations. These assignments—some up to nine months—give me opportunity to experiment with my own preaching and how people respond to it. Traditionally defined "expository" preaching—working through a text one verse at a time ("worse and worse, verse by verse," says Fred Craddock)—was one experiment. I looked for a theme running through the verses but made no great attempt to stay with it. I started with the first verse, explaining words, ideas, history, and characters. I ended with the last verse of the assigned text. I made application to daily life within the church or society as I worked down through the text. It was, I admit, a Bible study done from the pulpit.

These "expository Bible studies" have consistently drawn the strongest positive response from the congregations. I'm both disappointed and fascinated—disappointed because my more theological, well-balanced (introduction, points, conclusion), traditional—sometimes even "artistic" and occasionally "inspirational"—sermons I considered the best I had to offer.

Bonhoeffer in his lecture notes on preaching reminded his students at Finkenwalde that their goal was to have the congregation remember the Bible, not their sermons. The consistent, strong, positive response to my "expository Bible studies"

from the pulpit may be a signal that these congregations felt a need to learn the Bible, and had given up trying to remember my well-intentioned but too-crafty sermons. Perhaps they had also given up on adult Bible classes or found the anonymity of worship more comfortable than a class setting. The reasons are, no doubt, many.

Another incident, also in an interim parish, forced me to reconsider the teaching function of proclamation. Shortly before the service of Reaffirmation of Baptism, I met with the ninth graders about to be confirmed. They were at the end of two years of instruction and I asked them, as we prepared for the service, if they were Catholics or Protestants. Following a long pause, I asked again, thinking: one of the twelve will blurt it out. I asked again, and again. They didn't know. At the end of two years of instruction, and two years of sermon notes, they had no idea. I thought again about "learning leading to mission" and the task of preaching.

If I understood part of my preaching responsibility to be "learning that leads to mission," then some of my preaching might be directed toward the systematic training of members to do evangelism calling—from the pulpit: What is the Lutheran church? What is our history? our passion? our fundamental teachings? our gifts? our blind spots? our needs? A sermon titled "Four reasons why you should join this congregation" could be a "teaching for mission" event.

The herald, the good news, the teacher

One way to avoid confusing the fundamental purpose of preaching is to reexamine a few key New Testament words used to describe the event.

The most characteristic word for preaching in the New Testament is *kerysso*—to proclaim, to make an announcement. The word is used more than sixty times, and it portrays a clear picture: the Monarch's herald—a person of great importance, possessing personal integrity and character, and under the employ of the Monarch—has something to say. Clearly, it is something more than a lecture, more than teaching.

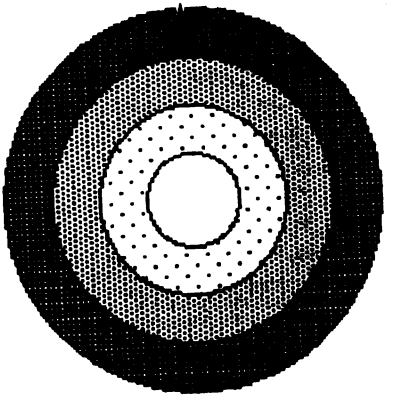
Bonhoeffer notes that the herald has *new* news—it's not been heard before. The announcement is not, of course, from the herald but from the Ruler. The herald passes on what the Monarch has decreed.

The primary motif for Christian proclamation must center here, on *kerysso*—a public proclamation of new news from the Monarch, delivered by a trustworthy messenger. The news is not "discussed" or "considered" or "overheard;" it is proclaimed.

A second cluster of words identifies the *content* of the herald's proclamation: *evangelizein*—it is "good news." The New Testament uses this word over fifty times. The runner comes in from Marathon—or Calvary—with a proclamation of a victory won. To "evangelize" is to share the good news of a dominion that has come among us, initiated by Jesus, with particular benefit to the poor and the sinner.

A third cluster of words used in the New Testament to describe the preaching event—*didaskein*—refers to the *factual content* of the Good News proclamation. The emphasis is on teaching. There are facts worth knowing, details that shape the content, ethical instructions about the new dominion of Jesus that must be shared.

Through instruction, ethical and doctrinal, the congregation is built up for mission. The congregation is brought into existence through the proclamation of good news, but this third element is here as well;



there is a teaching component to Christian preaching.

To teach is to convey the ethical instructions and doctrine that come with the breaking in of God's new kingdom. There are ethical implications for what the herald is joyfully announcing. Matthew 4 clearly separates three types of proclamation done by Jesus: "He went about all Galilee teaching, preaching, healing" (Mt 4:23). Paul makes similar differentiations in 1 Corinthians regarding the gifts of the Spirit.

Jesus taught in the synagogues (Mt 9:35) and in public (Mt 5:2). In these discourses he spoke of God, the kingdom of God, and God's will. What made the teaching of Jesus unique, except in controversy situations, was the authority with which he taught (Mk 11:28). He centered his instructions on the listeners' neighbor and on their personal relationship with him or her.

In the early church, this ethical teaching was considered a gift of the Spirit that centered on the correct interpretation of the Scriptures and on moral exhortations (Rom 12:7). The principal teacher was the Holy Spirit, whose gift had been given to heralds in the church (1 Jn 2:20, 27).

To catechize (the noun "catechesis" is not found in the New Testament) was to teach essential facts of Jesus' life (Acts 18:25). This was done both before baptism and/or immediately following baptism as a follow-up to proclamation (Acts 18:25). The teaching of doctrine developed out of the catechetical context.

Teaching evolved into a function in the early church. These apostolic teachings were considered good, healthy, and salutary (2 Tim 4:3).

Caution must be exercised in attempts to clearly separate teaching and proclamation. Good news contains facts as well as interpretation, and attempts by scholars to distinguish sharply between teaching and preaching in the NT have not been very successful. Teaching builds up proclamation, enriches, clarifies, and serves it. Proclamation of the good news is always central, but teaching from the pulpit is our privilege as well.

Learning what we don't intend to teach

What the proclamation attempts to teach and what the congregation may actually learn can, of course, be very different things. A strong word of caution must be given, lest our attempt to teach in our preaching result in learning which weakens the church.

I may teach in my preaching about the complexities of the scriptural witness, deeply mining each text with my many exegetical tools, but the people of God may learn they lack the education to adequately share Christ's message. "I wouldn't want to say something wrong."

I may teach about the global web of exploitation whereby goods and resources flow from south to north, but the people may learn they are only part of the problem

and can never be part of the solution. Despair is learned.

I may teach about prayer and spiritual disciplines, but the people may only learn how worldly they are. "Our pastor is very religious."

I may deliver my sermons with otherworldly calm, so taken by the "peace of God" I'm nearly asleep on my feet, only to have the people learn that a sermon is time to sit back, and that Christianity is essentially about a meditative, passive, introspective spirit.

I may teach in my preaching about the many-faceted ethical issues at stake in abortion or the death penalty, rehearsing every side to every issue, and what the people of God may learn is that nothing can be known with certainty.

I may teach in my preaching about the history of the Eucharistic Prayer, the importance of the Paschal candle, the Tridiuum and sign of the cross, only to have the people learn that religion is a matter of taste in a variety of cultic practices—do what suits your fancy.

I may teach in my preaching about my great heroes of the faith, who happen to be theologians and clergy, and the people may learn that the laity are essentially passive observers in a church dominated by the ordained.

I may teach the doctrines of the church in superlative metaphysical terms, even making clear what "coessentiality" actually is, only to have the people learn that Christianity is metaphysical, otherworldly, vaporous, mystical, poetic.

I may teach the insights of psychology and apply them to the biblical witness, only to have the people learn that Christ died primarily for my personal adjustment, mental health, or self-esteem.

I may teach in my preaching with "inside" ethnic humor or illustration only to have people learn that by their birth or nationality or marital status, they will always remain outside an inner circle.

What we attempt to teach, and what is actually learned, may be very different things. Those who listen and hear may be learning more than we know—or want. The "learnings" may come from the content of our sermon, or they may come from the non-verbal, subliminal, and unconscious elements revealed in how we preach, or in what we don't say.

The downside to the pericopes

One of the goals the preacher has when thinking about proclamation as a teaching event for the sake of mission, is to equip the congregation with the tools which build a sense of confidence for the mission task. Pericope preaching that skips around from book to book, chapter to chapter, week by week, may leave the congregation unfocused. Exegetical work done by the preacher may bring the three texts and the Psalm of the day into harmony, and the preacher may understand the movement of the texts through Lent or Epiphany, but unless the sermon clearly references those connections from week to week, the congregation may make no connection from one week to another. There may be pearls, but the string is missing.

The Pentecost season offers the best opportunity for a series of teaching sermons on one book, from beginning to end. The "start up" energy and study is significantly higher than following whatever pericope comes along, but at the end of the series the pastor and congregation together can celebrate: "We have heard Galatians!" Or, "We know ten Old Testament stories as our own, and we can share them with anyone

and let them inform our mission in the world."

The preacher who seeks to teach for the sake of mission is concerned about the confidence, or lack of it, that comes to the people of God. Pericope preaching only may work against that goal.

Strict adherence to the pericopes also encourages us to avoid series preaching with strong educational content that may center on doctrinal concerns. The Catechism, the Confessions, world religions, critical ethical issues of our time, are series possibilities that can easily be avoided by our singular pledge to the pericopes. On the Sunday the Gulf War began, how many sermons were heard on the doctrines of the Just War? Kairos teaching moments come and go through the nation, our city and congregation, and our own lives. Many of them may be sacrificed if we are unwilling to teach as we preach, free from the constraints of the pericopes.

Memorizing the parish

One choice faced early in every ministry is the decision to serve either the parish or the congregation. The parish, from Main Street south to the river, and from the interstate on the west to the railroad tracks on the east, may be the locus of our ministry. Everyone living and everything happening within those boundaries is our concern.

Or, attention can be focused solely on the congregation. Their needs may be so great that moving outside the membership is either impossible or unnecessary. Frequently, however, we may allow the demands of the congregation to squeeze out any time or energy for the parish. Or, we may not think of the territory and people between Main Street and the river to be any of our concern.

The preacher who seeks to teach for the sake of mission is concerned about the confidence, or lack of it, that comes to the people of God.

Proclamation which teaches for the sake of mission finds itself concerned with parish issues—parks, playgrounds, public schools, the elderly. Who are the people who actually live and work in this neighborhood? The mission of the congregation finds concrete expression within the parish when the teaching preacher educates the congregation, and, of course, is educated by them, about what is actually happening between Main Street and the river.

"Memorize the parish" is the old but true and workable cliche. We memorize it by walking it, talking to the shopkeepers, farmers, the unemployed: "This is my parish, and you're living, working, dying, surviving in it. How are you?"

Authoritative proclamation that leads to mission may be enhanced by those who will memorize the parish, and share that information with clarity, objectivity, and passion in the preaching event. The preacher knows from first-hand experience what he/she is talking about. The preached word becomes credible, real, and a specific invitation to mission. When we teach what we know, it is taught with authority.

The rich banquet of God's grace in Jesus Christ is not an educational event; it is Christ among us through the spoken Word.

Preaching with a goal

There are two basic tasks for preaching: to call the church into existence, and to build up the church that now exists. Our proclamation could at least be that goal-oriented.

If the specific task for a series of sermons centered on ways to call the church into existence, what shape would such preaching take? Since those listening to the sermon are already members of the church, the preaching would center on teaching them how to share the gospel in such a clear and convincing way that the church would indeed be called into existence. "Teach me, pastor, to be an evangelist. What do I say? What do I not say? What tools do you have for me? Teach me, please. Let me do what I am called to do. I am ready, willing, and—you must believe this—able to do this work."

Or, if the specific task for a series of sermons was to build up the church, then what shape would such preaching take? Preaching would center on how to apply the gospel to our own individual lives and to our common life within the congregation and our service to God's world, so the church would indeed be built up. "Teach me, pastor, how to pray. Teach me how to listen. Teach me in your preaching how we can be in solidarity with the poor, influence legislation, make a difference. Teach me, please. Let me do what I am able to do."

Teaching the congregation how to call the church into existence, or how to build up the church, would be thin gruel if the diet were steady. The rich banquet of God's grace in Jesus Christ is not an educational event; it is Christ among us through the spoken Word. However, it is not beneath our dignity, or the dignity of the gospel itself, to get specific and help the baptized people of God do what many want to do—share the good news of justification in Jesus Christ and work for justice for all God's people.

Preaching is a gift-giving act whereby the grace of God is made alive and present to all who hear. It is also a prophetic moment when our sin is made clear to us and we are delivered into the hands of a loving God. Preaching can also be a time to educate for the sake of mission.

Was David's Theologian Concerned about Mission?

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Scholars generally agree that the shaper of the Primeval History in Genesis, the editor of the larger portion of the Patriarchal narratives, and the recorder of the nation Israel's traditions under Moses' leadership was an unknown theologian whose work dates from the time of David and Solomon. Past attempts to identify "Israel's earliest great theologian"[1] as Nathan, David's prophet, or Abiathar, David's high priest, have given way to the general identification of him[2] as the unknown Yahwist. That identification is based on one of the primary features of his writings, namely the use of Yahweh as the name for God in all sections of the work.

Peter Ellis in *The Yahwist* describes him as "He [who] gave to his nation a national epic and to the world its first major theological opus." Ellis writes of him that "...his influence upon his own nation and upon the world have made him more than comparable to Homer."[3] Several scholars make the association of the Yahwist's time and theological interest with the religious and cultural context of the United Monarchy with its significant changes from the tribal period to the great Davidic empire.[4] Walter Brueggemann in his article "David and His Theologian" makes a correlation between four episodes from David's reign and four episodes in the Primeval History, noting that the "Davidic history supplies the clues and patterning of his materials about a world under curse and Yahweh's extraordinary way of dealing with that condition."[5]

Gerhard von Rad in his *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. I, writes of the formation of

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[1] Peter Ellis, *The Yahwist, The Bible's First Theologian* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1968), 21.

[2] The attempt of Harold Blum and David Rosenberg to identify the Yahwist as a woman (*The Book of J* [Grove Weidenfeld, 1990]) has received little serious attention from scholars.

[3] Ellis, *The Yahwist*, 21.

[4] Especially von Rad, *Genesis*; Richter see *BZ* 10 (1966):96-105; Ruppert, *Wort und Botschaft* (1967):88-107; Wolff, *Interpretation* 20 (1966):131-58.

