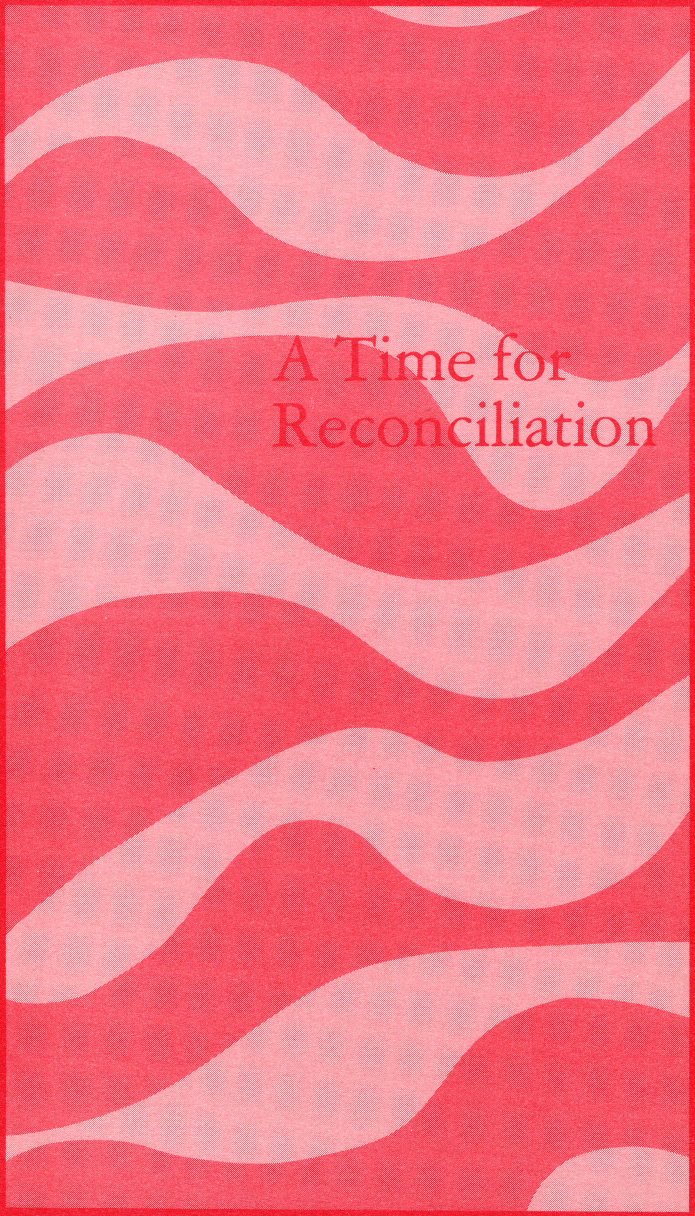
December 1989 Volume 16 Number 6



CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

in cooperation with
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

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

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

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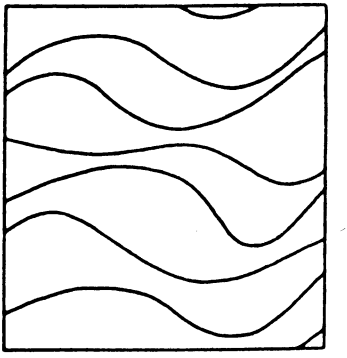
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A Time for Reconciliation

The Russian words *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* have their own meanings for the people of the Soviet Union. For the West they have signalled a most welcome change, a thaw in the Cold War, and reason for hope. This time of reconciliation between the Super Powers echoes another momentous change that transpired two millennia ago, when God's great "openness" and "restructuring" of the world led to an incarnation, a crucifixion, and a resurrection for us people, and for our salvation. Because of that Reconciliation, all our little reconciliations are possible and full of promise.

Ted Peters notes the recent reconciliation between faith and science in their common pursuit of the one truth. Some even detect a correspondence between what can be said scientifically about the cosmos and what theologians understand to be God's creation. The Big Bang theory of cosmic origins has this in common with the doctrine of creation: both know that it all had a finite beginning; science cannot penetrate behind the Big Bang. Others discover consonance between the epigenetic character of nature—living beings develop out of inert matter—and a notion like continuous creation. While there are still blind alleys aplenty, and while this is no time for naive optimism, astute listeners to conversations between scientists and theologians know that such cross-disciplinary dialogue is worth the energy.

Frederick C. Holmgren explores the options when life is so horrifying that one cannot tolerate another death or another act of torture. Sometimes, as a last resort, violence is the only human choice. He considers the story of Moses killing the Egyptian, a story too controversial for those who devised our three year lectionary and who, therefore, passed it by. According to the context in the book of Exodus, God chose Moses, who had risked his own life to save the life of one who was about to be killed. A complete pacifism that allows an oppressor to violate and kill creates its own terror.

Willard Pierce investigates the political implications of Luther's theology. The Reformer believed that God's righteousness calls justified sinners to be Christ to their neighbors within a political context. Faith is never separated from one's calling to bear the cross in a world which is still subject to alienation. By taking Christ as an example of political service, Luther highlighted the themes of equity and social compassion. The gospel alone frees public servants from the restricting dictates of self-interest and opens to them the possibility of self-emptying.

Craig M. Watts observes that many church members want controversial issues passed over in silence, and many pastors, with a warm relationship to the people, find it very difficult to be honest in their preaching. Yet, pastors need to remind the church to be itself, a people shaped by the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord. When the church responds to such ministry, it lives as both a judgment on the world and a statement of hope for it.

Susan K. Hedahl asks why evangelism preaching is so lacking among Lutherans. Her thorough investigation of the generation of preachers from 1893 to 1922 found that Lutheran sermons were often addressed to the head, toward matters of edification, doctrine, and sanctification. Preaching was a liturgical form for insiders. She calls for a focus on the crucified Christ, but also advocates the use of different aspects of communication: the mystical, the emotive, the experiential, and the eschatological. By making evangelism a central sermonic aim, we may discover a neglected part of doing ministry in a global context.

Finally, we present three brief gifts for the Advent-Christmas season: **Steven E. Liechti** urges us not to flee the darkness in Advent, so that when it is deepest we may be enlightened by the angels' news; **Paul Bauermeister** tells a sermonic story of how a "barn star" in Iowa made Christmas for him; **Carolyn Lorenz Utech** offers a Christmas prayer.

"All things were lying in peace and silence, and night in her swift course was half spent, when your all-powerful word leapt from your royal throne in heaven...." Christians have used this quotation from the Wisdom of Solomon (18:14-15) as a liturgical response to the incarnation (Introit for the First Sunday after Christmas). Few, perhaps, would know what to do with that passage's biblical continuation: "...into the midst of that doomed land like a relentless warrior." Frederick Holmgren is right: in some extreme situations only violence will do. Nevertheless, this passage from the Wisdom of Solomon, that once was merely a description of the violence of the Exodus, became over the centuries a picturesque and moving portrayal of the word becoming flesh for the world's reconciliation.

Talk about light in deepest darkness. In our era, and, yes, in this year, God's time for reconciliation has fully come.

Again.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Science and Religion: Toward a New Consonance

Ted Peters
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Is the time right for seeking reconciliation between faith and science? It appears that we are experiencing a lull in the fighting between the forces of the secular culture and those of the church. The modern world's scientific artillery has for a number of centuries been laying siege to the ancient citadel of religious truth. This has engendered fear on the part of the faithful, and on occasion has precipitated defensive reactions. But right now the dove of peace seems to be flying back and forth between both camps, quieting the hostilities and inspiring a mood of negotiation.

This is certainly the impression we get from the Second Vatican Council and the Holy See. In its "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," Vatican II reiterated the traditional distinction between faith and reason and, on this basis, granted autonomy and liberty to the pursuit of truth through scientific reason.[1] This amounts to a church declaration of independence on behalf of the natural sciences, a recognition of their intellectual autonomy.

The Pope and the Protestants on science

Pope John Paul II has gone even further. In a speech delivered at the Cologne Cathedral on November 15, 1980, the Holy Father said it is the responsibility of the church to take up the defense of scientific work. This is a dramatic commitment. In our own time, when ecological consciousness and fear of the bomb are causing our culture to challenge the validity and value of its own scientific establishment, we find this Christian leader advocating religious support for the pursuit of secular research.

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[1]*Gaudium et Spes*: 59.