[5] Walter Brueggemann, "David and His Theologian," *CBQ* 30 (1968):160.

the state as a period of crisis for the cult of Yahweh. The crisis was magnified in the closer and more direct contact with Baal and other foreign cults which were now a part of the new Israelite state.[6] The tolerance of the foreign cults was greater in the Solomonic reign than it was in David's (see especially 1 Kgs 11:1-8). This pleads for dating the Yahwist with Solomon rather than with David.

The most specific dating of the Yahwist is that proposed by Hans Walter Wolff, who lists among others the following reasons for the Solomonic era as the Yahwist's context: "The high literary culture which the Yahwist shows... the broad scope of international development reflected in the Yahwist's enumeration of the peoples in Gen 10:8-19, 21, 25-30...; the almost completely cultless atmosphere... from the free-thinking era of Solomon."[7] The statement in Gen 27:39ff. of Esau's rebellion from Isaac is an allusion to Haddad's rebellion written about in 1 Kgs 11:14-22. Judah is the dominant brother in the Joseph story. The Yahwist alone has the Hebron-Mamre stories, and Genesis 38 is about Judah. Wolff places the Yahwist in the vicinity of Jerusalem in Solomon's day when "the first crises of the empire were already appearing on the horizon."[8]

In the light of the interpretations of Ellis, von Rad, Brueggemann, and Wolff, who write of the crises in the empire of David and Solomon as the context and motivation for the Yahwist's work, we ask three questions regarding the Yahwist's work: How did he utilize the ancient traditions in shaping his message? What was the theme and content of the message? Was the Yahwist concerned about the mission of the nation? These queries will occupy our attention in this article.

There is general agreement among scholars that the Yahwist's material divides into three sections. They are (1) national traditions preserved in the books of Exodus and Numbers; (2) the extensive patriarchal traditions, combined by later redactors with the works of the Elohist and the Priestly document in Genesis 12-50; and (3) the Primeval History in Genesis 1-11.

It is highly likely that by the time of the Yahwist the national and patriarchal traditions already existed in substantive form. The Yahwist, in the light of the changed economic and cultural situation, worked at "ordering, selecting and enlarging the tradition,"[9] so that the old traditions could speak a new and fresh message to the "high literary culture" and the "free thinking era of Solomon."[10] Wolff asserts that the Yahwist shaped the materials also by inserting his own brief formulations and by adding strategic bridge passages into his Primeval History composition and into the Patriarchal traditions. He identifies the bridge passages as Gen 6:5-8, 8:21ff., 12:1-4a, 18:17-18, and 18:22b-33.[11] These passages give a continuity to the old traditions the Yahwist is utilizing for his message and carry the new message that he intends to convey in his formulation of the traditions. In short, they are statements of his own unique kerygma.

Scholars agree that the Yahwist took up three ancient legends of Mesopotamian

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[6] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Volume I (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 48.

[7] Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist," Chapter 3 in *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* by Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff, 44-45.

[8] Wolff, "The Kerygma," 45.

[9] Wolff, 46.

[10] Wolff, 44.

[11] Wolff, 46.

origin (Creation and Fall, Flood story, and the Tower of Babel story) in order to create a history of humanity and to show that all nations live under curse and are in need of blessing. The attention which the Yahwist gave to nations around Israel (Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Aram, Edom, the Amalakites, and the Canaanites) throughout the three sections of the tradition strongly suggest that he had an international concern. It can be proposed that during the Solomonic reign he pondered the question of the meaning of the old historical and religious traditions for the nations David had captured and Solomon ruled over in his vast empire.[12] What did the Davidic and Solomonic success mean to their larger world in the light of God's promise to the ancestors and the fulfillment of those promises of land, name, and nation?

The Yahwist then wrote an introduction to the patriarchal and national traditions with a purpose. It was to show the need of the nations now a part of the empire. By bridge passages he bound together the variety of patriarchal and national stories in such a way that they were given a continuity under his thematic concern.

What was that theme? How did the Yahwist construct his kerygma? What is the purpose in his editing the ancient traditions?

Gen 12:1-3, the first bridge passage, is the clearest articulation of the kerygma, according to Wolff.

1. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Go out from your land and from your kinfolk and from your parents' home to the land that I will show you.
2. I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing.
3. And I will bless the ones who bless you, but the one who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the land will bless themselves."[13]

Wolff makes a careful study of the syntax in this call to Abram. He points out the single imperative followed by a chain of five clauses with verbs that are in the imperfect cohortative form. In the final verb in the passage the Yahwist has switched to a perfect consecutive tense.[14]

He observes that in the final clause with its perfect verb form it "is set down decisively just whom the LORD's action ultimately concerns and what this action is to accomplish for them."[15] The word "blessing" in its frequent use and in its juxtaposition with the term "curse" sets the conditions of the Davidic nation and the nations incorporated in it.

The promise to Abram which contains blessings of great nation and great name had been realized in the David-Solomon successes. But God intended those achievements, stated as blessings, for the benefit of other nations—not as a reward for the nation's achievements. Wolff states that the perfect consecutive verb functions as a strong "terse, concise *conclusio* of the whole."[16] The nation has become great by God's fulfilling of the promise to the ances-

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[12] Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord in *The Bible's First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), state that the Yahwist dates from David's reign and that it was a work intended for private consumption in David's court. It was compiled to persuade Negev bedouin sheikhs whom David entertained "that the people whom David ruled descended from this kind of people and that, like David, they too enjoyed the privileges of the court at the head of the people." The purpose of the work was to encourage the sheikhs to give support to David's court and to his policies. (35)

[13] This translation and the others that follow are those of the writer.

[14] Wolff, 46-49.

[15] Wolff, 47.

[16] Wolff, 47.

tors. That is cause for celebration. It is occasion for gratitude and rejoicing. It is indeed a reason for pondering the question of national purpose. The Yahwist states that clearly in the *conclusio*, "So that you will be a blessing... and by you all the families of the land will bless themselves."

The kerygma is repeated in two additional Abraham stories. It is also present in one of each of the Isaac and Jacob accounts.

In Genesis 18 three messengers visit Abraham and Sarah and announce the birth of a son. Having finished their visit, the messengers proceed toward Sodom with Abraham accompanying them. One of the messengers prefaces his announcement of judgment on Sodom with the words:

17. Then the LORD said, "Should I be concealing from Abraham what I am about to do
18. since Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation and by him all the nations of the land will bless themselves?"

The account is an announcement of judgment to Abraham. He responds with a series of intercessions on behalf of Sodom. In so doing Abraham acts as a vehicle of blessing by attempting to reverse the judgment designated for Sodom.

Gen 22:17-18 is the Yahwist's conclusion to the sacrifice of Isaac story. It reads as follows:

17. For I will surely bless you and I will truly multiply your descendants like the stars in the sky and like the sand which is on the shore of the sea and your descendants will own the gate of their enemies,
18. and by your descendants all the nations of the land will bless themselves because you listened to my voice.

Abraham's obedience is rewarded with a repetition of the promise of descendants. That is followed by a statement indicating that the nations will benefit from the actions of the ancestor.

The Yahwist extended this message to Isaac in Genesis 26. In this account there is a command for Isaac to live in the foreign land similar to the command for Abraham to go to the land that the LORD would show him. Gen 26:3-4 states:

3. Live in this land as a resident alien and I will be with you and I will bless you, because to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands; in addition I will fulfill the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.
4. I will multiply your descendants like the stars in the sky and to your descendants I will give all these lands and by your descendants all the nations of the land will bless themselves.

This passage includes a number of the elements of previous texts. There is the reference to the promise to Abraham, the command to live in the land as an alien, the promise of the land to Isaac and his descendants, the multiplication of the descendants, and finally the benefit of all these for the nations who ultimately will be blessed by the success of the descendants.

The Jacob passage carrying the kerygma is the report of Jacob's flight from Canaan in Genesis 28. The theme is in verses 13-14:

13. And Lo, the LORD appeared upon it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac. The land upon which you are resting I will give it to you and to your descendants.
14. Your descendants will become like the dust of the earth and you shall spread out to the west, and to the east, and to the north and to the south. And by you and your descendants all the families of the land will bless themselves.

As he leaves family and land, Jacob is assured of God's identity and is promised numerous descendants and the land itself. The new element is the extent of the land occupation by the multitude of the descendants.

It is interesting to observe that only in the Isaac and Jacob stories is the promise of land made. In the call to Abram (in Genesis 12) there is only a hint of it in the order to Abram to go to the land that the LORD will show him. The element that is the same in all the accounts is the promise of many descendants. But most important is the *conclusio* which promises that "all the nations of the earth will bless themselves" in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants.

What point can be drawn from the fact that the inclusion of the benefit to all the nations is stated in the blessing to each of the patriarchal ancestors? Is it fair to conclude that the elements of blessing, name, nation, descendants, and land are God's gift for a purpose? Is that purpose perhaps a reminder to the nation of Solomon that it is gifted and empowered to extend blessing to others?

Joseph while in a foreign land rose to the highest position in the land. Blessed with intelligence and power to rule wisely, Joseph became a mediator of blessing to many nations. In his case the blessing was administration and organization to provide food for the world in famine. As the story records, "All the earth came to Egypt to Joseph in order to buy grain because the famine was heavy throughout the world" (Gen 41:57). Joseph, the powerful ruler blessed by the LORD, in his benevolent concern for the hungry nations provides them food so that they might live.

In light of all of the above, can it be stated that the Yahwist was concerned about mission?

Surely the leaders of the Solomonic empire could read the patriarchal stories and agree that the promises of blessing, name, nation/descendant, and land offered in them were fulfilled in their time. The one phrase in Gen 22:17, "...own the gates of their enemies" (the Yahwist downplays that militaristic phrase) reflects the success of David in bringing rest to the land after 200 years of periodic warfare with the neighbors. Now that Israel was enjoying her "Golden Age," what value did the ancient traditions have? What was the purpose of all Israel's achievements? Did this powerful, large, and wealthy nation have a mission?

The Primeval History was designed by the Yahwist to sketch the condition of nations; they were greatly in need of blessing. The Yahwist takes up the Patriarchal traditions and binds them together with a kerygmatic thread in which the promise of the Lord is repeated to each of the three. They would have descendants and land. God would bless them. In each of the repetitions of the kerygma the conclusion is clearly stated that the purpose of God's blessings on the descendants of the patriarchal families was mission. The new meaning of the stories of the ancestors in the context of the affluence, secularism, and power of the Solomonic empire was to call the empire to mission on the part of the nations under its control. The Yahwist was concerned about mission, the mission of his strong nation.

Can his interpretations have for us an extended context and application?

Book Reviews

JUNG AND CHRISTIANITY IN DIALOGUE. Edited by Robert L. Moore and Daniel J. Meckel. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990. ix and 266 pages. Paper. $12.95.

This is the first volume in a projected series on Jung and spirituality under the general editorship of Moore and Meckel.

The first volume has four sections. "Jung and theology" discusses Jung in relation to Christian faith (four essays); "Jung, feminism and spirituality" involves feminist critique and appreciation of Jung's work (three essays); "Jung and hermeneutics" explores Jung's interpretation of theology and Scripture (two essays); and "Jung and pastoral care" looks at the application of Jungian psychology for pastor and counselor (three essays). Each essay has a different author.

The preface makes clear Moore's approach, which is holistic and "post-tribal." Moore's contention is that those who are committed to a premodern, tribal hermeneutic are threatened by Jung because the "human spiritual birthright is imprinted in the depths of each human soul" and thus Jung inspires an impatience with religious narcissism. The series is intended to foster fundamental conversation on human spirituality.

The essays on Jung and theology demonstrate that Jung's approach was one of suspicion and retrieval. Jung was suspicious of any approach to Christianity that was monolithic and self-contained, since he used the method of comparative religion to understand his theory of archetypes. Hence, all religious language ultimately refers to the relationship within the domain of subjectivity between the ego and the self. Consequently the Trinity is re-defined by Jung as the mythic meaning of the self coming to terms with itself. The theological argument with Jung is clear: he refused to allow God-talk to be seen as subject-transcending language. Yet Jung also holds that there is a correspondence between the structures of subjectivity and the structures of objectivity, which creates the possibility for a dialogue between theology and psychology. For Jung, all words about the psyche are words about God and vice versa, and the psychologist is in a unique position to make critical-constructive observation about the completeness of doctrines of God. "Jungian man" is modern in rejecting literalism and authoritarianism, but also traditional in the re-interpretation of Christian symbols in the light of psychology. Modern consciousness is "homeless" because of the degree of self-analysis available to us in this age, which has rendered traditional religion impossible. Jung's solution is a retrieval which establishes a "home" for moderns by inviting us, through and beyond myth and ritual, to a form of liminality or communitas (Turner) which is permanent because it overthrows the need for social order by internalizing the meaning of order.

There is much more in this book, but this serves as an introduction to what awaits the reader.

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WORLDLY PREACHING: BONHOEFFER'S LECTURES ON HOMILETICS. Edited and translated with critical commentary by Clyde E. Fant. New York: Crossroad, 1991. xiv and 154 pages. Paper. $11.95.

This book was originally published by Nelson in 1975 and has been out of print for some time. Crossroad is to be commended for bringing it back. This edition is chiefly the same as the original but adds a new preface for the revised edition and a foreword by Eberhard Bethge.

These are the Finkenwalde lectures on preaching and, like the translation of *Spiritual Care*, they are reconstructed from class notes for which the original texts have been lost.

This is strong teaching. Bonhoeffer's notes indicate his passion for text and for truth, his concern with the form of speech that emerges

from the silent contemplation and exegesis of the Word, his interrelating of preaching with worship and church. Fant's commentary aids the text measurably, especially in his excurses. The text is full of remarkably contemporary concerns because Bonhoeffer achieves a kind of timelessness in his questions and his approach.

Highly recommended for preachers young and old, those new to the pulpit and those come of age while serving in it.

Jay C. Rochelle

In February of 1991, the Australian Council of Churches hosted the World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly in Canberra, Australia. As the eyes of the world focused on this land, it is especially important to remember the plight of its indigenous inhabitants—the Aboriginal People.

The works listed below document the struggles of the Aboriginal people throughout the 200 years of oppression since the arrival of western "colonizers." In its own way, each work contributes to a fuller picture of life and faith for Aboriginals.

The works are also important for us in the United States, especially as we reflect upon our own treatment of the indigenous inhabitants of this land, the Native American Peoples. Next year we will mark the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus on the shores of this land. Some will celebrate this event as the arrival of "real" culture and civilization, whereas others will mourn it as the beginning of five centuries of genocide and oppression. Perhaps some of the following resources can help us to learn from the Australian Aboriginal experience so that we might be in solidarity with *all* of our *American* sisters and brothers.

ABORIGINAL FILM AND VIDEO GUIDE [Canberra]: Awareness Through Film Group, 1988. Paper. A$10.00.

ABORIGINAL RESOURCES: HELPING EACH OTHER TO UNDERSTAND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND THEIR ISSUES. Melbourne: Division of Social Justice, Victorian Synod, Uniting Church in Australia, 1987. 20 pages. Paper.

ABORIGINES AND THE ISSUES: INFORMATION AND RESOURCE CATALOGUE. Compiled and edited by Tom Mayne. Sydney: Australian Council of Churches, 1986. 276 pages. Paper. A$10.00.

AUSTRALASIAN RELIGION INDEX. ANNUAL CUMULATION VOLUME 1–. Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., Australia: Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association and Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, 1989- . Paper.

BLACK AUSTRALIA: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND TEACHER'S GUIDE TO RESOURCES ON ABORIGINES AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS. Edited by Marji Hill and Alex Barlow. Volume I (up to 1977). Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1978. 200 pages. Paper. Volume II (1977-1982). Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1984. 96 pages. Paper. [Z5116.H52 1985]

CENTRE FOR BLACK BOOKS: CATALOGUE 1984. Glebe [Sydney], N.S.W., Australia: Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative College, 1984. Paper. (1990 edition forthcoming)

The *Aboriginal Film and Video Guide* is the first of its kind in Australia. It provides important information such as title, country of origin, film-maker, date of publication, synopsis, length of film, grading (i.e., upper primary, secondary, upper secondary, tertiary), and a distributor's list. It organizes over 200 popular films, is fully indexed, and includes maps and illustrations. Use of these films and videos is an excellent way for us to move from words and thoughts toward images and feelings of the Aboriginal experience. Available from: Awareness Through Films Group, GPO Box 1323, Canberra City, A.C.T. 2601, Australia.

Aboriginal Resources: Helping Each Other to Understand Aboriginal People and Their Issues is a brief but important work. It is written as a creative resource designed to stimulate thought and action for church groups as well as for others. It lists resources, organizations, and

people; it provides addresses, phone numbers, prices, etc.; and it even has some suggestions for individual and group activities. Available from: Division of Social Justice, Victorian Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia, Melbourne, Australia, or from the Australian Council of Churches (see address below).

Aborigines and the Issues: Information and Resource Catalogue is compiled, edited, and annotated by Tom Mayne. The work is much more than a straight bibliography. It offers almost 300 pages of books and articles, *and* maps, and names, addresses, phone numbers, etc., of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and centers. It covers church and church-related resources as well as relevant government documents. It is a few years old now, yet it remains a comprehensive and important guide to how churches relate to the issues. Available from: Australian Council of Churches, Box C199, Clarence Street P.O., Sydney, N.S.W. 2000, Australia; telephone (61-2) 29-2215; Fax. (61-2) 262-4514; Telex: SYDACC 171715.

The *Australian Religion Index* is an annual cumulation of articles and book reviews published in Australia and New Zealand on religious topics. The index was begun in 1989 as a cooperative venture between the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association and the Centre for Information Studies of Charles Sturt University. It is very similar to the Religion Index (One and Two) series published by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) in the United States. In fact, it uses standard ATLA "descriptors" (e.g., Australian Aborigines—economic conditions, land tenure, politics, race relations, religion, rites and ceremonies, social conditions, social life and customs), making it very accessible. It is the basic index in the field and is a very helpful tool for finding Aboriginal-related articles in such important journals as *Nelen Yubu*. Available from: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, P.O. Box 588, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W. 2650, Australia, telephone (61-69) 222-000.

Black Australia: An Annotated Bibliography and Teacher's Guide to Resources on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders is *the* reference work of its kind. Though somewhat dated now, the two volumes are still relevant and provide hundreds of pages of references for the serious student of the issues. Available from: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, P.O. Box 553, Canberra, A.C.T. 2601, Australia, telephone (61-62) 46-1111 and 46-1133.

The *Centre for Black Books: Catalogue 1984* is a unique and significant contribution to quality education. It is published by The Centre for Black Books, a part of Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative College, in Glebe (a suburb of metropolitan Sydney). The catalogue is critically important in that it is the only one which is meticulously screened for accuracy and fairness by Aboriginal people themselves. That is, it purposefully excludes inaccurate, unjust, and offensive material through a process established by a cross-section of Aboriginal people (teachers, administrators, activists, etc.). The catalogue is the best of its kind, and a new edition is due out very soon. Available from: Centre for Black Books, Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative College, 13 Mansfield Street, Glebe [Sydney], N.S.W. 2037, Australia, telephone (61-2) 660-0120.

These works highlight many of the problems of modern Australian society: racism, human rights violations, oppression and political favoritism, biased educational systems (which distort history), etc. They cover an important variety of documentation: journals, magazines, newspapers, press releases, public declarations by churches, personal letters, audio-visual media, and others.

All of them are very highly recommended for those who wish to know more about one of the most important struggles of our time—the Aboriginal struggles for life and justice.

Raúl Fernández-Calienes
Iliff School of Theology, University of Denver
International Diaconate Worker
Aboriginal & Islander Commission
Australian Council of Churches

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SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER: A CELEBRATION FOR CARROLL STUHLMUELLER. Edited by Carolyn Osiek and Donald Senior. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988. 184 pages. Paper. $12.95.

This book is a collection of essays by Chicago area exegetes in honor of Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, who teaches Old Testament at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, on the occasion of his 65th birthday.

Especially interesting to this reviewer are the essays by Robert G. Boling, Hayim Goren Perelmutter, and Carolyn Osiek. Boling is remarkable for his use of the theory of the development of human consciousness outlined by Julian Jaynes. This theory is implausible when understood against ancient Near Eastern literature (Jaynes has to push forward the dating of the Gilgamesh Epic by at least a millennium) and the contemporary understanding of human evolution. Similarly, unless I misunderstand him, Boling seems to posit an early date for the covenant. There are cogent arguments against this position.

Perelmutter provides a Jewish perspective on the development of prayer from the Temple to the synagogue. The fixed liturgical forms of the canonical Psalms are expanded, in later Jewish history, by the use of personal spontaneous prayers. Perelmutter's concise analysis sheds light upon the background of early Christian prayer.

Carolyn Osiek's contribution is the finest and most provocative in the book. Her interpretation of Paul's prayer life, as revealed in the Pauline epistles, draws upon the anthropological concept of the dyadic personality. Such a personality exists not in individualistic terms but is largely determined by and understood within the context of the larger social group. Prayer for Paul is not a private relationship to Christ but a relationship of Christ to the world through the individual who prays. This could not only drastically change our exegesis of Paul but also our contemporary application of his thought.

This book is not a "how to" manual on prayer but a collection of essays by biblical scholars upon the concept of "prayer" as found in Scripture. Anyone who is seriously interested in the understanding of prayer in the Bible would profit from this book.

Lynn Allan Kauppi
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY. Edited by Everett Ferguson. New York and London: Garland, Inc., 1990. xx and 983 pages. Cloth. $95.00.

Just as the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* is the best one-volume reference tool for church history generally, so this impressive work now takes its place as the best reference volume for the early church in particular. Assisted by Michael P. McHugh, Frederick Norris, and David M. Scholer, editor Everett Ferguson has assembled almost a thousand entries in as many pages, all signed by the 135 expert contributors. Displaying the maturing breadth and depth of North American patristics scholarship, this roster of established specialists is most impressive. Their achievement is in covering the pertinent "persons, places, doctrines, practices, art, liturgy, heresies, and schisms" (vii) in clear, simple language for students and teachers, adding thorough and current bibliographies for further research and scholarship. The brief Chronology, the occasional illustrations (all in black and white), and especially the extensive index of cross references all add to the usefulness of this well-made volume. It might seem ungrateful to want any more from the very best, but a simple index of the scriptural citations provided in many of the articles would have been helpful, and adding to the list of authors the title(s) of their contributions would have been interesting. Essential for any reference collection, and highly recommended for congregational libraries and any personal library which takes the early church seriously. This book will be the standard reference tool for a generation and is well worth the price.

Paul Rorem
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

STORIES MAKE PEOPLE: EXAMPLES OF THEOLOGICAL WORK IN COMMUNITY. Compiled by Sam Amirtham. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989. ix and 99 pages. Paper. US$5.95.

This is a collection of stories of people "doing theology" around the world. The title is a phrase which describes how people who are doing theology are actually rewriting and remaking their own history and, therefore, making their faith come alive.

The book introduces us to the daily "cross-bearing life" of Indian women, the techniques of a Swiss theological workshop, the "church politics" endured by an African evangelist, the vision and passion for justice and liberation of Brazilian young people's movements, the historic and transforming tradition of Negro Spirituals from the U.S.A., and much more. In their own way, each of these stories shows us how we can reflect on our own life experiences and find rich sources of insight for ourselves and for our communities.

The book includes two stories in which people are *not* speaking for themselves. The chapter on the Australian Aboriginal people is written—and therefore inescapably interpreted and "filtered"—by non-Aboriginal people. The language of the article is incredibly full of classism for authors who claim to be "in a process of affirming self-worth with participants who had been the *'objects'* of many development projects over the years." In fact, one of the Aboriginal people who served as a leader in the workshop was constantly referred to as "another of the faculty present" and remained nameless throughout the article. His words and contributions merited publication but not acknowledgment. If the authors were serious about affirming self-worth and "facilitating a 'developmental paradigm shift,' then they would *not* have been the authors.

Thus, the failure of the book itself is that the very point against which Aboriginal people fight—the "white-expert syndrome"—is what is used as a prime example of a "people's story" about self-determination.

Similarly, the chapter "on how basic Christian communities had begun in Latin America and then spread to the rest of the world" (55) is written by a non-Latin American—someone from Scotland. While this article is quite well-written, it nevertheless betrays a serious lack of *conscientization* on the part of the author. It should more properly have been written by a person "from the point of origin," a Latin American.

Secondly, the book includes a story of the same old oppressive mentality that has stifled "fresh theological and biblical perspectives" for centuries. There are two stories of people gathering for Bible study, each with very different perspectives. The Swiss group (16-22) is looking at the oppressive situation of Onesimus in terms of "financial capacity," "obedience," and "service," rather than liberation from slavery itself. The language used is remarkably classist and sexist. On the other hand, the Philippine group (83-88) is looking at the oppressive situation of the Israelites under the Egyptian king in terms of "Low Intensity Conflict" and "counter-insurgency." The language is marked by inclusiveness and spontaneity. The former is clearly a people's story of the oppressor, while the latter is clearly a people's story of the oppressed. Though both are truly representative of "people's stories," they present a quite jarring picture of differing levels of awareness and understanding of our increasingly interdependent world.

The inclusion of some of the stories is questionable, which makes the book uneven and confusing, yet the stories are there for us to read and learn from. They show us what "being church" and "doing theology" are about for people from around the world. They (almost always) speak for themselves, but it is up to us to have "eyes to see" and "ears to hear," and more importantly, the courage to act.

Raúl Fernández-Calienes

THE CONDEMNATIONS OF THE REFORMATION ERA: DO THEY STILL DIVIDE? Edited by Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990. Paper. xxvi and 214 pages. $19.95.

This book grows out of ecumenical dialogues in Germany during the 1980s, in which participants were reminded that even as they celebrated the "progress" they were making toward "fundamental agreement" on traditionally controverted issues of justification, sacraments, and the ministry, at the same time they were also pledged by confessional subscription or by canon law to condemn many of the same terms and concepts that they were now declaring to be "acceptable."

Unwilling simply to dismiss the normative declarations of an earlier age as either naive or as historically conditioned and thus no longer relevant to the "now," the dialogue partners asked whether the various sides actually understood what their opponents were teaching, or whether they sometimes condemned "phantom" errors. Similarly, they asked whether the teachings in question may have changed in the years since a particular *damnamus* was issued. In either case, it is possible that the anathemas would no longer apply today.

A potential danger in such an endeavor is the temptation to dismiss much sixteenth-century controversy as a matter of simple "misunderstanding" and not really as disagreement on central, substantive issues. The reader will note such a tendency in this book, as well as an eagerness to believe that the churches no longer teach the condemned "errors," and that therefore the condemnations are no longer applicable.

At the same time, however—and this is where the value of the book lies—this exploration into the concerns that led to these claims and condemnations invites readers to examine their own understandings of these matters. To stimulate reflection, probing questions are asked at various points about whether the dialogue partners actually take seriously the statements they claim to hold as "central" to their faith.

For a pastor's own reflective reading, and certainly in a Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue setting, the book will provide grist for profitable reflection or discussion. It could prove useful, as well, for an advanced adult forum—although in more than a few congregations the price may exclude some participants who simply cannot afford to pay $20 for a "study" book.

Keith Killinger
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE TEACHING MINISTER. By Clark M. Williamson and Ronald J. Allen. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991. 138 pages. Paper. $12.95.

One of the most important religious issues at the close of the second millennium is how to halt the steady decline of the mainline church. Clark Williamson and Ronald Allen of the Christian Theological Seminary at Indianapolis suggest one resource in the title of their book, *The Teaching Minister*. Their thesis is that the best way for the sinking church to recover is to make education its rudder and the pastor-teacher its helmsman.

Current analyses of the church point to a crisis of belief triggered by a loss of ultimacy and transcendence. People are abandoning the faith because of a failure of doctrine and teaching in mainline religion. The way out of this quagmire is through ministry that educates the laity in both the religious tradition and in doing theology in the world today.

To undergird this proposal the authors trace the role of teaching in Judaism and Christianity, surveying biblical sources from Deuteronomy to the Pastoral Epistles. This is followed by a chapter on the place of teaching in the early church through the Puritan period. The authors especially favor the Reformation emphasis on teaching as the primary work of the preacher. They propose a conversational, self-critical, and theological style of teaching by the minister as pastor-teacher.

In order to recover its teaching mission, the church must reclaim its "capacity to think theologically." Chapter Four proposes a "critical orthodoxy," a stance within the tradition that makes the Christian witness meaningful. It is the task of the church to reinterpret its faith in a

theocentric, prophetic, and constitutive style, presenting the gospel in a manner that is appropriate, credible, and morally plausible. This is a "nuts-and-bolts" approach to theology which asks that everything the church does be faithful and understandable.