And the pontiff even goes beyond the recognition and support of scientific autonomy. He advocates reconciliation with theology. He seeks a confluence of natural revelation and special revelation. In the above-mentioned speech we find him proposing a rapprochement and saying,

> The pursuit of a new humanism on which the future of the third millennium can be based, will be successful only on condition that scientific knowledge again enters upon a living relationship with the truth revealed to us as God's gift. Human reason is a grand instrument for knowledge and structuring the world. It needs, however, in order to realize the whole wealth of human possibilities, to open to the Word of eternal Truth which became human in Christ.

In a speech to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the publication of Newton's *Principiae* on September 26, 1987, John Paul II told a panel of physicists and theologians in the company of the College of Cardinals:

> Reality is *one* and the truth is one; and we claim that there is an intrinsic call for unity of knowledge whether it comes from experimental science or from theology.[2]

What we have here is an open invitation to dialogue between the disciplines, to pursue a single vision of the world which draws resources from the natural sciences as well as the theological tradition.

Protestant and ecumenical Christians are ready for dialogue as well. Institutes for the purpose of bringing scientists into conversation with theologians have been established in the U. S. and elsewhere. Princeton University has a center. The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago has set up the Chicago Center for Religion and Science. At the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences pursues ongoing research regarding the potential integration of the disciplines. The Presbyterians have a task force to deal with it. The former LCA and the Lutheran World Federation sponsored a major international conference on "The New Scientific-Technological World: What Difference Does it Make for the Churches?" in Cypress in November, 1987.[3]

The readiness to explore reconciliation is by no means limited to churches, however. There is also a new openness among many scientists, especially among physicists. Freeman Dyson at Princeton is reconsidering the design argument for the existence of God—or at least a world mind—based upon the anthropic principle.[4] In his book, *God and the New Physics*, British researcher Paul Davies says that "science has

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[2]Although John Paul II believes in a unity of truth, he upholds the independence of science and theology as separate disciplines. He believes cross-disciplinary dialogue will actually clarify the integrity of each. He writes, "only a dynamic relationship between theology and science can reveal those limits which support the integrity of either discipline, so that theology does not profess a pseudo-science and science does not become an unconscious theology. Our knowledge of each other can lead us to be more authentically ourselves." See the "Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II" in *Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, edited by Robert John Russell, William R. Stoeger, S. J., and George V. Coyne, S. J. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

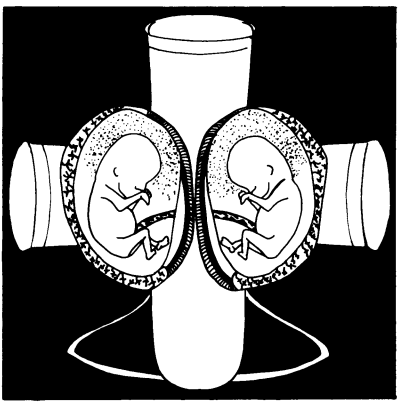
[3]The proceedings have been published as *The New Faith-Science Debate*, edited by John M. Mangum (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

[4]Freeman Dyson, *Disturbing the Universe* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1979), chapter 23.

actually advanced to the point where what were formerly religious questions can be seriously tackled" by the new physics.[5] Charles Townes, University of California physicist and Nobel Prize winner for his laser research, sits on the board of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Conferences on the theological implications of the new physics are being held and drawing increasing attention. C. F. von Weizsäcker says that science pursues knowledge, that knowledge is power, and that we need morals and religion to teach us how to use such power responsibly. In short, there exists now an atmosphere of readiness on the part of many scientists to think through the religious and theological implications of the knowledge gained from studying the world of nature.

Watch out for the blind alleys!

How best should we proceed? How should we understand the relationship between science and theology if we are to move in the direction of rapprochement? I suggest that we begin by pursuing *hypothetical consonance*.[6] By 'consonance' we are looking for those areas where there is a correspondence between what can be said scientifically about the cosmos and what the theologian understands to be God's creation. 'Consonance' means accord, harmony. Where we find accord or harmony between the disciplines, let us explore them further under the hypothesis that they are speaking about the same reality. This will reflect an important underlying assumption, namely, there is one God and one world so that, in the long run, science and theology are attempting to understand one and the same reality.



Not everyone would agree with this assumption. Consequently, there are numerous alternative proposals for understanding the relationship between science and theology. But, in my opinion, hypothetical consonance is the best road to follow because the alternative routes lead into blind alleys. Let me mention some of the more popular blind alleys.

The first blind alley is *scientism*, sometimes called 'naturalism' or 'secular humanism.' According to scientism, science provides all the knowledge we need to know. There is but one reality, the finite reality of nature, and the natural sciences provide the only methods for giving us the truth. Religion does not provide us with knowledge of reality. It provides us only with pseudo-knowledge, that is, false knowledge about non-existent fictions. Earlier this century, British philosopher and atheist Bertrand Russell told a BBC audience that "what

[5]Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Touchstone, 1983), ix.

[6]The following argument becomes the theme for the book, *Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance*, edited by Ted Peters (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989).

In the long run, science and theology are attempting to understand one and the same reality.

science cannot tell us, [hu]mankind cannot know." In short, the scientist allegedly gives us truth and the theologian gives us delusions. Precisely because it denies any validity to religious experience or insight, scientism is a blind alley; it assumes the impossibility of rapprochement between science and religion.

The second blind alley is ecclesiastical *authoritarianism.* This is the theological position of assuming that if there is a conflict between faith and reason, then reason must be wrong. It assumes that special revelation constitutes the highest truth and should therefore exercise authority in evaluating and arranging the discoveries of natural reason and science. The *Syllabus of Errors,* promulgated by Pope Pius IX in 1864, sought to make a strong defense against the encroachments of the modern world. Error number 57 in the list read this way: "It is an error to believe science and philosophy should withdraw from ecclesiastical authority." The assumption here is that scientific knowledge and religious knowledge share the same domain, so that in the event there is a contradiction one must be right and the other wrong. The further assumption is that the church knows what is right and has the right to direct the course the sciences take. The problem with ecclesiastical authoritarianism, of course, is that science cannot function unless it functions freely. It requires academic autonomy if it is to advance. This independence is just what Pope Pius IX denied and what Vatican II affirmed. Without academic freedom we cannot have genuine science, and without genuine science rapprochement is a sham.

The third blind alley is *scientific creationism.* Today's creation scientists are the heirs of yesterday's fundamentalists. Both take a strong stand for the literal truth of the Bible. There is a marked difference, however. Whereas the fundamentalists of the 1920s stood on the authority of the Bible, today's creation scientists are willing to argue their case in the arena of science. They assume that biblical truth and scientific truth are of the same sort; they belong to the same domain. When there is a conflict between a scientific assertion and a religious assertion, then we allegedly have a conflict in scientific theories. The creationists argue that the book of Genesis is itself a theory which tells us how the world was physically created: God fixed the distinct kinds (species) of organisms at the point of original creation. They did not evolve. Geological and biological facts attest to biblical truth, they argue. The problem with this is that scientific creationism fails to recognize the historical distance which separates the mind-set of the ancient world from that of the modern world, the worldview of biblical times from that of scientific times. The original symbols of the Christian faith first arose in a time when language was dominated by myth, symbol, and nuance, and pointed to transcendent mysteries. The language of modern science strives for univocity, mathematical precision, and the elimination of mystery. Things have changed so that we need hermeneuti-

cal principles to move from the Bible to the modern world. Scientific creationists fail to recognize the full width of the gulf which separates antiquity from modernity and the length of the bridge we need to build.

The fourth blind alley might appear to be the right way to go, because it is advocated by highly respected scientists and theologians; but, nevertheless, it leads to a dead end as well. It is the *two-language theory*. Recognizing the point I just made against the scientific creationists regarding the ancient language of religion and the modern language of science, many scholars in the twentieth century have argued that scientific theory and religious faith represent two separate and distinct domains of knowing. Albert Einstein, for example, distinguished between the language of fact and the language of value. "Science can only ascertain what *is*, but not what *should be*," he once told an audience at Princeton; "religion, on the other hand, deals only with evaluations of human thought and action." Note the use of "only" here. Each language is *restricted* to its respective domain.

Perhaps the most articulate contemporary advocate of the two-language theory is Langdon Gilkey. When he testified against the scientific creationists at Little Rock in 1981, it was the two-languages argument which convinced Judge Overton to rule Arkansas Public Act 590 to be unconstitutional. The Arkansas law had decreed that evolution and creation were both scientific theories and, therefore, both should be studied in the public schools. But, argued Gilkey on the stand and in his book, *Creationism on Trial: God and Evolution at Little Rock*,[7] evolution speaks the language of science while creation speaks the language of religion; and one does not translate into the other. Science deals only with objective or public knowing of *proximate* origins, whereas religion deals with existential or personal knowing of *ultimate* origins. Science asks "*how?*", while religion asks "*why?*" What Gilkey wants, of course, is for one person to be able to embrace both Christian faith and scientific method without conflict. To do so is to be bilingual, so to speak.