The final two chapters offer practical assistance on how to make the sermon and the ministry agents for teaching. A list of characteristics and sample forms of a teaching sermon plus plans for a sermon series provide helpful direction for initiating an instructional program from the pulpit. Suggestions about how worship, pastoral calling and counseling, and administration and programming can transform the parish into a "neighborhood theological seminary" round out the helpful hints in this text.

In a time when many have given up on the church, this book is a refreshing, constructive statement that makes eminent good sense. Unless the church is simply to surrender the day to mindless religion, a recovery of theology and teaching is essential. Although the message of this book could as well apply to preaching, it scores important points for thoughtful faith and intellectually responsible ministry. It is addressed to pastors, but anyone committed to church renewal from the foundation up will want this book in their library.

Jerry K. Robbins
Lutheran Campus Center
Morgantown, West Virginia

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT REVISITED. By Justo L. González. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989. 185 pages. Paper. $15.95.

González offers here a provocative introduction to the history of Christian theology. The contents are the product of over thirty years of writing and lecturing on the subject in response to the sense of perplexity among Christians (be they liberal or fundamentalists) who are unable to find much help in traditional theologies to understand the present challenges of the world.

González interprets the history of Christian thought to complement standard material which introduces students to the field. Aware of the biases and agendas—often unknown to some authors—present in these texts, González engages in a revision of salient developments in Christian doctrine and invites the reader to recover the most ancient perspective of the early church.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, covering chapters one through five, examines the early development of Christian theology. Here the author challenges traditional notions of the origin and growth of Christian doctrine. He points out that toward the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, three main currents of theological thought considered orthodox originated in the early church. He examines the geographical origin of each trend—Carthage, Alexandria, Asia Minor and Syria—, its principal exponents—Tertullian, Origen, and Irenaeus—, and their main category of interest—moral (law), metaphysical (truth), and pastoral (history). He also suggests a typology (A, B, and C) to help establish the quite distinct emphasis of each type in reflecting and understanding the central themes of Christian teaching. Thus, the main feature for Type A becomes a legalistic and moralistic impetus, for Type B a persistent drive to show compatibility with the best of human knowledge, and for Type C an insistence on God's self-revelation in history within the context of an eschatological framework.

This survey is accompanied by chapter five, which investigates each type's socio-political setting, which played a significant role in the theological formulations of its representatives, even if they didn't recognize the fact. The author contends that when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Type C was progressively forgotten, while Types A and B became the standard for orthodox theology. He also claims that the reason for this development cannot be construed as a pure doctrinal matter but may be better explained by the resistance manifested by Type C in making the interests of the powerful more acceptable to the gospel and the gospel more compatible with their power.

Section two (chapters six through eight) offers a summary of developments in Christian theology after the fourth century up to the present. The author shows how the works of Eusebius of

Caesarea and other prominent apologists became part of a long tradition which interpreted Christian faith from the perspective of the dominant sectors of society. Of paramount importance in this process were the writings of Augustine of Hippo, in whom the basic perspective of Type A, joined with elements of Type B, became characteristic of most later Western theology.

During the Reformation important issues divided the church. This led to a sporadic recovery of some characteristics of Type C theology, such as Luther's understanding of the "Word of God" as a source of creating and redempting action in history and his understanding of the "work of Christ" as victory over the powers that hold human beings in bondage. Protestants and Catholics, however, generally remained within the parameters of Type A, which was dominant throughout the Middle Ages.

Further developments in the history of Christian thought followed the same lines. At various points those who felt that Type A was too confining (even as modified by the addition of elements of Type B) resorted to various forms of Type B. This is seen in Rationalism and Pietism in the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth-century works of representatives of theological liberalism.

At the turn of the century, the reaction of "Fundamentalism" over "Protestant Liberalism" or that of "Traditional Catholicism" against "Modernism" continued the pattern of re-establishing the standard of Type A. Distinguished theologians like Paul Tillich and Rudolph Bultmann developed new versions of Type B. The author ends this section by claiming that the most significant feature of our century—the enormous impact of which will be seen only in the next—is the current rediscovery of the perspective and theological insights of Type C.

The last section (chapter nine) examines signs in our age which point to a significant recovery of Type C theology. These signs are found in three important developments: first, the growth of a truly universal church; second, the post-Constantinian character of our times; and third, the declining prestige of Western civilization. These three factors confront us with situations similar to those faced by the early Christian community. Some who find themselves at odds with the prevalent views and practices of the world simply capitulate or decide to make their faith a private matter. But many others continue to struggle to come to a deeper understanding of faith that more closely resembles Type C theology. An important sign of this new theology is evidenced by the renewal of Reformed theology through the influence of Karl Barth. Similar instances are also present in the new currents of Lutheranism represented by the Lundensian theology, the liturgical renewal, the Second Vatican Council, and liberation theology. While vast differences are evident among representatives of these movements, they all have in common a recovery of basic themes characteristic of Type C theology with a renewed emphasis on history and eschatology.

This publication is an important contribution to historical theology. González' typical conciseness, clarity, and humor make it a resource readily available to a broad audience. The book is not, by the author's own admission, an unbiased interpretation of the history of theology; but every history is an interpretation guided not only by ancient documents and historical data but by the historian's own biases and agendas.

The most provocative challenge of González' book is to persuade the reader of the significant value of recovering for today a way of interpreting the Christian faith which through the centuries was intentionally displaced and forgotten. He challenges the reader to question the validity of those interpretations that have dominated the field, to raise the significance of a marginalized perspective that leads to a deeper understanding of the Christian message. In this regard, González' contribution is excellent and stimulating.

José D. Rodríguez
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

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THE MAKING OF THE CREEDS. By Frances Young. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991. xii and 115 pages. Paper. $10.95.

Regular readers of reviews will recall that six years ago we reviewed the reprint of Alan Richardson's little classic, *Creeds in the Making*, a text which served many a generation of seminary students. This book was to be an "updated version" of Richardson's work which Ms. Young wrote at the invitation of SCM Press. In fact, it turns out to be a different and more contemporary look at credal formulation which ought take its place next to Richardson on your shelves. Ms. Young's work takes into account our understanding that facts never exist apart from their interpretation, a separation Richardson could still assume in the days when he wrote his original text. At the same time, new findings in Gnosticism and other early Christian movements and persons needed to be included. The result is a spare writing of an enormous amount of information; Ms. Young is to be commended for producing such a short piece on such a difficult subject, but the reader should know that brevity, in this case, does not warrant either a quick read or a once-and-done approach. This book should become a reference work for you as Christian faith at century's end becomes more misunderstood and misrepresented in the milieu of "pluralism."

Jay C. Rochelle

ALBRECHT DÜRER: A BIOGRAPHY. By Jane Campbell Hutchinson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. xiv and 208 pages. Cloth. $25.00.

This new biography of Dürer provides a picture of a man living in his world. It deals with many aspects of Dürer's life—his education, friends and social status, financial dealings, travels, family and marital relations, his successes and disappointments, his pride and sense of self-worth. Hutchinson connects his career with the religious and political movements of the age, reconstructs his journeys and key influences, and quotes liberally from his writings to give us a sense of the real person, a renowned artist with everyday concerns and a drive toward excellence.

Dürer was strongly attracted to the writings of Luther, and shared with him many of the tensions of the time. He became a champion of the German world against the arrogance of the Italians; his skill enabled him to work within both the Catholic and Protestant hierarchies. Hutchinson dismisses the issue of whether he was Protestant or Catholic: like many of his contemporaries, he expected Rome to adopt reform and reunite with the Protestants. Unlike Luther, who emphasized the spoken word, he believed that "the noblest of a man's senses is sight... a thing seen is more believable and long-lasting to us than something we hear." He was an innovator in areas of craft and allegory and an aggressive businessman, apparently initiating the first copyright suit, and toured Europe as a celebrity. In 1840 he became the first artist to be honored with a public monument. Hutchinson is particularly good on the later uses made of his image by anti-modernists and German nationalists, including the Nazis.

This is not a deep artistic or psychological analysis. While the author discusses Dürer's Christ-like self-portraits and his image of Melancholia, from which he suffered, she is not primarily concerned here with his archetypes, cognitive structures, or internal conflicts, or his work on perspective, geometry, and letterforms. Her achievement is in presenting to us the real life of a man who has been obscured by his myth, so that we can get to know him.

Philip Bouwsma
Calligrapher and lettering artist
Hamden, CT

BEYOND NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY. By Heikki Räisänen. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990. 224 pages. Paper. $14.95.

This is a good introduction to the discipline of New Testament theology. The author traces major developments over the past two centuries and offers a prospectus for the future of the

discipline. Räisänen begins with J. P. Gabler's concern to distinguish the study of biblical theology from the work of dogmatic efforts, by scholars such as D. F. Strauss, to reconstruct biblical history independent of traditional dogmatics. Räisänen then focuses on W. Wrede's programmatic work in the history-of-religions school, which sought to establish New Testament theology as a purely historical study of early Christian "religion," without regard to the limits of the canon and independent of service to the church. After a review of the history-of-religion proponents, Räisänen treats the neo-orthodoxy of Barth and the existentialism of Bultmann, both of whom wanted to recapture the role of Scripture as the Word of God relevant to the present. Bultmann viewed "biblical theology" as normative for dogmatic theology. Others who followed Bultmann treated biblical "salvation history" as normative for faith and belief. Still others singled out certain writings of the New Testament or a key motif, such as eschatology, and treated this as normative for the Christian faith. Räisänen concludes his survey by highlighting certain trends, such as the call for a theology of the whole Bible rather than just the New Testament, the concern to resolve the problem of unity and diversity in the New Testament, and the use of the Bible to critique contemporary religious conceptions and institutions.

In the latter half of his book, Räisänen sets out his own program for the discipline, calling for a reconsideration of Wrede's proposals, as yet unrealized. In this regard, Räisänen argues that New Testament exegesis ought to inform theology and not vice versa, that the focus of New Testament theology should be the religious experience of early Christianity rather than a study of New Testament writings, that the limits of the canon should be disregarded in the study of early Christianity, and that one should recognize the inevitable biases and limitations of each scholar's point of view. Furthermore, Räisänen argues that in our post-Christian era New Testament theology should address an audience broader than the church and should do so without regard to the faith of the audience. In Räisänen's view, the task of New Testament theology is more than the enhancement of preaching; it should provide critical information about life, with contemporary social and global concerns in mind. The exegete should also be prepared to be critical of the biblical faith and its influence. Räisänen admits that exegetes can be merely descriptive of the past, but they can also choose to "actualize" New Testament theology by using it to critique contemporary religious conceptions and social institutions.

Räisänen has good insights about what is needed now in the discipline. In an era when few people will accept an idea simply because it occurs in the New Testament, Räisänen is right to suggest a dialogical approach to the Bible in which one exposes one's own biases and critiques the text with honesty. Also promising is his suggestion that theology broaden its subject matter to include the whole "symbolic universe" of a writing or an era. Such a shift from theology to a study of "worlds" and worldviews is considerable. It would no longer be adequate, for example, to talk about the Christology of a writing narrowly in terms of titles of Jesus without also including an analysis of such matters as cosmology, cultural assumptions, and character traits. Also, Räisänen proposes that we begin New Testament theology thematically with Christology and eschatology. But why not begin with the understanding of the human condition which the work of God in Jesus is meant to address? Finally, Räisänen is too oriented to the text in terms of its "meaning" only and offers little by way of reflection on the performative "rhetoric" of a text shaped to transform the reader (hearer). Rhetoric may be the main entree into actualizing the text, for the rhetoric of a text engenders the transformation of life and action.

Räisänen has provided a readable review and proposal with a helpful bibliography, notes, and an index of authors cited. The book should be a valuable guide to scholars, teachers, students, and interested pastors.

David Rhoads
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

ANARCHY AND CHRISTIANITY. By Jacques Ellul. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. 109 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Ellul affirms as *the* Christian political option an anarchy which eschews the sense of finality other ideologies, be they capitalist or community, proclaim. The apocalyptic vision is central to his critique of other political programs, and he shows us the history of anarchy in a simple but elegant sweep through the Bible. Ellul hopes anarchists will read the book and recognize, at last, that their brief is not against Christian faith but against the institutional religions which pretend to represent that faith. Ellul does not understand anarchy as chaos or disorder but rather as non-domination. Biblical power is shared power, and his call in the book is for small grass-roots groups to take up the biblical mandate to create communities in which equality and non-domination are the order, organized in the name of God the liberator. The motif of liberation *is* central to the Bible, according to Ellul's reading, but not in the sense that liberation theologians tend to read it, since the poor are equally in the grip of demonic power struggles as are the rich. Vintage Ellul.

Jay C. Rochelle

COMMON GROUND: AN INTRODUCTION TO EASTERN CHRISTIANITY FOR THE AMERICAN CHRISTIAN. By Jordan Hames Bajis. Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Co., 1991. xi and 302 pages. Large paperback. $14.95.

The material in this book is shaped particularly for American Christians of a conservative-evangelical to fundamentalist bent, and the agenda of American fundamentalism has, in a sense, shaped the way in which the book is written. There is a chapter, e.g., which explains the historic position of the Eastern (and most Western) churches over against so-called "believers' baptism," and there is no chapter on icons (which this reviewer found striking in its absence, given the weight placed on icons in faith and life among the Orthodox). Perhaps this becomes more understandable when we recognize that this is an introduction to the Eastern church which comes from the pen of a priest of the evangelical Orthodox church, that intriguing phenomenon which grew out of Campus Crusade and associated movements in the 70s and 80s and which has now been mostly subsumed into historic Orthodox churches. The Evangelical Orthodox Church contains those few churches and pastors who did not choose to enter into the mainstream of Orthodoxy.

The book is well-researched, and the text reads well. It is marred by a number of typos and misspellings, but they are mostly in the footnotes, which are considerable but unnecessary for the ordinary reader. Although there are many shorter introductions around, none is as thorough for what the writer is trying to accomplish as this one is. There is a great deal of material on the meaning of church, sacraments, and Bible in the Orthodox church, and I find it particularly helpful that he provided an introduction in which he discussed the difference in mentality between Eastern and Western churches and Christians. In the body of the text he is at pains to point out the distinctions between East and West with regard to biblical reading, sacramental piety, and ecclesial thinking and recognition.

Jay C. Rochelle

WHAT IS NARRATIVE CRITICISM? By Mark Allan Powell. Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series, edited by Dan O. Via, Jr. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. xi and 125 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Powell concisely and clearly answers the question posed by the title of this book. He begins by briefly outlining the history of literary criticism of the New Testament since 1946 (the year of publication of Erich Auerbach's Mimesis) to the present. He then succinctly distinguishes some of the varieties of literary criticism currently practiced. Powell concludes this discussion by defining narrative criticism as criticism whose goal "is to read the text as the implied reader." The implied reader is the knowledgeable reader that the author imagines as being addressed by

the text. The remainder of the book addresses the subjects of story and discourse, events, characters, and settings as understood from this perspective. His concluding chapter analyzes the relative advantages and disadvantages of a narrative critical approach to New Testament texts.

For those readers with a background in literary criticism this book will probably be too basic. However, for readers such as the reviewer, who quickly become lost in the jargon of modern literary critical studies of the Bible, this book is quite literally a godsend. Powell provides precise definitions of technical terms, clearly written discussion, and basic bibliography. As such the book is of considerable value for students in introductory courses, graduate students preparing for exams, scholars, pastors, and anyone seriously interested in literary critical approaches to Scripture.

Another greatly beneficial aspect of the book is Powell's determined effort to relate literary, or aesthetic, approaches to the New Testament with an understanding of the New Testament as "the Word of God." Almost any forum addressing the role of the Bible could benefit from Powell's brief but insightful discussion.

The book suffers from the lack of a glossary. The reader must search through earlier portions of the text to find the definitions of technical terms. This is a minor criticism of a very fine introduction to one aspect of understanding Scripture from a literary perspective.

Lynn Allan Kauppi

GOD-CHRIST-CHURCH—A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PROCESS THEOLOGY. By Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. New York: Crossroad, 1989. 259 pages. Paper. $16.95.

Suchocki begins with the notion of relation and argues persuasively that humans are relational beings. Humanity creates, molds, affirms, and knows its own existence because it is in relation to other humans, the world, and God. The notion of relation and the dynamics which go with it are central to Suchocki's development and treatment of humanity, sin, God, Jesus, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

Suchocki affirms the presence of sin and evil. Sin is a distortion of the relational existence. Humanity, both individually and as a society, is responsible for the distortion. Simultaneously, humanity is responsible for achieving the highest potential freedom from sin.

Suchocki applies the relational notion to God. God is relational. God feels, experiences, and relates to the world. The hidden God reveals and relates to the world as Presence, Wisdom, and Power. God relates through the special revelation of the incarnate Jesus Christ. As other process theologians have done, Suchocki ties the Incarnation to the historical Jesus of Nazareth and explains the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Suchocki continues by developing the notions of ecclesiology and eschatology. Two chapters deserve mention. First, the discussion on Universality in Chapter 14 demonstrates Suchocki's sensitivity to contemporary pluralistic issues and their many implications for the Christian faith. Second, the discussion on the usefulness and power of prayer in chapter 17 is both powerful and moving, especially for those who feel trapped and oppressed.

In the conclusion Suchocki briefly discusses Trinitarian language. She explains why she avoids Father, Son, and Holy Spirit terminology and prefers to use the terms Presence, Wisdom, and Power as an appropriate and meaningful contemporary model of God.

At the title suggests, Suchocki uses process thought and language as the philosophical framework for her discussion. This book is an excellent introduction which avoids the difficult and cumbersome process jargon. The appendix carefully and clearly presents the process model and introduces the reader to process terminology. The glossary and illustrations are especially helpful. This is an accessible and valuable introductory book for pastors, interested lay people, introductory theology courses, and those who are curious about process theology.

Jeff Zell
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Briefly Noted

AMOS OF ISRAEL: A NEW INTERPRETATION. By Stanley N. Rosenbaum (Mercer, $25). Through sociological, historical, and linguistic analysis of the life, words, and times of Amos, R. comes to some startling and provocative conclusions: Amos was a native northerner, a middle level bureaucrat and member of the "haves," who blew the whistle on his society when its egalitarianism had been crushed by capitalism. Not a simple shepherd or a fig-slitter, he was a district inspector of government herds and of sycamores. After his confrontation with the powers-that-be, he fled to Tekoa in the south, where he wrote down his own words before 745. R. detects Samaritan words and a northern dialect in the language of Amos and concludes that the book is a unified speech that Amos—depending on interruptions—could have delivered in twenty minutes or so. The most intriguing thing about this proposal is its alternative to the standard geographic interpretation: that Amos, an obscure southerner, of the lower class, wandered up north and somehow found his voice against that kingdom's royal establishment. This alternative needs testing at every turn, to be sure, but it has challenged Amos scholarship at its core. RWK

HOLY WAR IN ANCIENT ISRAEL. By Gerhard von Rad. Introduction by Ben C. Ollenburger (Eerdmans, $14.95). von Rad's classic discussion of Holy War described it as an institution from the time of the amphictyony, or Tribal League, dealing primarily with defense against attacks upon Israel. Later narrative accounts used Holy War to exhort individual Israelites to have faith in Yahweh and to trust in him for deliverance. Ollenburger's introduction to the English translation of von Rad's study surveys the discussion before and especially after von Rad and places emphasis on a non-cultic understanding of Holy War and the presence of such "Yahweh wars" in Israel's earliest history. Following Millard Lind, O. argues that the oldest war, that of the Exodus in chapter 15, placed emphasis on the soleness of Yahweh's actions in warfare, a condition which he describes as "pacifism." von Rad is probably most vulnerable in his neglect of the so-called archaic poetry and his claim that the earliest wars were defensive. Although the notion of an amphictyony has become unpopular among current historians, I think that Ollenburger may underestimate the cultic character of the oldest Holy War traditions. I also find it a strange use of "pacifism" when the deity still fights mightily. The book concludes with a representative bibliography on war, peace, and justice in the Hebrew Bible compiled by Judith E. Sanderson. RWK

PSALMS 51-100. Word Biblical Commentary 20. By Marvin E. Tate (Word, $24.99). This thorough commentary provides more than ten pages on each Psalm and tells readers what they need to know about the translation, text, form, exposition, and wider theological meaning of each, including its relationship to the NT and the Christian faith. Those who know Hebrew will get the most out of it, but it is written in such a way that even those who know no Hebrew can profit immensely and not be confused. It joins earlier commentaries on the Psalter in the Word series (by Peter C. Craigie and Leslie C. Allen, both in 1983) to provide the most up-to-date and scholarly/pastoral commentary on the whole Psalter in English (A. A. Anderson's useful commentary in the New Century Bible is based on the RSV; Kraus's commentary, recently translated from German, is primarily a work of the 50s, despite some light updating). T. teaches at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. His balanced use of historical criticism and his effective theological discussions make tragic the recent "conservative" takeover within his church body. RWK

WAR NO MORE? OPTIONS IN NUCLEAR ETHICS. Edited and introduced by James W. Walters (Fortress, $6.95). This volume on comparative Christian thought on nuclear arms originated in a conference held at Loma Linda University in 1986. It includes short and concise essays by the Mennonite theologian John H. Yoder ("Nuclear Arms in Christian Pacifist Perspective"), Roman Catholic theologian William C. Spohn, S.J. ("Nuclear Deterrence under Strict Moral Conditions"), and political scientist Paul Seabury ("The Just-War Legacy in the Nuclear Age"). The volume ends with the comments of two distinguished voices in the area of church and society, Protestant theologian John C. Bennet and Roman Catholic theologian George Weigel. Intended for use with adult discussion groups, clergy, and undergraduate students, the book's value is enhanced by an annotated list of suggested readings. While the present global political situation might suggest the decreased importance of reflection and discussion of nuclear ethics, this volume reminds us of the continuing urgency of the issue. Reinhard Hütter

JUSTICE, PEACE, AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION. INSIGHTS FROM ORTHODOXY. Edited by Gennadios Limouris (Geneva: WCC Publications, $9.95). This is a selection of papers presented at the Orthodox consultations "Orthodox Perspectives on Creation" and "Orthodox Perspectives of Justice and Peace." The book achieves two things at the same time and can be highly recommended: first, it presents a series of twelve very interesting theological reflections on creation, justice, and peace, which do not simply reflect the conventional wisdom of the Protestant mainline; and second, it provides introduction to the richness and uniqueness of Orthodox theology. A very good example of ethical reflection in an ecumenical context. Reinhard Hütter

A THEOLOGY OF FORCE AND VIOLENCE. By Peter Mayhew (Trinity Press International, $8.95). This thought-provoking volume represents a theological defense of the use of force, and if need be of violence, in political and social situations of enduring injustice, under the condition that there be a reasonable chance of successfully replacing it with a just order. The British Roman Catholic author's thesis is driven by the primacy of justice and works in the Just War logic, yet he applies it to those intra- and inter-state conflicts which are normally not covered by it. He discusses violence in Northern Ireland, Palestine, South Africa, Central and South America, and concludes with a chapter on international war. The essay's perspective is strongly informed by the author's experience of pre-war Nazi Germany and the Second World War. The essay can be read as an attack on the sentimental and romantic pacifism which prefers a peace without justice and does not know about the cost of peaceableness in a world of injustice. Reinhard Hütter

In **HISTORICAL CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE: METHODOLOGY OR IDEOLOGY?** (Baker, $9.95) Eta Linnemann delivers a broadside attack on critical biblical study. She received her doctrate in New Testament, studying under R. Bultmann, G. Ebeling, E. Fuchs, and F. Gogarten. After becoming a university lecturer, she was profoundly disillusioned by the results of critical scholarship. Evangelical Christianity provided a way out of her personal faith crisis and led to her disowning of biblical criticism as a destructive, agnostic method. This book, divided into two sections, is the fervent testimony to her new found joy in evangelical faith. She first describes the essentially anti-Christian character of the modern [German] university, then evaluates historical critical theology in the light of her evangelical convictions. Written with the fervor of a new convert, Linnemann presents the reader with a radical either/or: either evangelical faith (based on an inspired, errorless Bible) or atheistic historical critical theology. Her book will reinforce the convictions of those who share her basic evangelical convictions and seem like a parody of modern biblical scholarship to those who do not. There is a *via media*; but Linnemann leaves no room for it. Ultimately a profoundly disappointing book. Edgar Krentz

J. L. Houlden, Professor of Theology at King's College, London, wrote this commentary on **THE PASTORAL EPISTLES: I AND II TIMOTHY, TITUS** for the paperback series, The Pelican New Testament Commentaries, in 1976. Now you can purchase it in an unaltered reprint in the series TPI New Testament Commentaries (SCM Press and Trinity Press International, $14.95). Houlden interprets the letter as a Pauline pseudepigraph that enabled the church to face serious doctrinal problems by proposing standards for correct belief and structures to support them. It is a helpful resource and a good volume to introduce a new series of paragraph-by-paragraph commentaries. It's a good read and a good buy. Look for additions to the series in the form of new works and other reprints. Edgar Krentz

POLITICS AND POLICY. THE GENESIS AND THEOLOGY OF SOCIAL STATEMENTS IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA. By Christa R. Klein with Christian D. von Dehsen (Fortress, $19.95). The two authors provide a useful, succinct history of the genesis and theology of the social statements of the LCA and its predecessor churches. A first chapter provides an overview of "Church and Society" 1820-1918, a second chapter covers the years 1918-1962, the following seven chapters the years 1962-1984. An appendix of slightly over 100 pages contains all the 19 social statements of the LCA. The chapters and statements on race relations, marriage and family, capital punishment, poverty, Vietnam, conscientious objection, religious liberty in the United States, the human crisis in ecology, human rights, and economic justice are not only still highly relevant but are like a mirror of the social and political history of the United States during the last 30 years. An important book to ponder while the birth-pangs of the ELCA are still with us. Reinhard Hütter

TWENTIETH-CENTURY RELIGIOUS THOUGHT. By John Macquarrie (SCM Press/ Trinity Press International, $19.95 paper). This book originally appeared in 1963 as the most comprehensive discussion of theology, philosophy of religion, and critique of religion in the 20th century; it quickly advanced to become a standard textbook and a classic in its field. In 1989 Macquarrie presented a revised and expanded edition which does justice to the most recent developments in theological discourse. Now chapters are included on the renewal of Catholic theology, liberation theology, indigenous theologies, feminist theology, and African-American theology. In this updated version, Macquarrie's book remains the most comprehensive guide through the jungle of this century's debate in theology and the philosophy of religion. Reinhard Hütter

THEOLOGY OF PEACE. PAUL TILLICH. Edited by Ronald H. Stone (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, $10.95). This volume gathers twelve articles on peace (several never before in print) by one of the most eminent theologians of this century. The articles span the decades from the late thirties until the mid sixties; they include Tillich's first public political speech in the United States, "The Meaning of Anti-Semitism," essays on post-war construction, durable peace, power and justice in the post-war world, the hydrogen bomb, and the Berlin situation. The essays reflect both the historical context of the Second World War and the Cold War and Tillich's genius of approaching the universal through reflecting upon the particular. A helpful volume, especially for those who continue to be attracted by Tillich's thought. Reinhard Hütter

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Preaching Helps

First Sunday in Advent—Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, Series C

The Peace of Christ

It's Luke's turn again, and I wonder how he will fare this time around. Luke is probably the most maligned of our evangelists. Ernest Renan called Luke's Gospel "the most beautiful book in the world." Luke would be disappointed with what Renan no doubt regarded as a rave notice. The esthetic aspect of our Gospels is much studied in these days of renewed literary criticism, and of the evangelists Luke has of course long been regarded as the singular artist.

But Luke has a tough message of love to proclaim. Tough, and often offensive, since we prefer tender messages of love—messages of love which require little in the way of repentance and which do not put us into too close proximity with certain of our neighbors.

During this year of Luke some will pull down off the shelf one of the classics of redaction criticism and reread Hans Conzelmann's complaint that Luke spoke for a church settling down in the world for the long haul. That is to say, Conzelmann believed that Luke had apostasized from the early church's gospel of existentialism. Would that be so bad, if true?

Luke did think about the good news of God's grace moving out into the church after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And he thought of the church moving out into the world, place after place and generation after generation, in the power of grace with a message of "peace."

"Peace" is one of Luke's big words (2:14, 19:38). God proclaimed "peace through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). Luke is forever contrasting the Lord Jesus and his peace with the Lord Caesar and Pax Romana.

Tacitus reports the lament of a British chieftain who had felt the strong arm of Caesar: "The Romans create a desert and call it peace." Israeli journalist Jacobo Timerman visited Tyre and Sidon during the war in Lebanon, and seeing the heaps of rubble created by Israeli bombs shook his head sadly and lamented what he called the Pax Hebraica. And at least some in our own country, viewing the destruction of power plants, sewage systems, and water supply in Iraq (putting countless children's lives in jeopardy), have raised questions about the Pax Americana.