The problem with the two-language theory is that it prevents any rapprochement from the outset. It separates by definition. It assumes there is no connection whatsoever between what Christians believe about God's act of creating and the observable creation which is the result. It assumes that there is no connection between the ultimate question: "why did God create?" and the proximate question: "how did God create?" In actual parlance, however, one cannot even say *that* God creates without also saying something about *how* God creates. The two cannot but overlap. The lines between ultimate and proximate questions and causes are much more blurred than Gilkey assumes.

The two-language theory forbids cross-disciplinary conversation. Even if we should find points of consonance between scientific understanding and theological understanding, it would have to be considered nothing more than a coincidence. We could not explore the possibility that the language of one might serve to illumine the other. We could not develop the assumption that both are speaking about the same reality. Conversation would come to a dead end, even if it did get started. In sum, the two-language theory is a blind alley for those who are hoping for any kind of rapprochement between natural science and Christian theology.

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[7]Langdon Gilkey, *Creationism on Trial: Evolution and God at Little Rock* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).

Hypothetical consonance is the better idea

I like the idea of hypothetical consonance better. It recognizes where we are at the outset: theology sings one song and science another. Nevertheless, it gives us something to listen for. We can listen for those measures where both make sound at the same frequency, where we hear a momentary bar of harmony. Then we can at least ask if this might some day lead to a shared melody. Let me audition with a couple of examples: creation out of nothing and continuous creation.

Big Bang and creation out of nothing

Our first example, the concept of creation out of nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*, has been significant for Christian theology since the time of patristic apologetics. It derives from the experience of the gospel in New Testament times, the experience with Jesus' Easter resurrection and the promise of new creation. The questions were raised: What does it take to raise the dead? What does it take to bring all of nature and history to its consummation in the everlasting kingdom of God? Answer: It takes lordship over the created order. It takes a God who loves but also a God whose power is undisputed and unrivaled. It takes the very same God who brought the cosmos into existence in the first place.

The logic of these commitments meant that there could be no matter or stuff or principles which were as eternal as God. In the middle of the second century, Theolophilus of Antioch praised Plato for acknowledging that God is uncreated. But then he criticized Plato for averring that matter is coeval with God, because this would make matter equal to God. "But the power of God is manifest in this," he wrote, "that out of things that are not he makes whatever he pleases."[8] This reflects apologetically what St. Paul had previously said doxologically: God "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17). What this finally led to was the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in the work of Augustine, the notion of a finite beginning which marks the onset of time and space.

The doctrine of creation out of nothing and the idea of a finite or temporal beginning have fallen on rough times in the modern world. With the doctrines of evolution, process, and progress so prevalent in our scientized culture, many have suggested that Christian theologians should give up on this outmoded idea.

Ah, but with the advent of the Big Bang cosmology among astrophysicists, the idea of a finite beginning has become quite intelligible! Using the analogy of an exploding artillery shell, this theory of our now expanding universe retraces the steps of its past history back to its point of origin, to the original explosion. We are now riding our way out from the initial bang on a piece of cosmic shrapnel. As we look backwards (or bangwards) we return to a point some 15 or 20 billion years ago when the entire universe was completely singular, completely unified. We are talking about the point when time began, we are talking about $t=0$. There is no infinite regress backwards in time that we can speak of. Thus, $t=0$ marks the end of the line for strictly scientific research, because astrophysicists cannot talk about what was going on before there was any time. And it is scientific theory itself which has brought us to the end—that is, to the beginning—of the line.

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[8]Theophilus of Antioch, *Autolycus* II:4.

A few years ago astronomer Robert Jastrow, himself an agnostic, began arguing that "the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world." In his book, *God and the Astronomers*, he described the scientist straining to scale the mountain of ignorance, trying to conquer its highest peak. But as the scientist pulls up to the final rock, there can be seen a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.[9]

By no means should we interpret this as an opportunity for the theologians to say, "See, I told ya so." Rather, we should interpret this to mean that there just may exist sufficient consonance between astrophysical theory and theological commitment for us to ask: Can scientific knowledge of this type illumine what we believe to be God's relation to the world?

Epigenesis and continuing creation

Our second example stands in converse but complementary relation to the first. It is the idea of continuous creation, *creatio continua*. Ours is a time in which we believe change is fundamental to the nature of reality. The concept of evolution over time in both physics and biology means that the world is constantly experiencing the arrival of new things. According to the Big Bang cosmology, we may have begun with a very dense ball of concentrated protohydrogen, but we did not stay that way. Once the bang occurred and we moved from concentrated heat to expanding cooling, new laws of nature came into existence and so did new forms of matter. And the process continues even now, as astronomers watch through telescopes as new stars and new configurations of reality are born.

And once things settled down on the surface of planet earth, they really did not settle down at all. Everything here is in movement. The evolutionary development of living beings out of inert matter, and then the development of new species out of previous species, means that nature is epigenetic, not just genetic. That is, we have more than one genesis. New and unprecedented life forms make their appearance. We are living amidst an ongoing history of creative activity.

We are living amidst an ongoing history of creative activity.

What do these observations have to do with theology? The scientific creationists are threatened, of course; they wish to assert that God fixed every kind of reality and every species of living things at the point of the original bang. But do the creationists really reflect our fundamental Christian commitment? I believe not.

New creation

We need to think about eschatology and providence here. The New Testament promise of new creation is based upon Jesus' resurrection, certainly a new and unprecedented event if ever there was one. God is by no means stuck with the world as it is, but plans on redeeming it and transforming the old creation into a new creation. Jesus Christ is but "the first fruits" of

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[9]Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 116.

Understanding God to be the author of new things is intrinsic to the fundamental symbols of the Christian faith.

what will happen to all of us (1 Cor 15:20). By analogy, one could think of the moment of original creation eschatologically, i.e., to bring a cosmos into existence out of nothing is itself an eschatological act, just as will be its ultimate transformation into the everlasting kingdom of God. What this means, I believe, is that understanding God to be the author of new things is intrinsic to the fundamental symbols of the Christian faith.

The idea of providence applies here as well. By providence we mean that God has not abandoned the ongoing course of events, natural and historical. If we had only a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, believing that God created the world in the beginning and then left it alone just as he had finished it on the seventh day, then we would have the God of deism, not the God of Judaism or Christianity. Believers in the Bible have maintained that God continues to be involved in what happens, bestowing grace, caring and acting and redeeming. The only God we know is a dynamic God, an acting God. There is no ground for thinking that our world is static nor that God's creative work in our world is over and done with.

Perhaps the symbols of eschatology and providence could be illumined by what the natural scientists are saying is going on in our universe. Perhaps it would be helpful to think of God's activity in the world under the banner of *creatio continua*.

Now some have argued that *creatio continua* should replace *creatio ex nihilo* in the theologian's vocabulary. But, I ask, why not utilize both? Both have some consonance with current discussions in the natural sciences, both seem to be sufficiently intelligible to be worth exploring further.

Conclusion

I do not want to engender an atmosphere of naive optimism regarding a science-theology rapprochement. Wide differences—both theoretical and institutional—remain to make the agendas of the various sub-disciplines within each domain strangers to one another. What I do wish to promote is the notion that engaging in cross-disciplinary conversation is worth the energy. To do so we need to work with the assumption that there is but one reality and that all seekers of truth, both scientists and theologians, desire to understand that same reality. With this assumption in mind, we should listen for those notes of consonance; then pause and ask if all the notes are possibly being sung by the same voice.

Violence: God's Will on the Edge Exodus 2:11-25[1]

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The title of this essay has a double meaning—a double edge. At one level, it refers to the fact that violence is not at the center of God's will; God does not, I believe, desire violence. I say this even though there is in religion, including biblical religion, a great deal of violence seemingly initiated or approved by God.[2] At another level, the title, "Violence: God's Will on the Edge" has to do with people who are being threatened with deadly violence. These are victims who are hanging on at the edge of life — the edge of death. In this kind of threatening circumstance, not only is one free to use counter-violence, but it may be the only action that an ethically responsible person may take.

It is against this background that I wish to look at an important text in the Hebrew Bible, Exodus 2:11-25, which tells the story of the Egyptian oppression of the Hebrews and the reactions of Moses and God to this oppressive situation. This passage is absent from the ecumenical lectionary.