It is not always easy or comfortable to read the Gospels. It will not be simple to penetrate to new levels of understanding of Luke or of God's grace and peace in the year ahead. But no endeavor can be more important or more relevant to our times.

The First Readings in this issue focus heavily on the Gospels. The Old Testament lessons were treated in exemplary fashion at the hand of our late friend and colleague Carl Graesser in our October 1988 issue.

As we enter the Year of Luke, it may be appropriate to mention that we seem well supplied with fine commentaries on this Gospel: Eduard Schweizer (1984), Charles Talbert (1986), Fred Danker (1988), and David Tiede (1988) have all written with the preacher in mind. Joseph Fitzmyer wrote his big two-volume Anchor Bible commentary (1981-85) with people of insatiable curiosity in mind. Robert Tannehill wrote *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (2 vol. 1986) for people who want to come to terms with Luke as author and literary craftsman. Walter Pilgrim's *Good News to the Poor* (1981) is a fine study of Luke's message regarding rich and poor. And for pastors and teachers who want an orientation to Lukan studies we are fortunate to have Mark Allan Powell's *What Are They Saying about Luke?* (1989). (These last two authors, WP and MAP, have been contributors to "Preaching Helps" in recent issues.)

Helping us as we move into Advent and Epiphany of Year C, the Year of Luke, is the Reverend Barbara Wills. Over the past ten years she has

written on numerous occasions for "Christ in Our Home" and "The Home Altar." The Spring 1991 issue of "The Home Altar" will carry devotions she has produced for Holy Week contemplation. She currently serves as pastor of St. Paul's Maple Leaf Lutheran Church in Elma, Iowa. Our gratitude to her for her contributions in this Advent-Epiphany issue.

And I wish all of you readers and preachers,

Peace and Joy!

Robert H. Smith
Editor of Preaching Helps

First Sunday in Advent
December 1, 1991

Psalm 25:1-9
Jeremiah 33:14-16
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Luke 21:25-36 or Luke 19:28-40

FIRST READING

The Gospel opens with troubling images of the collapse of the world's attic into the world's basement. You need not live in earthquake country or a war zone to feel the unsettling effects of such language. Jesus speaks of a time when everything we have always counted on as stable and enduring suddenly begins to crack.

What is astonishing here is that each paragraph in this lesson closes with unparalleled good news. The advent of terrors invite us to "lift up our heads, for redemption [not destruction!] is drawing near" (v. 28). The collapse of the old is prelude to the coming of the new.

Stars may collide and whole worlds vanish, but "my words," says Jesus, "will not pass away." And the speech of Jesus is unfailingly and surprisingly gracious. "Too gracious," said his enemies. "We must silence him."

History will end, but these paragraphs (and all the paragraphs of the New Testament) say that it ends not in some black hole but at the feet of "the Son of man" (v. 36). Stephen's history as a Christian was short and not terribly sweet, but at his end he saw the exalted Christ rendering a verdict the exact opposite of the one enacted by his executioners on earth (Acts 7:56).

If you live to the north anywhere near a body of water that freezes solid each winter, you know how slowly cold days can pass and how it can seem that warm air and warm soil are a mere daydream. But then one day the ice begins to moan and crack like rifle shots, signalling the happy onset of spring. Advent is that cracking noise you hear.

1 Thessalonians is also intensely eschatological, and it too stresses the advent of the Lord of history as divine rescue. The coming Lord is none other than "Jesus" who is on the way to deliver us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10) and to gather us to himself that we may always be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17).

Both Luke and 1 Thessalonians call readers to a state of readiness in their living toward the end. *TIME* ran a cover story on Evil (June 1991), bemoaning the difficulty theologians (and others) have in explaining catastrophic evil. Jesus and Paul do not explain, but they do both call believers to live in trust toward God and to "abound in love toward one another and to all people" (1 Thess 3:12). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The birth pangs of the new age seem to occur in every generation: "great distress on the earth," "wrath against God's people," people fainting from "fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world." From the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century, through the ransacking of Rome, the plagues in medieval Europe, the slaughter of Jews in Nazi Germany, to our present woes—fear of a nuclear holocaust, starvation in Africa and the Middle East, revolutions in Latin America, crime and AIDS in the United States, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and its gruesome aftermath—the list is endless and exhausting. All generations have experienced the distress.

We look around us and tremble. Older folks say the return of the Lord must be near. Some people sell their possessions and camp on hillsides. Others begin to stockpile weapons and food. Everyone wonders how long it can go on and how it will end. Like sheep without a shepherd, we mill about aimlessly on the edge of hysteria.

Today's Gospel lesson leaves most people uneasy. When will the end be? Some want it now, but they've waited so long already. Will it come? Others don't want it at all. They point out how unlikely it will be to come soon—if indeed it comes. "The prophecy must have meant something else," they say.

One thing these people all have in common is that they see this time in a linear way. It is *chronos*. If these events do occur, they will herald a moment of judgment and glory unsurpassed by any merely human event—a moment in time that will come and then pass on to another moment.

But the birth pangs are always with us. It is a long, hard labor. Will the fetus survive the birthing?

"Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (v. 28). "These things" are always happening, and in the life, passion, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, our redemption has already drawn near. Whether or not this day of judgment is an event in *chronos*, only the future will reveal. But that it is repeatedly a *kairos* event is evident in the life of each of God's people. No generation passes away without experiencing the fearful distresses of the earth and its people, writhing in the pain of brokenness. And to each generation is offered the inbreaking of God in Christ, bringing judgment and redemption.

As God's children, we are called to stand up and raise our heads. We cannot cower in the darkness or we may fail to see the *kairos* moments of redemption as they come. We are to be up and watchful, alert to the coming of our Lord. If we are weighed down by anxieties, worries, greed, and dissipation, we may miss the moment.

Watch! For our Lord is continually coming.
BMW

Second Sunday in Advent
December 8, 1991

Psalm 126
Malachi 3:1-4
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

FIRST READING

Both of the New Testament readings sketch world history as reaching from the present all the way to the end of time. The present has its problems, but Paul and John the Baptist are not preoccupied with the power of evil. They are realists, but they are not cynical, not bitter, and certainly not defeated.

Both John and Paul took lessons in political realism, studying the ways of the world from the inside of prison cells (on John the Baptist, see Lk 3:20). A pair of cliches about people in prison is that they "languish" there, that is, mark time cut off from creative action, or they "rot" there, defeated by an oppressive system.

Neither word describes John or Paul. Both brim with energy and hope. In fact they are full of the energy of love precisely because they are full of hope.

Paul remains an active proclaimer in spite of prison bars, and the gospel had become known "throughout the whole praetorian guard" (the whole imperial government quarter of the city). And he continues to be an intercessor for others, and he is obviously an active correspondent. He graciously intervenes in the lives of the Philippians with his prayers to God and with his joyful letter to them.

Paul's energy was not broken by prison, because he knows who really controls history: the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2, 2:11). He knows that God "who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6).

Luke opens this new section of his Gospel with an elaborate synchronism, not simply so that scholars have an easier time calculating the precise year when John the Baptist began his preaching in the wilderness but so that we can all contemplate the height and breadth and length of the good which God is preparing for the cosmos. John the Baptist prepares the way for a real gospel for the real world, in fact a gospel that contradicts the gospels of the world. The gospel of God is here set against the political gospels of that time and our own.

The word of the Lord did not come to Tiberias Caesar or Pontius Pilate, to Herod or his brother Philip, to Lysanias or to the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas. Instead it came to John who had no power, no palace, no praetorium, and no high priesthood.

John heard God whispering into his ear that the ancient promise made through Isaiah (40:5) was about to come true. Not the high and mighty alone, not the Roman elite and their provincial cronies and supporters alone, and not priests or people sanctified by religious correctness alone, but "all flesh shall see (experience) the salvation of God" (3:6). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

At a specific time in history, in a particular place on earth, a voice cried out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord" (v. 4). Luke has grounded his report in history, in a known location, and in the writings of a particular people, the Hebrews. He has also called on a very particular understanding of his audience: that God is encountered in the wilderness. So John, who preaches repentance and a renewed relationship with God, is found, appropriately, in the wilderness. However, as the prophecy is read, it is fulfilled. The one crying out is in the wilderness, and it is in the wilderness that the way is being prepared.

The preparation in the wilderness brings two images to mind for me. Here in northeastern Iowa, part of the preparation of the fields for planting each spring is "picking rock." The pressure caused by the freezing of the earth each winter and the subsequent thawing each spring, breaks up the bedrock and forces chunks of it upward to the surface of the ground. Each year the way must be prepared for plows and planters. Rock-picking machines and people comb the fields prior to planting time to remove rocks and stones that could damage expensive equipment.

The other image is one of huge earth-moving machinery rolling its way across the desert, leveling mountains, filling in ditches, bridging rivers and streams—preparing the way for super highways that span the continent and make easily available previously inaccessible places.

You will have your own images of preparatory activities, but the message is the same. Obstacles must be removed before the goal can be attained. Rocks must be removed before plowing and planting can take place. The crop will not be harvested without the preliminary work—work that precedes even the planting. A person will not arrive at a given destination unless the roadbed is carefully prepared to receive the smooth surface over which a vehicle may pass. New life with God will not happen unless our Lord comes, and the Lord cannot reach unrepentant hearts.

Our Lord comes. We must prepare. Repentance will remove the obstacles in his path: pride, greed, selfishness, indifference, prejudice, hatred.... Our Lord indeed comes, as Luther assures us, "without our praying for it," but can he reach his destination?

Jesus is coming! Be ready! Repent! BMW

Third Sunday in Advent December 15, 1991

Isaiah 12:2-6
Zephaniah 3:14-18a
Philippians 4:4-7 (8-9)
Luke 3:7-18

FIRST READING

The final line of the Gospel is jarring. How can Luke call John's preachment "good news"? John's mouth had just been full of the harshest images: people described as slithering snakes, axes poised to strike sharply at the roots of trees, fruitless plantings chopped down and thrown into the inferno, baptism with howling Spirit and fire.

"Good news?" Maybe the word means simply "message" and we should not pay any attention to the Greek prefix "*εὐ-*" (in the word *εὐαγγέλιον*) which usually means "good."

However, to the oppressed and confused multitudes, it really *was* good to hear that God was after all paying attention to their supplications and cries, that God was not ignoring current events. God was not turning a blind eye to the naked and hungry (3:10-11, 16:19-31) or to the scams of tax collectors and other powerful entrepreneurs (3:12-13, 15:1, 18:9-14, 19:1-10) or to the violence of the police and the military (3:14, 7:1-10; Acts 10-11).

God is a God of justice and of mercy after all. How these would meet and kiss, John does not say. But John's words are "good news." And in fulfillment of his proclamations Jesus steps onto the scene (3:21-22).

As John proclaimed the coming earthly ministry of Jesus, so Paul proclaims Jesus' future epiphany. Because Jesus is present and future Lord, because he is Lord and is at hand, anxiety gives way to prayer, to thanksgiving, and to the peace of the Lord. Even for Paul in prison. Even for us, no matter what prison walls hem us in. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

John the Baptist proclaimed the "good news" with many exhortations. Too often we confuse "good" with "easy." John's news was good news, but it was not easy news.

Good news, in the popular understanding, usually implies a release from responsibility, worry, and concern. A pay raise is good news. Getting a few extra days of paid vacation is good news. Not having to take an exam is good news. Whatever releases us from struggle is seen as good news.

But these forms of good news are all easy news. Not all good news is easy. An ailing woman is told that her health may be restored, but there will be many months of difficult treatments. This is not easy news. A man is told that his family will be able to refinance their debts and in a few years be free, but it will mean a strict budget and no more credit buying. This is hopeful news, but the reality will be difficult to live out.

John the Baptist came into the wilderness of Judea preaching the good news of God's coming kingdom: the coming of the One who was more powerful than he. It was news that required repentance, commitment, and a baptism in fire. It was news of hope and the fulfillment of long expectations, but it was not easy.

Fire also figures heavily in this text. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be thrown into the fire (v. 9). But those who are not thrown into the fire and destroyed will still be baptized in fire (v. 16). (Note that *ἐν* is literally translated "in.") Fire, rather than water, is the element used by the more powerful One who is coming. And the chaff will burn with unquenchable fire.

No one escapes the fire. Suffering, pain, injustice—the heat of life—comes to everyone. But only the chaff and unfruitful trees will be destroyed by it. Those who repent, who bear the good fruit of faith, will be refined and strengthened when they pass through the fire.

It is sometimes difficult to preach such texts as this without giving the impression that we can avoid the fire—or at least survive it—by our own efforts at repentance and by performing good works. But no one avoids the fire, and those who have been in it can attest to the fact that we are powerless to lift ourselves out. Yet, we are

baptized in the Holy Spirit as well as in the fire. God stands in the fire with us, just as the Lord stood with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:24-25). The God who comes does not leave us on our own.

If we try to stand alone in the flames, we will be consumed, but by admitting our vulnerability and embracing the One who comes, we will be lifted out of the fire and saved. BMW

Fourth Sunday in Advent December 22, 1991

Psalm 80:1-7
Micah 5:2-4
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

FIRST READING

Both New Testament selections speak oddly of bodies. The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus' whole biography from beginning to end was obedience. His body was the temple in which he made offering to God, with each breath and with every step doing the will of God. His life is viewed not as many deeds and many words spread over many days and years. The author sees it as a single act of priestly sacrifice offered once and for all, for the benefit of all who belong to him.

Luke also speaks of bodies. His is a tale of two mothers. They are "cousins" or at least "relatives" of some kind, and both are pregnant, both looking ahead to births and newness of life. In their expectant state, they are an apt symbol of Advent.

The focus of the lesson is their encounter in Judea. We may wonder how in that world Mary might travel as a pregnant young woman from her home in the north to a village in the Judean hill country in the south. Was Joseph with her? Maybe her mother and father were with her? How long did the trip take? What route did she travel? Did Mary know Elizabeth well?

Luke displays not one bit of curiosity about such questions. He wants readers to think of the relationship between John and Jesus. That is the real encounter, as he sees it. As soon as expectant Mary greeted expectant Elizabeth, the unborn John began to bear witness to the unborn Jesus: John leaped in Elizabeth's womb. John kicked his mother, as though to cry out, "Look! This is our Lord and Savior."

Luke says that John was obedient prophet from his mother's womb. Hebrews says that Jesus was obedient Son on our behalf from the first moment of his bodily life to his last.

Jesus of Bethlehem is little among the clans of Judah (Micah 5) and yet marked by ancient prophecy and by the Baptist's infant testimony. He will stand and feed his flock, and they shall dwell secure. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Two women share a very special secret. They share the excitement and expectation of knowing that God has given them unique responsibilities in the fulfillment of ancient prophecies. They are the first to know that the Messiah is coming.

Elizabeth, a woman past childbearing age, is pregnant with one who is to become a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord. Her young kinswoman, Mary, who is unmarried, is pregnant with the long-awaited Messiah.

The angel Gabriel had visited Mary to tell her the news of these pregnancies. So excited is she at hearing these things that she immediately rushes off to see Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea. She is eager to exchange news: the hopes, fears, and uncertainties that overwhelm her. Only Elizabeth can come close to understanding Mary's situation. They share the common bond of being chosen by God to bear very special children. As the older woman, Elizabeth will perhaps be able to serve as Mary's mentor, sharing the wisdom and experience of her many years with the younger woman.

As Mary and Elizabeth greet each other, we can imagine the hugging and laughing and weeping that went on. Even the child within Elizabeth leaped with joy at the encounter.

Then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and "exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women!'" (v. 42).

And Mary said (or did she sing? or shout?), "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (v. 47).

God had come to redeem "those who fear him," those whose trust is in the Lord. The lowly would be lifted up: women, children, the poor, the hungry, those who are abused and violated and oppressed. The powerful would be brought down: kings, the rich, those who dominate and destroy.

These two women, unknown outside their families and neighborhoods, who lived in a society that devalued women, had been visited by the Holy Spirit and chosen by God for a special mission. They had been blessed.

What did it mean for Mary and Elizabeth to be blessed? Once John is named, we will hear no more about Elizabeth. Mary's blessing, however, will lead her in paths of sorrow as well as joy. But for this time, the joy overrides all other considerations as she waits with eager longing for the birth of her child—the Messiah who comes. BMW

The Nativity of Our Lord December 25, 1991

Psalm 98
Isaiah 62:10-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:1-20

FIRST READING

The lesson from Titus is a fragment of one long and complicated sentence. Omitted as too bleak and depressing (for Christmas meditation, at least) is the description of the people's condition prior to God's rescue. That description climaxes in the words "hated and hating," the polar opposite of the love which the lesson celebrates.

The thought in the sentence runs as follows: (A) At one time we wallowed in folly and hatred (3:3), but (B) at the right time the divine loving-kindness appeared (*ἐπεφάνη*, 3:4), (C) and as an act of pure mercy God saved us [main verb, 3:5], (D) by the regenerating bath (*παλιγγενεσία* =Genesis all over again) of the Spirit of God (3:5) set loose in the world through Jesus Christ (3:6), with the result (E) that we now enjoy fresh status with God and are heirs of eternal life (3:7).

The sentence celebrates the powerful mercy that has moved us that whole infinite distance from folly and hatred (A) to new life (E).

The name "Caesar Augustus" (Luke 2:1) conjures up images of power and of peace. Augustus ended civil warfare that had convulsed the empire, establishing a blessed peace. But Luke's account features an imperial decree of enrollment. Augustus not only kept the peace but he also kept track of the numbers, counting inhabitants province by province and city by city for purposes of taxation and military draft. And the name "Quirinius" was burned in the memory in connection with cruel suppression of Jewish rebellion against Roman exactions.

In such times and circumstances Joseph went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and he did not travel alone. Mary went with him. She is described rather oddly, it seems, as "his betrothed, who was with child." Luke does not deny that Joseph and Mary are a married couple, but he does not call Mary "his wife" because to do so would imply that they had consummated their marriage sexually. What he wishes to say is that Joseph and Mary (and the unborn Jesus) travel to Bethlehem as a family but a very odd one.

We will never understand the child born to Mary at Bethlehem if we think of him only as the product of the union of two human families. He is the epiphany of God (Titus 3), the eruption of God, the breaking forth of God in the midst of human life.

And he will establish upon the earth a peace more glorious even than that for which the tribes and families of earth hailed Caesar or feared Caesar. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

It's time!

From birth to death, time plays a critical role in our lives. For some, time is a hated taskmaster; for others, a flexible friend. Sometimes, the phrase "it's time" heralds a longed-for event. But there are times when "it's time" carries an ominous ring, forcing us into a dreaded situation.

Koheleth tells us that "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven" (Eccl 3:1). When we feel that life is not unfolding to our satisfaction, that God is not acting quickly enough in ways that meet our expectations, it's good to remember that there *are* times for the events in life, and there is *time* for them as well.

Throughout the Old Testament the people of God had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. They waited—sometimes patiently, sometimes impatiently—for the time when the Messiah would arrive. And then, one day, it happened. "The time came for Mary to deliver her child" (v. 6).

The people of God had waited with eager longing for the Messiah to come. Mary and Joseph had, no doubt, anticipated the arrival of this infant whose conception had turned their lives upside down.

But when the time came, was anyone really ready? Was Mary prepared to give birth in a stable while visiting in a strange town? Or had she hoped to be back home before the big day arrived? And Joseph: Had he anticipated this particular development and made plans to cope with it? Did he have an alternate plan that included birth in a stable? Were the parents of the infant Jesus really *ready* when he came upon the scene?

How well prepared were the shepherds to whom the angels announced the good news of great joy? Had they been among those who hoped and prayed for the coming of this special One who would bring hope and healing to the nations? The text suggests that the angels' news caught them off guard. They were terrified, fulled with excitement and wonder, and totally unprepared to be the recipients of such a wonderful message from God.

Advent is over, the time has come to welcome our infant king. Are we ready? Do we ask our Lord to wait until tomorrow, or next week, or next year? Have we feared the disruptions he will make in our lives and hoped that he would wait until a more convenient time? Have we thought that he would come only to others but not really to us? We have anticipated his coming, but has it been with eagerness or dread?

Our Lord comes, in God's time, whether we are ready or not. The time is here. Let us welcome him! BMW

First Sunday after Christmas December 29, 1991

Psalm 111
Jeremiah 31:10-13
Hebrews 2:10-18
Luke 2:41-52

FIRST READING

Much of Hebrews seems devoted to shouting the superiority of Jesus over angels, over Moses, over Joshua, over the priests. But here the author takes pains to trace the closest possible connection between human beings in general and the one human being Jesus. He and they are joined in a shared experience of humanity and vulnerability. He was not immune. He did not float above the human condition. Jesus and humankind are bound in a single bundle.

Unique he is, but he was "not ashamed" to stand in solidarity with all God's sons and daughters and to call them "my sisters, my brothers" (Ps 22:22).

He gladly took upon himself flesh and blood, not simply to share the human condition but to change it. His work was to be born in flesh, subject to death, in order to do combat with the prince of death. He came to alter the conditions of life and death, so that we might stop fearing death and get on with living our lives as people on

a pilgrimage toward the presence of the living God.

The twelve-year-old Jesus in Luke's Gospel (Luke 2) does not do stunts or perform dinky miracles as in the apocryphal Gospels of the infancy (killing careless playmates and then restoring them, fashioning mudpie birds and then making them fly).

In Luke's Gospel Jesus does do something astonishing. He breaks away from Joseph and Mary. He breaks out of the comfortable ranks of relatives and friends heading toward Nazareth. He is restless in the old company and the old routines, because he is conscious that he "must" move in other company and that he has another home, not in Nazareth. He "must" be in his Father's house.

The carol "What Child Is This?" leads to the questions, "Whose Children Are We?" and "Where Is Our Home?" What shape will our lives take, when we move as pilgrims heading toward the sanctuary of the mystery of God's love? RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In this episode, reported only by Luke, we find an event from Jesus' childhood, an example of the ways in which he was growing in strength and wisdom and in divine (v. 40) and human favor (v. 52).

Early in the story we discover that Jesus is missing. Missing children are probably not unique in history, but they are a growing concern in our society, one that has been receiving a lot of attention in recent years.

Most parents will be able to identify with Mary and Joseph in this story. They have all probably lost children temporarily in grocery stores, shopping malls, or around the neighborhood. Some may have had their children kidnapped or run away. And there will be a few who have lost children to death through accident or disease. It may be helpful to explore with these parents their feelings when they first discover their child gone. What fears and anxieties do they experience? Do they feel embarrassed or guilty? Are they to blame for their child's disappearance? Are Mary and Joseph to blame for assuming that Jesus was okay and not checking on him sooner? Or does Jesus have to accept responsibility for not checking in with his parents and letting them know where he would be?

Twelve-year-olds often get caught up in their activities and lose track of time. This is a good reminder of Jesus' humanity. Even though he was precocious and wise beyond his years, he still grew and developed as a normal child.

It also rouses interest that it took Mary and Joseph three days to find Jesus. Where did they look? Why didn't they check out the temple first? Where would we begin to look for a lost child? We can imagine their growing anxiety as the days passed and Jesus was not found.

But he is finally found, safely discussing the Torah with the rabbis in the temple. Already we see hints of Jesus' own later ministry and calling when he himself will be a rabbi. We also find the beginning of the separation from his family that must eventually come. Jesus has to be in his "Father's house." His Father's house is God's temple in Jerusalem, not Joseph's carpenter shop in Nazareth. And this is the last appearance that Joseph makes.

The ties with his earthly family will be loosened more as Jesus grows older and begins to fulfill his mission. It will become clear that just as God is his true Father, so his mother and siblings are "those who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk 8:21). Jesus releases the ties to his birth family so that he may be free to encompass the whole of humanity in God's love; so he may take his proper place in God's family.

Mary and Joseph seem to accept Jesus' explanation, even as they are puzzled by his behavior. These earthly parents who had been in on his identity from the beginning, who knew the song of angels, the adoration of shepherds and sages, and the threats of Herod, still fail to understand. This misunderstanding of his parents seems to set the standard for others who would follow. Even his disciples and closest friends would fail to understand him, as we often do as well. Yet even these things Mary remembered and treasured in her heart. BMW

Second Sunday after Christmas
January 5, 1992

Psalm 147:12-20
Isaiah 61:10–62:3
Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18
John 1:1-18

FIRST READING

Mark begins his narrative of salvation at the Jordan River with the ministry of John the Baptist, when Jesus was about 30 years old. He calls that "the beginning of the gospel." Matthew and Luke run farther back, to Jesus' birth and even some months earlier to words of promise spoken to Joseph (Matthew) and to Mary (Luke).

John thinks farther back. Jesus is the Word of God, and "in the beginning," before worlds came to be, in the deep silence before God spoke, the Word already was.

Matthew invites us to contemplate Joseph's quick obedience to divine commands, and Luke draws attention to Mary's trust. John leaves all that aside and holds before our eyes the Word, God's eternal self-expression.

The Word is the ever-existing energy and wisdom of God that "reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other and orders all things well" (Wisdom 8:1).

Matthew writes that Herod set out to kill Jesus and slaughtered the innocents. In Luke, Simeon warned Mary that a sword would pierce her soul. John sees all the opposition to Jesus as the world's perennial flirtation with darkness. The Word brims with life and light but is opposed mightily from one end of the earth to the other, as peoples and nations attempt to order their lives as they see fit without reference to God.

Magi from the east brought gifts (Matthew), and shepherds left their flocks to see what angel choruses were all worked up about (Luke). And John promises that all who trust this erupting, descending, incarnate Word will burst out of the womb of the world and be born anew as God's children.

Christmas according to John is the matchless eruption of God's Word in the midst of human life. "What Child Is This?" God's Word! The Word has leaped down from the heavenly throne at midnight when the world was still and has become flesh.

The Word, full of gracious truth, is awesome and unique exegete of God (1:18). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In Christian baptism we are "reborn children of the heavenly Father." In a sense, our baptism is a form of adoption. How different was Jesus' baptism! Jesus' baptism was a moment of confirmation rather than adoption. The voice from heaven announced: "You are my Son, the Beloved."

John the Baptist's activities in the wilderness had filled people with hope and expectation. Was John the Messiah? No. John was adamant. The Messiah was coming, though, "the one who is more powerful than I."

Then Jesus appeared on the scene, was baptized, and received the confirmation of his status by the descent of the Holy Spirit (in the bodily form of a dove) and by the proclamation of the heavenly voice.

It might be helpful to ask ourselves about the meaning of baptism for ourselves and for Jesus. It is perhaps too bad that the sacrament of Holy Baptism no longer retains the act of confirmation. Nevertheless, there are parallels that can be drawn.

Jesus' baptism was Jesus' first public act; it announced his identity and was the catalyst for his ministry. From that moment his life was openly dedicated to the work of God. The wilderness temptations, the prayers, sermons, and acts of compassion that characterized Jesus' ministry all flowed from this moment of humble action and divine blessing.

In our own baptisms we were acknowledged as God's children, "born of water and the Spirit." In infant baptism it is not quite clear that the work of the Holy Spirit has begun in the child. Yet we know that it has. As parents accept responsibility for their promises to "teach [their children] the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments," and as they grow older to "place in their

hands the Holy Scriptures and provide for their instruction in the Christian faith," we see the blossoming of faith that was begun by the Spirit.

The moment of baptism marks a moment of grace that begins a child's journey with God. As we each walk the way of Jesus, the Messiah, we will have many other moments of grace: moments of prayer; moments of learning, inspiration, and healing; moments when the touch of the Holy Spirit will guide us through the joys and sorrows of life.

The voice from heaven proclaimed Jesus "the Beloved." We, too, who "have been marked with the cross of Christ forever" have been made beloved children of God through baptism. BMW

The Baptism of Our Lord January 12, 1992

Psalm 45:7-9
Isaiah 42:1-7
Acts 10:34-38
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

FIRST READING

Jesus' baptism counts as the first of several "pentecosts" reported in Luke-Acts. God in the time of Jesus and in following generations looks with favor upon a person or community, delights in them, and calls them by name.

For Luke, Jesus is obviously unique. He is the Offspring of God in an altogether singular fashion, performs unique work as the "Savior who is Christ the Lord" (2:11), and alone sits at God's right hand.

And yet in centrally significant ways Jesus is pattern for many other agents of God, or he is the first of many miracles of God. Cut on the same pattern as the baptism of Jesus is the call and baptism of the Jerusalem community (Pentecost, Acts 2), the baptism and empowering of the Samaritans (Acts 8), the conversion and equipping of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10-11, epistle today).