The story speaks of Moses' concern for his people: "he looked on their burdens." In vv. 23-25 we find that God felt the pain of Hebrew suffering also. Moses shared the pathos of God! One day he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked about and then "he killed the Egyptian."

When the news of this act slipped out into the community and eventually came to the ears of the pharaoh, Moses had to flee to Midian. In this land we have one more picture of Moses defending victims of violence; he intercedes on behalf of seven women, daughters of Jethro, who were being bullied by some shepherds.

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[1]This article is an abridgement of a paper given at the Conference on the Holocaust held in Evanston, Illinois, in 1985.

[2]See, e.g., Robert North, "Violence and the Bible: The Girard Connection," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985): 1-27.

Moses and the Egyptian

1. Jewish Tradition. In Jewish tradition, Moses' concern for his people is admired even though it meant killing the Egyptian who was beating the Hebrew to death. Thus, for example, the Exodus Rabbah 1:29 declares that Moses killed the Egyptian out of zeal for God and only did so after consulting with angels. With their concurrence he then killed the Egyptian. The attempt to hand this violence over to God betrays the uneasiness of Jewish interpreters in this matter, but even so Moses' violent act is seen to be justified.

2. The New Testament. In Acts 7:23-29, 35, the story of Moses killing the Egyptian appears in the context of the speech of Stephen. In this address there appears no criticism of Moses for killing the Egyptian. The problem is not with Moses; it is with the Jewish rejection of Jesus. Stephen argues that the people who misunderstood the act of Moses and rejected him as deliverer have once again rejected their deliverer, Jesus.

3. The Christian Tradition. Brevard Childs has documented the diversity of Christian interpretation in his commentary on Exodus and in his essay on this text in *Biblical Theology in Crisis*.[2] Those who appear to legitimate the slaying of the Egyptian include Tertullian, Ambrose, Luther, and Calvin. Disapproval of this act is voiced by such people as Augustine, S. R. Driver, and H. Frey.

Childs concludes his important study of Exodus 2:11-25 with a question about the legitimacy of "using physical violence as *a means of social change*" (emphasis mine).[3]

4. A Model Act? To ask, as does Childs, whether this text helps us in deciding whether physical violence may be used "as a means of social change" may not be the correct question to ask. The text gives no indication that Moses was attempting to establish a program of social change by his act. The intervention of Moses may, however, say something—not everything—about violence and justice.

Risk-taking

When people live under oppression, they often survive by courageous risks, cleverness, quick wit, secretiveness, and luck.

There are times, however, when one has no time for clever actions, wise sayings, lies, or bribery. Sometimes, one must act in an instant if one is to be of any help. The emergency is *now*. There is no time to consider social change, no time to consider limited action. It is time for choice between a life and a life. Not an easy choice, but one that must be made, because one will live and one will die. As presented by the author of Exodus 2, this appears to be the dilemma of Moses. If he does not intervene, the Hebrew man will die. Moses did not arrive on the scene after the crime, as did the Good Samaritan; he arrived while the crime was in process.

What options did Moses have as he faced this brutal beating of the Hebrew? Moses had to decide whether the Egyptian or the Hebrew would emerge alive. He chose to rescue the victim.

Although violence or killing should never be encouraged, nevertheless, as a last resort—in the defense of an innocent community or individual—violence may be the only humane choice. In certain situations we have few choices. Sometimes the choice

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[2]Brevard Childs, *Exodus* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 40-42, and *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 164-83.

[3]Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*, 182.

narrows as to which person will emerge alive from a conflict. If we do not act, the oppressor survives—the victim does not. To cooperate in "passive killing" by our inaction does not sear the conscience as much as taking up a weapon to restrain or kill an offender. But if people are mistreated or killed because of our inaction, surely we are responsible. The act of Moses in slaying the Egyptian is vastly different from the deed of Cain. Cain killed because he was not his brother's keeper. Moses killed because he was responsible for his "kin."

As already mentioned, the story of Moses and the killing of the Egyptian is not included in the lectionary of the church. But why not? The story exhibits a high moral tone: Moses, like the prophets who followed him, felt the pathos of God and acted to help one who was cruelly mistreated, who, in fact, stood at the edge of life. Did those responsible for the selection of the lectionary texts view this act unfavorably and judge the text unsuitable for preaching?

Moses chosen by God in spite of his violence?

Another text *is* included in the lectionary, namely, Exodus 3:1-15, the story of Moses meeting the LORD at the burning bush. Here Moses is called to be God's servant in bringing about the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt. As pastors preach on this incident, reference is often made to the activity of Moses before he met the LORD at the bush. The point is often made that before Moses met God, Moses tried to bring about the deliverance of the Israelites in his own, violent way. This violent way of Moses, it is said, ended in disaster. When Moses finally met the LORD, so the argument continues, he finally gave up his own way of doing things and submitted himself to the way of God. In doing so Moses finally, with the help and leadership of God, found success; the people were delivered in grand style. God chose Moses despite the fact that he was a murderer! It becomes one more example of how God can take people who are seriously flawed in life and use them for the good of people and for his own glory.[4]

Moses struck... God struck

This interpretation of Moses, I believe, goes counter to the narrative in Exodus 2-3. God chose Moses who risked his life to save the life of one who was about to be killed. God, of course, did not choose Moses *because* he was a killer. It was unfortunate that in order to save the life of the victim, the attacker had to be killed; there was, however, no other option.

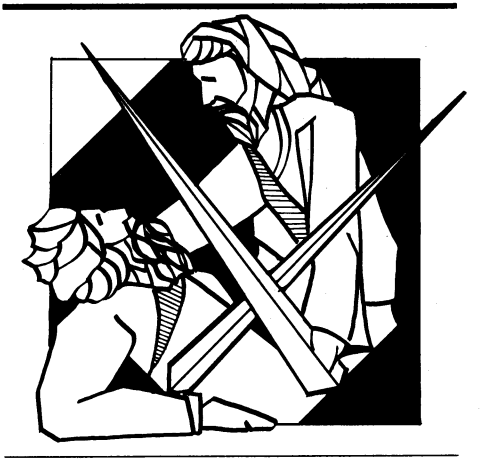
It may be noted, by the way, that the story in Exodus appears to indicate that violence was also the only option left to God in the attempt to release the Hebrews from Egyptian cruelty. The pharaoh would not of his own decision release them. Finally, God used force. As Moses struck (Hebrew *nakah*) the fatal blow against the Egyptian, so God struck (Ex 12:29, *nakah*) the Egyptians with the final plague: the killing of the firstborn.

Granted, Moses looked around to see if anyone was watching before he took action. We should not, however, conclude that he did so out of guilt. He acted out of fear; he knew what it meant if he were caught. Oppressive situations force people to act in ways that run counter to normal life style

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[4]In general, Christian commentaries appreciate Moses' passion for others but either condemn the killing or offer no further comment. Jewish authors tend to justify this act of Moses.

and ethic. Would we say it was wrong for people in a concentration camp to lie, cheat, deceive, and bribe if that meant life to them and to others? Normal patterns of conduct do not function when chaos invades life.



Conclusion

It is important for the church to emphasize such teachings as love of neighbor (Mk 12:31), love of the enemy (Mt 5:44), not resisting one who is evil (Mt 5:39), and blessing those who curse (Lk 6:28). These are teachings that bring health and wholeness to life. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that Jesus did not view these teachings as rigid laws which must always be obeyed. As we mentioned earlier, in his relationship to the pharisees he is not depicted as showing love or blessing (cf. Mk 3:1ff. and Mt 23). To speak this way about Jesus is not to say that he failed to obey his own teachings; it is to say that these teachings are not absolute principles that apply always and everywhere. There are times when they apply and times when they do not apply. The teaching about not resisting the evil one may not apply when one is attacked by those who intend to rape, rob, inflict injury, or kill.

The Church should be aware of the violence that exists in the Bible, violence represented by fierce words or glances and by angry acts. This is not to say that texts revealing violence must be emphasized and approved. Nevertheless, although violence in the Bible is not to be ranked first on the list entitled, "The Will of God," it may be unwise to repress the biblical writers' representation of violence or the approval of violence in certain situations. To leave the impression that Jesus was never angry but was always soft-spoken, that he always blessed those who cursed him, is to give a false view of him. Further, to repress the fact that the New Testament at times approves the violence that took place in ancient Israel (e.g., Acts 7:25 and 13:19), is to misrepresent the New Testament. The softening or repression of these violent attitudes, words, or acts makes the New Testament appear more pacifistic than it really is.