Here are key elements in Luke's "Pentecost Pattern": God's pleasure lights on certain people, who may be insignificant or even obnoxious to current insiders and power brokers. God stirs them by the Good News so that they respond in trust and prayer. And while they stand entranced in faith and enraptured in prayer, the skies crack wide open, and God's Spirit comes flowing down into their lives. And they get caught up into the onward flow of the work of God in the world, crossing boundaries, reaching out to embrace and love.

The floodgates of heaven opened over Jesus' head at his baptism, and the world has not been the same ever since. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Without the Word there is no life. The Word was in the beginning when God created light and all that is. The darkness of primordial nothingness was overcome by the light of creation. It is the Word that brings all things into being, and from the Word comes vitality, energy, and light.

In her novel *A Wind in the Door*, Madeleine L'Engle stresses the importance of naming. Those that aren't named cease to be. The numbers of the stars are not known, but each one's name *is* known in this story. We must be named to *be*.

In today's text John names Jesus. Jesus is the Word, the One that has been from the beginning, the Source of all that is: God. The naming of Jesus overcomes darkness, for he is the Light that is not swallowed up by darkness, the Light that overcomes darkness.

Since the Word was from the beginning, it was not part of the created order. When the Word entered creation it was necessary to have someone to identify and name the Word because the world did not know, nor did it recognize, the One who had made it. So there was a man sent from God whose name was John. John the Baptist, named by God, was sent to name God. He came as a witness to testify that he was not the Messiah and to point out the One who was. And all who received the Messiah became children of God.

Naming and name-dropping are not the same. Those who are children of God are not born of human will. They do not have to rely on human

ancestry and human systems of naming. They are known by God. They are made God's children by the will of God—born of water and the Spirit (Jn 3:5).

Before the appearance of the Word, God's children relied on name-dropping. It was through their ancestry as descendants of Abraham and Sarah and on their adherence to the Torah given by Moses that they came into the family of God and were recognized as God's children. Being named God's child depended on an "accident of birth" and a rigidity of practice. Human choice and decision-making restricted one's eligibility to be named "God's child."

But in Jesus, God's Word made flesh, the door is open to all. As foretold by Isaiah, in Christ God says, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isa 43:1b). The promise made to Israel, and through Israel to all people, is the promise of grace and hope; the promise of life that overcomes death; the promise of light that overcomes darkness.

The Word has been named. Through the Word, we are named. For the Word has become flesh to dwell among us, to make known the grace and mercy and identity of God. BMW

Second Sunday after the Epiphany
January 19, 1992

Psalm 36:5-10
Isaiah 62:1-5
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

FIRST READING

Each of our Gospels features a narrative about Jesus in which he for the first time launches out onto his public ministry. It differs in each Gospel, and in each Gospel the selection seems just right.

In Mark Jesus performs an exorcism in a synagogue (Mk 1:21-28, Jesus as the World's Exorcist). In Matthew Jesus sits on a mountain and utters the first of his five great sermons (Mt 5-7, Jesus as Teacher of Righteousness). In Luke Jesus enters the synagogue at Nazareth and interprets Isaiah (the Gospel for the next two Sundays: Jesus as Lord of a Peaceable Kingdom).

John begins his narration of the public work of Jesus by reporting what we call "the wedding at Cana." What makes this "first of his signs" so apt is not just that it is performed at a wedding (and that is, of course, important) or that the stone jars were "for the Jewish rites of purification" (and that should not be overlooked) but that it is an act of transformation.

It is unlike any miracle in the synoptic Gospels. It is not a matter of taking bread and fish and making more bread and fish, although that is so stunning and important that the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle told in all four Gospels. Jesus takes water and makes wine, and this new wine is better than good, aged wine.

Before he recites any other deed or word of Jesus, John summons us to meditate on this: unique, revolutionary, transforming power is breaking forth in human history in the person of Jesus. Jesus is Destroyer and Creator of Worlds. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The wedding at Cana of Galilee is an intriguing story. It invites us to ponder. Why was Jesus' first miracle such a seemingly insignificant one? Why does he make exceptional wine for a roomful of inebriated guests who really do not need any more to drink and probably will not appreciate the taste anyway?

This story can be viewed as the opening maneuver in the negotiations that will culminate in the new covenant between God and humanity. We see a foretaste of the covenant in Jesus' blood in the 120-180 gallons of wine, a most generous outpouring of grace. Jesus never does anything in half measures!

The interaction of the players in this story also arouse my curiosity. Mary is the instigator of this miracle. She ignores Jesus' obvious reluctance to have anything to do with the situation at hand. Even when he attempts to distance himself

by calling her "woman" instead of "mother," she continues to force his hand. Like most mothers with loving sons, Mary feels confident of her son's cooperation, however reluctantly given.

It is interesting to speculate on Mary's reasons for pushing Jesus into this action. Is it really only because she wanted to help a neighbor? Surely there were less spectacular ways to do that. We might guess that, like mothers throughout the ages, Mary had decided it was time for her son to make his move—to leave the nest. Another mother who comes to mind is Rebekah and her manipulation of Jacob and Esau.

It is also curious that the only ones aware of this miraculous event besides Jesus, Mary, and the disciples are the servants, the *διάκονοι*. Without their cooperation, the miracle would not have been accomplished. And they, the least, were privileged to participate in the miracle and to know about it. The drunken guests, the bridegroom, and the head steward—those who were invited to the wedding and who were in positions of power—were completely in the dark.

And so the wedding dance begins, the joy and feasting that will be part of the celebration of the wedding, the new covenant with God in Christ. BMW

Third Sunday after the Epiphany
January 26, 1992

Psalm 113
Isaiah 61:1-6
1 Corinthians 12:12-21, 26-27
Luke 4:14-21

FIRST READING

The lectionary breaks the Gospel in two, assigning half to this Sunday and the remainder to next week. The transition between verses 21 and 22 is so rough and the suggestions for bridging it so diverse that it may be just as well. It would certainly be hard for a congregation to hear the lesson in one sitting and make sense of it. But preachers will want to work through the whole before speaking on either half.

For Luke, this is Jesus' first public action. By setting this event here at the outset, Luke gives the scene a position of unparalleled prominence. It gives readers of Luke-Acts their first impression of Jesus and his program, and first impressions are especially powerful, forming and focusing the sensors and expectations of readers.

The words of Jesus reported here have long been called his "programmatic statement" or his "keynote speech." That is certainly accurate, but the scene involves more than speech or sermon.

In 4:16-30 we have all of the following elements: a chosen agent of God, anointed with the Spirit, speaking good news, allusion to miracles of healing, an audience divided in its response, harsh opposition seeking to silence the word by means of execution, a miraculous escape, and the very strong suggestion that rejection in this place and by these people will lead to the grace of God being shared with those whom they regard as outsiders.

In many ways those elements, all of them present in this one pericope, are the basic building blocks of the whole Gospel of Luke. And those same elements seem to form the skeleton on which Luke hangs his stories of the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 1-5), the Seven (Acts 6-8), Peter in his work outside of Jerusalem (Acts 9-12), and the narratives of Paul (Acts 13-28).

When God's grace broke out in Jesus, fulfilling ancient promise, it arrived with power to heal bodies and spirits. Its energy astonished beholders and inevitably offended many, because the grace of God refuses to flow gently and reliably within channels of our own construction.

In this season of Epiphany, images of light from the Gospel of John come to mind: "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never overpowered it" but not from lack of trying. Luke is saying the same thing in his image of Jesus, roughly handled and marched out to the brow of the hill on which the town was built. There the crowd would throw him down and kill him, "but passing through the midst of them he went away."

That scene foreshadows death and resurrection, oppression and narrow escape, which are the

constant companions of the church, as long as the church is being church: agent of God anointed to heal, to free, to absolve, to bring good news to the poor. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus has just successfully finished his wilderness testing. Luke tells us that Jesus returned to Galilee ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος, "in the power of the Spirit." The NRSV translates this as "filled with the power," but I prefer "in the power of the Spirit." I see Jesus walking the roads of Galilee totally immersed in the Holy Spirit. His whole being is permeated. There is a new vitality, an air of excitement, a glow.

"A report about him spread through all the surrounding country." Apparently, things were already beginning to happen. Jesus must already have begun healing and teaching, reaching out to those in need (v. 23), exuding a new and refreshing sense of right-ness and power.

What grasps me most about this text is the sense of breathless anticipation that follows Jesus' reading of the Isaiah text. It is a specific text that he has apparently searched for (v. 17), and his reading of it follows a report about him that has surely reached his hometown.

The people of Nazareth have watched Jesus grow up. Many of them would have known him when he got lost in Jerusalem at age twelve, and perhaps been present at his barmitzvah. He had been gone for a while, and strange tales had preceded him home. People are curious about what had happened to him while he was gone. To top it all off, Jesus has just read a prophecy from Isaiah, a prophecy concerning the advent of the Messiah, a prophecy that has never before been read in quite the same way: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me..." (Lk 4:18).

I can see every eye in the synagogue glued to Jesus as he slowly, calmly rolls the scroll. The silence is profound. And into this deep and expectant silence, Jesus speaks: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21).

How did the people hear these words? It is perhaps like hearing "Dad has died"; "You have just won $1,000,000." It takes time for the full implications to sink in. The shock is so great that it is impossible even to make a value judgment about the words just spoken and heard.

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." How will the people of Nazareth respond? How will we respond? BMW

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 2, 1992

Psalm 71:1-6, 15-17
Jeremiah 1:4-10
1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13
Luke 4:21-32

FIRST READING

See last Sunday.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

We greet this text with a sense of expectancy, of suspended animation. In last week's text Jesus announced his identity. Now the conductor stands poised, with raised baton; the orchestra waits with bated breath for the downbeat, for the moment of response.

The initial response to Jesus' announcement is positive, "all spoke well of him" (v. 22). Perhaps they thought that because Jesus was one of them, "Joseph's son," they would reap some special benefit from their association with him. Jesus was their very own messiah, a local boy who had made it big. Surely they would get something out of the relationship. If nothing else they could turn the old carpenter shop into a bed & breakfast or charge for tours at Jesus' home and the synagogue where he had been taught as a boy.

But Jesus is not just a hometown boy who gives special treatment to those who claim him

for their own. Jesus doesn't fall into the trap they have set for him, the one that expects him to take care of his own first or that wants him to prove he really is all he says he is. Prophets, like other great people, are never accepted in their home towns. They will either be exploited or resented. If they do not allow themselves to be exploited, they will certainly be resented.

But there is more to this story than just Jesus' refusal to be manipulated and used. Already, the signs are present that point to Jesus' universal claim on all people. He does not belong to the people of Nazareth. He is sent by God, and his loyalty is to God. And just as God chose to send relief to a Gentile woman in Sidon during the days of Elijah, and healing to a Gentile leper in Syria during the time of Elisha, so God will not be manipulated by or confined to a particular people or place. The people of Nazareth could not claim Jesus as their exclusive property. Instead, Jesus claims all people in all places, and in all times.

Today's text reminds us that we cannot make Jesus our personal talisman any more than the people of Nazareth could. When we try to do so, we will be confused and angry when he refuses to be manipulated and slips away from our grasp. To know Jesus as Messiah is to be claimed and transformed by him. BMW

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Learning which Leads to Mission

Roger W. Fjeld
President, Wartburg Theological Seminary

ELCA seminary presidents recently shared with each other the things that are receiving priority attention at our respective schools. We were struck by the fact that, almost without exception, our seminaries are engaged in curricular review or revision, and in each case the goal is a curriculum which is more mission-oriented.

Some people think curricular revision is a chronic and not very fruitful seminary activity. Woodrow Wilson, when he was president of Princeton, complained that "trying to change a curriculum is like trying to move a graveyard!" Course names change and requirements are juggled, but there is little real change—so goes the argument.

That could be the fate of these current efforts, too, but there is something different and encouraging about what is being attempted. The starting place is a conviction that the church needs to become more effective in mission and that its seminaries can either enable or frustrate that goal. We shape the future mission of the church through the framework we use and the content we offer to leaders-in-training.

And it is precisely the question of framework or paradigm which prompts this latest round of attention to curriculum. We are increasingly concerned about the way a "Christendom mentality" persists in a church and world where Christendom is no longer the organizing principle. The tendency is still to think as though Christian belief and church life were dominant, as though the world were Christian and the church supplies the values and direction for society.

That sort of thinking was already questionable centuries ago; today it is positively wrong. Ours is a world of many religions and no religion, of competing values and clashing cultures. The church needs to understand its role as leaven and witness, not organizer of society.

A key example is the difficulty we have thinking about witness. Most of us are products of the life-long nurture of the church. We've grown up inside the institution we now serve and tend to take faith and church membership as normative reality. When we are challenged to give witness and invite, our tendency is to treat the other as a Christian looking for a church, rather than as an inquirer seeking Christ. Our witness can be shallow and "churchy." Sometimes it is downright self-serving, motivated by the desire for more members rather than a desire to share the gift of life with those who are outside the faith.

That is not to suggest that witness and nurture should be pitted against each other. Witness at its best cares for and nurtures the whole person. Nurture at its best is a powerful witness. But if a church knows only

how to nurture, it fails to be all that the church was intended to be. Nurture, when it is the sole focus of ministry, can deteriorate into a maintenance mentality.

Our Lutheran heritage is a nurturing heritage. The Lutheran reformers addressed a society in which all, or nearly all, were baptized members of the church. Theirs was the task of renewal—of recovering the gospel in a church that was deeply in error, both in doctrine and in church life. They did not directly teach us how to understand and reach out to a non-Christian world, because they did not have to deal with such a world. Our task is to take that rich Reformation heritage and address it to a radically different set of circumstances.

Wartburg's shorthand for that task is the new motto, "Where Learning Leads to Mission." By it, we mean that we intend to shape a curriculum and life together which is more intentionally devoted to preparing leaders for the mission of the church. A motto does not make that happen. Nor does the introduction of new courses. Something more substantial is needed. It will take reconceptualizing of both the goals and the content of theological education. It will take changes in the way faculty think and teach. It will take time. But the issues are important enough to be worth the energy. One harbinger is the heartening fact that faculty, far from resisting this change, are the ones who most clearly see the issues and press for the change.

I have described this task in terms familiar to Wartburg, partly because this is a "Wartburg issue" of *Currents* and partly because this is the situation I know best. But I believe all of the seminaries of the ELCA are in similar trajectories, with similar deep concern about greater effectiveness in mission. At a time when we could be engrossed simply in surviving while the ELCA financial crisis continues, we are seeking to serve a church which wants to be in mission. It is an exciting and challenging time to be engaged in theological education; an exciting and challenging time to be the church in mission!

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