It may be admitted that this pacifistic representation of the New Testament has brought into our world a wholesome emphasis. With so much violence in our world, we need to hear about another, better way to relate to our friends and enemies. But in those times when life turns to chaos, it may be that we must take violent action in order to save the life of another. Because we have so emphasized the pacifism of Jesus, and of the New Testament generally, Christians may be tempted to watch violence take place without acting.

In 1937, Dietrich Bonhoeffer preached a sermon on Psalm 58, a so-called psalm of vengeance. He placed a Christian interpretation on the psalm, declaring that the one calling on God for vengeance in this psalm is really Christ speaking through King David. It is a cry for God to take action; we can do nothing. He stated:

> Above all let us learn here that faced with the enemies of God and his church all we can do is pray. Our own courage—no matter how great it may be—all our bravery is bound to snap in the presence of this enemy. Here we are dealing with Satan's attack. Here the one who alone has power over Satan, God himself, must take the initiative.[5]

However, later—when Bonhoeffer believed, as did many other people, that violent action must be used to defend the victims—he took part in an abortive attempt on Hitler's life. It was not a pleasant thing to do, but at the edge, life is not pleasant. Such an act is not to be seen as a model for social change; it is only an attempt to save the life of victims. Several years ago when Bishop Tutu was interviewed on television he said he wanted to see a peaceful solution to the South African problem. That peace is his goal may be seen by his many actions pointing in that direction (e.g., addressing 25,000 people prepared to riot and persuading them not to do so). However, the bishop indicated that if life went on as it had for many years, he would support revolutionary action. Life on the edge is not pleasant; it is not the place where people construct programs for social change. It is the place where evil is so horrifying that one cannot stand another death, another torture—and one takes action.

The story of Moses and the Egyptian deserves the attention of the church. Preaching on Exodus 2:11-25, as well as on other texts that speak of victims, victimizers, and violence, could help us confront the full teaching of the Bible on a topic that presses ever more forcibly upon us. This is not to say that we should encourage violence in a society that is already too violent. We know that acts of violence carry great risk in that they create counter-violence, which may bring about a continuing cycle of violence and counter-violence. What we sometimes forget, however, is that a complete pacifism that allows the oppressor to violate and kill creates its own horror.

In the Gospel of John 18:10-11, we are informed that one of the disciples carried a weapon. Although Jesus rebuked him for using it on a particular occasion (Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus), apparently Jesus did not discourage the wearing of the sword. Would the sword have been used (as a last resort) if Jesus and his disciples had come upon a man who was under attack? No one can say for certain, but I believe the answer is "Yes." Moses and Jesus may be closer to each other than we think with regard to appropriate action "on the edge" of life.

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[5]See F. Burton Nelson and Daniel Bloesch, "A Bonhoeffer Sermon," *Theology Today* 38 (1981/82): 469.

Luther on Political Ministry

Willard Pierce
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This essay attempts to show how Luther's interpretation of justification by faith enables Christians to be ministers of the gospel within a political context. The thesis is: God's righteousness transforms original sinners into justified sinners and calls justified sinners to be Christ[1] to their neighbors *within a political context.*[2]

Much of the current discussion of Luther and politics is a return to the criticism of Ernst Troeltsch, which was retrieved by Karl Barth during World War II.[3] Justification is interpreted as the fruit of the "introspective conscience of the west" (Bishop Stendahl); this doctrine leads to the church's political impotence and its shirking of responsibility for the world.[4]

For Luther, however, political ministry is the necessary consequence of freedom. It is grounded in the gospel of justification by faith, framed within the dialectic of law and promise, and worked out in both kingdoms of God's world.[5]

Why justification by faith is necessary

Gutierrez rightly asserts that the paradigm of liberation in the Bible is the Exodus.[6] God hears the cries of enslaved Israel (Ex 2:24), remembers his covenant with Abraham and Sarah, and delivers the people from the land of slavery by carrying them to a "good and broad land, flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8).

While the story of God's liberation of Israel is an occasion for celebration, it is, nevertheless, problematic. The One who

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[1]*Luther's Works* 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957):365-77.

[2]*Luther's Works* 45 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1962):81-129.

[3]Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 2:540-43. See also Karl Barth, *A Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1941), 31-40.

[4]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 318-19.

[5]For a more developed exposition of this thesis see Willard Pierce, "The Value of Freedom in the Political Theology of Luther and its Promise for Contemporary Political Theology" (Th. D. dissertation at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1986).

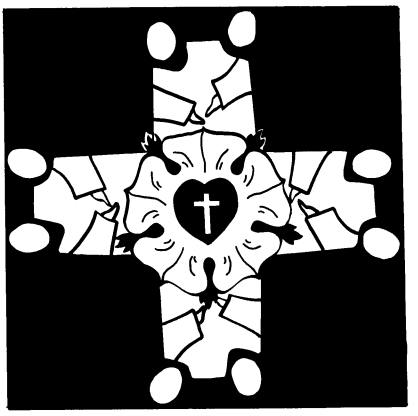
[6]Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973), chapter 9, "Liberation and Salvation."

liberates demands steadfast obedience, but liberated Israel consistently questions the intentions of Moses and the saving activity of God: "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Ex. 16:2).

Liberated Israel remains enslaved to its belly. Freed by Yahweh, they remain slaves. Exodus is not, from this perspective, a paradigm of liberation. It is a paradigm of disobedience and reflects the bedrock of the human dilemma before God. To be "like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5) establishes an adversarial relationship with God which has deadly consequences. The belly, even in the case of the Exodus, rules out the doxology appropriate to God's liberating activity.

According to the *Augsburg Confession*, Article II, all men and women are full of evil lust and are unable to have true fear of God and true faith in God. While modern readers may cringe at such language about original sin, it actually explains the relationship which the book of Exodus painfully records: liberated slaves are unable to fear God and are unable to have true faith in God's promise of deliverance, and they are subject to the "eternal wrath of God." This primal experience of alienation is called *Anfechtung* by Luther. The *Anfechtung* is God's judgment passed upon original sinners who can neither fear God nor trust God. This helps us to see the Exodus not only as a paradigm of liberation, but as an occasion for God's judgment and wrath (Num 20:12).

How then does liberation occur? Humanity by nature neither fears God nor has faith in God. Even when the yoke of oppression is lifted by God, liberated folks remain enslaved because, as Luther observes in his "Disputation Against Scholastic Theology," they want to be God, and do God's work.[7] Fallen humanity is dead before God.



The death of humanity before God is universal in scope. There is no sphere of life left untouched by this universal lack of fear and faith in God. Such slavery to the power of death makes any discussion of the human ability to love God fictitious.[8] Being dead before God prevents persons from serving others in good faith,[9] or meriting the love of God. All must *first* be converted to the love of God.[10]

Such alienation can only be overcome through God's righteousness, and this makes Luther's discussion of justification by faith a matter of death and life (Forde). By way of the "fortunate exchange" (*LW* 26:284),[11] Christ takes upon himself our death, our alienation, and gives to fallen humanity "his innocent and victorious person."[12]

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[7] *Luther's Works* 31:10.
[8] *Luther's Works* 31:10.
[9] *Luther's Works* 31, Theses 19 & 20.
[10] *Luther's Works* 31, Theses 25 & 27.
[11] *Luther's Works* 26 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963): 284.
[12] *Luther's Works* 26:284.

Christ's death sets aside God's judgment.[13] Original sinners become justified sinners, and Christ's gift of faith gives people the heart to say: "I believe in God and am confident that he will be gracious and merciful to me."[14]

The sinner, being justified by faith, is freed from alienation. At that moment God's liberation in Christ becomes an occasion for the praxis of faith: "I believe that God is calling us out into that barren wasteland, and that God will provide for us just as God has promised." Slavery to the belly is replaced by trust in God's saving, liberating power.

Christian freedom: the ministry of justification

While an affirmative nod is given to Luther for his recovery of justification by grace through faith, many see him as a conservative reactionary in his linking of justification and discipleship, especially with regard to politics.

Professor Jürgen Moltmann has renewed the Troeltsch-Barth critique of Luther from the perspective of political theology.

Moltmann recognizes the revolutionary potency of justification and Luther's theology of the cross for the life of the church. Indeed, the theology of the cross gave birth to the Reformation. However, as Moltmann points out, the reform of the church must always incite the reform of the world. According to Moltmann this did not happen with Luther. When Thomas Müntzer and other "radical" reformers added a political vision to the theology of the cross, Luther condemned them and sided with the princes. This limited the lordship of the Crucified One to the experience of faith, and led, according to Moltmann's interpretation, to a tradition of political unburdening within the Protestant tradition.[15]

It is important to remember, however, that Luther discusses justification and ministry in the same breath. Faith is never separated from one's calling to bear the cross in a world which is still subject to alienation (Rom. 8:19ff).

Luther does not want justified sinners to trust in their works as a way of securing divine favor. But Luther adds: "We do not forbid [works]; we are only pointing out the abuse of them and showing that they should be done for the inspiration and good of our neighbor and that we should not put our trust in them."[16]

The dialectic of faith and ministry is often misinterpreted, or faith is reduced to political/ethical imperatives.[17] Another tendency is to make political/ethical imperatives proofs for the existence of faith.[18] Luther argues that God's righteousness empowers one to be a Good Samaritan-type neighbor while God remains the only source/object of human trust. This new alignment

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[13]*Luther's Works* 26:284.

[14]*Luther's Works* 22 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1957): 142.

[15]Jürgen Moltmann, *Following Jesus Christ in the World Today: Responsibility for the World and Christian Discipleship*, Occasional Papers, no. 4 (Elkhart IN: The Institute for Mennonite Studies, 1983):71. For an excellent interpretation of Luther and the Peasant Wars see Hubert Kirchner, *Luther and the Peasants' War* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

[16]*Luther's Works* 51 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959): 117.

[17]For critique of this tendency see Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society* (Minneapolis: The Winston Press, 1985).

[18]For further reading see Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism: The Theology and Philosophy of Life of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 98-101.

centers works/ministry/praxis within doxology. Being Christ to one's neighbor gives glory to God, "so that all things may be God's alone, both the commandments and the fulfilling of the commandments."[19]

Evangelical political ministry

In his treatise, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed*, Luther provides a sound basis for temporal authority and political ministry in the biblical traditions. Then he examines how far the "arm" of temporal authority extends into the life of the church. The third section of the treatise is written for the benefit of those very few who have been called by God to be political ministers.

Luther is primarily interested in developing a sense of wisdom and moderation for political ministers. In fact, at first glance Luther's advice may not seem appropriate to the operation of political office. For example, he does not tell political ministers how to affect public policy. Instead, he offers four guidelines:

> First toward God there must be true confidence and earnest prayer, second, toward [the politician's] subjects there must be love and Christian service; third with respect to [one's] counselors and officials he [or she] must maintain untrammeled reason and unfettered judgment; fourth with respect to evil-doers, he [or she] must manifest a restrained severity and firmness.[20]

Sound, equitable leadership is a gift from God and comes to those who have true faith in God's promise.[21]

Luther insists that Christian political ministry is grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and not in a particular political tradition.

The political minister is first and foremost a servant, who cares for the well-being of his or her constituents. Luther understands government to be a gift of God to constrain the wicked. Precisely because Luther maintains the divine institution of temporal authority, he takes great care to remind people in political ministry that their calling is to be *public* servants. This position allows Luther to point political ministers to the one example of selfless service which is the foundation of their ministry: Jesus Christ.

> The political minister is first and foremost a servant.

The political minister should picture Christ and say: "Behold Christ, the supreme ruler, came to serve me; he did not seek to gain power, estate, and honor from me, but considered only my need, and directed all things to the end that I should gain power, estate, and honor from him and through him. I will do likewise, seeking from my subjects not my own advantage but theirs."[22]

By taking Christ as a model of political service, Luther at first seems to be confusing the two kingdoms, along with law and promise. Upon closer examination, however, he uses the "Christ-like prince" to highlight the themes of equity and social compassion, not justification by faith.

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[19] *Luther's Works* 31:349.
[20] *Luther's Works* 45:126.
[21] *Luther's Works* 45:119.
[22] *Luther's Works* 45:120.

If the political pastor is doing his or her job correctly, the cross will soon rest upon his or her shoulders.

The "fortunate exchange" lifts the burden of sin and death and imputes sinners with the gift of faith. Justified sinners are called by God to the ministry, including the ministry of public service. Jesus Christ is necessary, for he alone frees public servants from the dictates of self-interest.

By viewing Christ, the political minister makes the following commitment to public service: "I will use my office to serve and protect them, listen to their problems and defend them and govern to the sole end that they, not I, may benefit and profit from my rule."[23] Thus for Luther, the whole point of Christian ministry in the political sector is *kenosis*, self-emptying. As used by Paul in the Christ-hymn (Phil 2:3-11), *kenotic* love expresses how Jesus Christ took upon himself the form of a servant, humbled himself in obedience to the will of his Father, and suffered death on a cross.

Justification by faith makes *kenosis* possible within the political sector, because faith "conditions and disposes" persons to serve selflessly, even if to serve means to suffer and die. As an act of self-divestment, *kenosis* does not unburden God's people in Christ in the political sector (Moltmann). *Kenosis* is burden-assuming. Public service, following the example of Jesus Christ, is not a matter of protecting self-interest or perpetuating public institutions. Rather, Christians serve within the context of public office by becoming "burden-bearers" of their constituents.

Christ-grounded public service is the most difficult estate on earth, "full of trouble, labor, and sorrow."[24] For if the political pastor is doing his or her job correctly, the cross will soon rest upon his or her shoulders.[25]

Luther uses the example of Jesus to instruct political ministers on how to deal with the pull of self-interest. Justification by faith enables men and women to embrace the example of Christ, an example which leads away from self-aggrandizement and self-justification, to suffering and cross and self-emptying, as the vehicles for public service.

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[23]*Luther's Works* 45:120.
[24]*Luther's Works* 45:126.
[25]*Luther's Works* 45:126.

Proclamation and Controversy

A Study in the Ethics of Preaching

Craig M. Watts
Louisville, Kentucky

The purpose of the preaching of the Christian message is to persuade men and women to be reconciled to God and to live a life which is consistent with this divine/human reconciliation. Few would dispute this claim. However, in order to persuade people to be faithful to their relationship with God, more than vague admonitions are needed. It is necessary for the preacher to indicate specific aspects of faithfulness over against those values, convictions, and lifestyles that are unworthy of Christian existence. In order to perform this task it is difficult, if not impossible, for the preacher to avoid addressing sensitive areas of individual behavior as well as controversial issues of public debate.

Reinhold Niebuhr spoke to this concern shortly before he left the parish ministry to embark upon his career at Union Theological Seminary:

> One of the most fruitful sources of self-deception in the ministry is the proclamation of great ideas and principles without any clue to their relation to the controversial issues of the day. The minister feels very heroic in uttering the ideals because he knows that some rather dangerous immediate consequences are involved in their application. But he doesn't make the application clear, and those who hear his words are either unable to see the immediate issue involved or they are unconsciously grateful to the preacher for not belaboring a contemporaneous issue which they know to be involved but would rather not face.[1]

Niebuhr continued by acknowledging that members of the clergy cannot be experts on all of the technical problems associated with industrial and national life. "But the ministers who make a virtue of their pious generalities are either self-deceived or conscious deceivers."[2]

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, *Leaves From the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1929, 1956, 1980), 191.

[2]Niebuhr, *Leaves From the Notebook*, 192.

Too often the decision whether or not to bring the Christian message to bear upon areas of controversy is looked upon as a matter of taste or technique. Prophetic preaching, as it is characteristically called, is frequently viewed as an option, or even as a product of the personal maladjustment of certain ministers rather than as an essential facet of responsible ministry. But if the prophetic preacher's task is "to keep himself and his people in constant tension with the world and to help them maintain a constant maladjustment of the evil that besets it,"[3] the refusal to engage in this task is a matter of ministerial ethics.

One of the reasons preachers fail to apply the Christian message to the controversial questions of the day is the fact that many church members prefer such questions to be passed over in silence. To challenge vested interests or confront popular prejudices through pulpit proclamation is contrary to the understanding of the purpose of the church held by many persons.

In the recent study of the formative beliefs and practices of American life, *Habits of the Heart*, Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues found that in the minds of many people religion is relegated to the private sphere and compartmentalized so that it provides loving support but can "no longer challenge the dominance of utilitarian values in the society at large." In fact religion is often treated as a means of escape from the common struggles of the world and does "more to reinforce that world, by caring for its casualties, than to challenge its assumptions."[4] This is true in both Protestant and Catholic churches. The authors of this study wrote:

> There are thousands of local churches in the United States, representing an enormous range of variation in doctrine and worship. Yet most define themselves as communities of personal support. A recent study suggests that what Catholics look for does not differ from the concerns of the various types of Protestants.... When asked the direction the church should take in future years, the two things that a national sample of Catholics most asked for were 'personal and accessible priests' and 'warmer, more personal parishes.'[5]

In an earlier study Andrew Greeley found that "the overwhelming majority of Americans do not like to be disturbed by religion more than they deem appropriate."[6] This observation has been reconfirmed in a church-wide survey sponsored by my own denomination, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).[7] The research project was the most extensive self-study embarked upon by the Disciples, a mainline, ecumenically oriented Protestant group. One area of the study pertained to the question of the minister preaching, making public statements, and leading discussion groups on social issues. A number of issues were listed in the questionnaire, and the respondents were asked to mark one of three options: "Minister and congregation agree (on this is-

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[3]Otto J. Baab, *Prophetic Preaching: a New Approach* (New York: Abingdon, 1958), 125.

[4]Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 224.

[5]Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*, 232. The study referred to is Dean R. Hoge's *Converts, Dropouts, Returnees: A Study of Religious Change Among Catholics* (Washington, D. C.: United States Catholic Conference; New York: Pilgrim, 1981).

[6]Andrew Greeley, *The Denominational Society* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1972), 104.

[7]Ann Updegraff-Spleth and Charles Brackbill, *Report on Disciples Churchwide Survey* (Indianapolis: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1986).

sue)," "Minister and congregations disagree," and "I am unaware of this issue being mentioned." The results of the survey indicate that the majority of persons have never heard mentioned the arms race (57%), the sanctuary movement (55%), nuclear weapons (57%), civil disobedience (68%), refugee resettlement (66%), statements regarding U. S. military intervention (Vietnam, Central America, etc.) (67%), abortion (71%), and homosexual rights (72%).

The study continued by asking in relation to the previously named issues whether the respondent believes the minister places (1) too much emphasis on them, (2) not enough emphasis on them, or (3) about the right amount of emphasis. An overwhelming 78% expressed the view that their minister placed about the right emphasis on the issues of controversy. This answer is striking in view of the fact that a majority of the respondents have never heard their minister even address many of these pressing public issues. This indicates a general satisfaction with silence when it comes to ministers applying the Christian message to controversial questions.

Because there is a general lack of desire for sermons that delve into matters of controversy or generate tension in the lives and thoughts of parishioners, ministers may be led to conclude that they have no ethical responsibility to engage in such preaching. But such a conclusion is possible only if it is forgotten that the shape of the minister's responsibility is ultimately not determined by the desires of the members of his or her congregation. Rather the minister's first responsibility is to God who called the church into being and defined the church's purposes. In keeping with this responsibility the minister's preaching must remind listeners that "the church is not just another haven in the storm to protect some from the ravages of modernity, but a people who care



so deeply that they refuse to do anything else than speak the truth in love."[8] In other words, the preacher is obliged to preach prophetically in order to remind the church of its own prophetic identity. This is not an option but an imperative.

In his early years Reinhold Niebuhr suggested that when it comes to speaking out on issues of controversy the timidity of many ministers is not so much a result of economic dependence upon the people of the church as it is a product of a warm relationship with them. He wrote, "I think the real clue to the tameness of a preacher is the difficulty one finds in telling unpleasant truths to people whom one has learned to love.... Once personal contact is established you are very prone to temper your wind to the shorn sheep. It is difficult to be human and honest at the same time."[9]

The preservation of a warm relationship between the minister and the congregation is an important concern. Extra sensitivity is required when dealing with certain

[8]Stanley M. Hauerwas, "The Pastor as Prophet: Ethical Reflections on an Improbable Mission," in *The Pastor as Prophet* (New York: Pilgrim, 1985), 44.

[9]Niebuhr, *Leaves From the Notebook*, 53.

topics lest the message needlessly alienate some. Yet a sensitivity to the feelings of parishioners should take a form that would facilitate communications of relevant truth rather than to silence divinely disruptive truth. However disquieting it may be, it is necessary to call into question the vested interests, cherished convictions, and the support of unjust structures which are found among members of the church, but which, nevertheless, are inappropriate in light of the revelation of God in Christ. To love the church in truth is to work to encourage the church to fulfill its purpose as a community where the victory of Jesus Christ over the powers of darkness is lived as a present reality. A love which is concerned to maintain harmony within the church without regard to the purpose of the church is in fact destructive.

Hence, there are times when the minister must preach messages in which he or she will risk traumatizing a congregation and disrupting an ill-founded harmony in order to call the church to be faithful to its purpose as a community of reconciliation. This is necessary because there are too many instances where churches embrace in their own internal life the very structures and assumptions which are expressions of the sinful brokenness of the present age. When this occurs, congregations contradict their own purpose as alternative communities which model the divine possibility for humanity and which bear witness to the future which God has promised. In such instances the minister whose love for the church is shaped by the purpose of the church will not draw back from the prophetic task which requires, in the words of Walter Brueggemann, "an assault on public imagination, aimed at showing that the present presumed world is not absolute, but that a thinkable alternative can be imagined, characterized, and lived in.... The ground for such an alternative picture of reality is the sovereign rule of God."[10]

In a congregation in which many people have conformed to the prevailing vision of society, along with its values and practices which lead to discrimination, injustice, and institutionalized violence, there is little likelihood of a change in the posture of the people without the experience of some degree of pain. This is the pain of prophecy that destabilizes entrenched falsehood so that the truth of God might be made manifest, not only in the words of the preacher, but in the life of the church. The preacher must preach disquieting truth so that the church can be a "community capable of telling the story of a crucified messiah."[11]

In his 1872 Yale lectures Henry Ward Beecher admonished ministers to maintain a "genial, sympathizing love" at the center of their ministries. But against those who cling to a notion of love that would exempt them from dealing with controversial questions or from speaking messages that could give rise to conflict, Beecher clarified his view of the loving minister:

> I do not mean these...sunshine, good-natured men, who are without sharpened discriminating thought, have no preferences, no indignations, no conscience, no fire.... He who preaches mainly to taste and the sense of the beautiful, he who sees God especially in forms and colors and sounds, and all the sweet elements of grace in the world, has one portion of the truth, but he is apt to run out, through feebleness, into sentimentality.[12]

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[10]Walter Brueggemann, "The Prophet as a Destabilizing Presence," in *The Pastor as Prophet*, 52-53.

[11]Hauerwas, "The Pastor as Prophet," 42.

[12]Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, First Series (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1892), 243-45.

Speaking unwanted truth may seem to be a harsh or even unloving thing, but it is a mistake to conclude that a loving action never causes pain. The opposite can be true. Love without truth can be destructive. Within the church love that is not guided by truth tends to degenerate into sentimentalism. "What men commonly call love is usually an affection which shuns like the plague truth between people. And this situation is not altered by the fact that sacrifice is sometimes both demanded and given. Where there is no will to truth, even sacrifice turns to flattery."[13]

It is this sort of flattery which the dedicated minister must be wary of for the sake of both truth and love.

"The truth still remains the greatest service of love which men [and women] can show to each other in the community of Christ," wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[14] But truth is not a service of love when the speaker is concerned about the technically correct expression of the subject matter without an equal concern for the recipients of the message. A statement made to or about an enemy with the intention of wounding that person may be correct in its content, but such a statement could hardly be called truth in the service of love. Truth worthy of the name is not a tool to destroy persons and relationships. Rather it is to be spoken with sensitivity to the context in which it is spoken and to the persons to whom it is addressed. To preach on matters of controversy in a way that is ethically responsible requires more than the indiscriminate unleashing of an accurate message.

This is not to say that everything about the form and content of appropriate proclamation is ultimately determined by the situation in which it takes place and the people who are to hear it. For Christian proclamation is not concerned only with the state of mind or the circumstances of the people to whom it is directed. As Karl Barth has observed, "real proclamation" is commissioned by, based upon, and an expression of God's own speech.[15] That is the divine given that must never be set aside. However, proclamation that is issued forth without regard to the context in which it is spoken may in some strange way be gratifying to a preacher who feels compelled to get the message "off his chest," but such proclamation does little service to the truth or to the people who hear the words. In such cases the hearers will be missed by the message, and the truth itself will be lost in the inevitable confusion and misunderstanding that occurs when proclamation takes place without regard to where and to whom it is directed.

> A love which is concerned to maintain harmony within the church without regard to the purpose of the church is in fact destructive.

The point of preaching is not just verbalization but communication. This requires some accommodation in the form of

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[13]Knud Logstrup, *The Ethical Demand* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 22.

[14]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords* (London: Collins, 1965), 296.

[15]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 88ff.

the message. But as Helmut Thielicke has noted, such an accommodation "does not represent a questionable compromise, because the intention is still to express only the truth, using, however, means which are subjectively at our disposal and also objectively appropriate to the matter itself."[16]

The manner in which truthful speech takes place differs from one case to another.

This is in keeping with the historical nature of most truth and of human existence itself. "The truth itself is certainly not discredited simply because the means used to express it may not meet the criterion of objective correctness but are instead adjusted to a given state of consciousness."[17] A fairy tale may convey more truth about human nature to a small child than the more technically accurate psychological or sociological study could ever do. The point of being sensitive to the situation and the persons addressed is not to tailor the message to fit their preferences or prejudices but to speak a relevant message that they can receptively hear. This is essential if truth is to be spoken in love.

Out of a concern for the truth and the people who need to hear it, the minister may provisionally remain silent about a critical concern so that the people might be given an opportunity to become more adequately prepared to hear the truth. Such silence is to safeguard the truth and protect the hearer who would be unnecessarily injured by premature proclamation which would be contrary to love. Speaking in a somewhat different context, Bernard Haring made the observation that while it is true that genuine love calls for truthfulness, "this truthfulness, as a requirement of a harvest of love, will be patient and wait for a favorable moment.... Temporary silences...can be plain lies if they arise from an unwillingness to speak truth; yet they are a communication of love in truth and truth in love if they are aiming at the best possible communication."[18]

At this point Bonhoeffer is a helpful guide. He contended that the meaning of "telling the truth" is determined by who the parties are who are involved in the process. For a child to tell the truth to a parent is not the same thing as a parent telling the truth to the child. The life of the child can be utterly opened to the parent so that nothing is concealed. However, parents cannot possibly relate to the child in the same manner. In view of this and other relationships, Bonhoeffer maintained "that 'telling the truth' means something different according to the particular situation in which one stands."[19] At any particular time an account must be taken of one's relationship since the manner in which truthful speech takes place differs from one case to another. This necessitates serious reflection on each situation with the realization that the more complex the situation is, the more difficult will be the task of

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[16]Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 523-24.

[17]Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, 524.

[18]Bernard Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol. 3 (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 96.

[19]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 127.

'telling the truth.' In order for a communication to be truthful it must differ according to whom is being addressed, where the speaking takes place, and what is being spoken about. The truthful word is not of itself unvarying but is "as much alive as life itself."[20] Detached from life and the particularities in which it is spoken the message may have the appearance of truth, but it will be devoid of its character.

If one's desire is to communicate truth, then genuine sensitivity to the times, places, and persons addressed must be maintained. "Truth" abstracted from life is rigid and loveless. Bonhoeffer declared,

> He dons the halo of the fanatical devotee of truth who can make no allowance for human weakness; but, in fact, he is destroying living truth between men. He wounds shame, desecrates mystery, breaks confidence, betrays the community in which he lives, and laughs arrogantly at the devastation he has wrought and at the human weakness which 'cannot bear the truth.' He says truth is destructive and demands its victims, and he feels like a god above these feeble creatures and does not know that he is serving Satan.[21]

The very fact that God was disclosed in Jesus Christ and that the preaching of the gospel testifies to this revelation entails a judgment on other claims of truth.[22] But proclamation that expresses the Word of God judges out of love, not out of pride and insensitivity to the situation in which the message is spoken or without regard for the persons to whom it is directed. It is the particular congregation being addressed that the minister must keep in mind. Sermons are not preached in a vacuum. Hence the educational level, professions, political affiliation, economic standing, age, and race of the members of the congregation are all factors that must be considered. The history, traditions, and conflicts of the church,

It is the particular congregation being addressed that the minister must keep in mind.

as well as the local customs, largest sources of employment, and the central struggles of the larger community are also considerations that will come into play if truth is to be spoken in love so that it will genuinely encounter the people. But this sensitivity to the persons addressed and to the situation in which the word is spoken is not needed primarily so that the minister may avoid disturbing the people. Rather it is so that needless disturbance can be avoided in order that appropriate and fruitful disturbance will be made possible which will lead to greater faithfulness. This occurs when the Christian story intersects the story of the people in their particularity.

It goes without saying that sensitivity to the situation in which one preaches requires the serious intellectual work necessary to understand the pressing issues of controversy which are to be engaged. It is impossible to apply the Christian message to a problem if the problem itself is not

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[20]Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 129.
[21]Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 130.
[22]Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 406.

The minister must never cease being prophetic in order to be pastoral and never cease being pastoral in order to be prophetic.

understood. Of course, both the information one can absorb and the clarity one can attain will always be limited, especially in view of the fact that a parish minister is required to be a generalist. Furthermore, a degree of ambiguity in any complex social issue is inevitable even when exhaustive technical information is available. But to preach in a manner relevant to the controversial concerns of the day does not necessitate one to have the expertise of a thoroughly equipped economist, sociologist, military strategist, or industrialist. The details of policies and programs are not the appropriate content of the sermon. In preaching the minister is to lift up a vision of the world which is consistent with and expressive of God's care for the world as it was manifested in Jesus Christ. This vision will outright exclude some political options and make manifest the narrow interests they serve and the injustice they perpetuate. But responsible preaching "has to do not primarily with addressing specific public crisis but with addressing, in season and out of season, the dominant crisis that is enduring and resilient, of having our alternative vocation co-opted and domesticated."[23]

This being the case, the minister must never cease being prophetic in order to be pastoral and never cease being pastoral in order to be prophetic. To be pastoral is to nurture the church. But to nurture the church in a way that is in keeping with the church's purpose as a community that embodies the sort of love seen in Jesus Christ requires that the pastoral ministry be prophetic. For in preaching, as well as in liturgy, in counseling, and in program planning, the minister is to remind the church to be itself, a people shaped by the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord. When the church responds to such ministry it lives as a judgment on and a statement of hope for the world.

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[23]Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 13.

Sermonic Aim and Lutheran Evangelism

A Case Study in Historical Homiletics

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The "Confession of Faith" and the "Statement of Purpose" which ground the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America contain neither the words "evangelism" or "preaching," although both documents are permeated with references to these activities.[1] With the highly visible emphasis on evangelism today, how is such an effort to be homiletically construed? What determines the sermonic structures and materials of an avowedly "evangelical" church as it declares Jesus Christ to non-Christians and unaffiliated seekers, as well as to Lutherans themselves?

Against the historical backdrop of Lutheran preaching in America, answers may be found for these questions, and we discover why "evangelism preaching," which characterizes other branches of American Protestantism, is so lacking among Lutherans.

For what or for whom is the sermon intended? The aim of much Lutheran preaching is actually at cross purposes with the contemporary directives for evangelism and outreach. What has produced the current predicament, and what solutions are available?

The history of American Lutheran homiletics shows it to be quite isolated from efforts in other denominations which contributed to the religious development of the nation. This occurred because of chronological and linguistic realities.

While Lutherans became part of the New World as early as the seventeenth century, the majority of Lutherans did not arrive until the later nineteenth-century immigrations, and Lutheran pulpits had little influence on the general Protestant population.

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[1]"A Handbook and Directory for Congregational Leaders" (Minneapolis: ELCA Distribution Service, 1988), 2-3.

Lutheran preaching also remained segregated from American religious life because of linguistic configurations. Even into this century, much preaching was in German or in one of the Scandinavian languages. G. H. Gerberding expresses his frustration with the implications of Lutheran language usage. "It had not dawned on Lutheran theologians that America's official, governmental, school, newspaper, and commercial language was English, all English."[2]

A rhetorical analysis of Lutheran sermons demonstrates that, in addition to these corollary factors, the dominant aim of proclamation contributed directly to the general inability of Lutheran pulpits to offer "evangelism preaching."

The background for the issue is embedded in the homiletical beliefs of the early Reformers scattered throughout the *Book of Concord*. Based on Luther's radical insight into the power of the Incarnate Word, these doctrinal interpretations clearly articulate a singular sermonic aim: proclamation of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Did this sermonic intention carry over into Lutheran preaching in America? Lutheran sources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicate an obvious preoccupation with sermonic aim as pastors sought to proclaim "the pure Word of God." Those efforts reveal both the integration and diffusion of traditional Lutheran homiletical values through the processes of Americanization.[3]

Concerns about sermonic aim were prompted in part by an apologetic effort to define Lutheran proclamation *against* forms of evangelism preaching exhibited by Dwight Moody and of social gospel preaching by Henry Ward Beecher. That such well-known personalities were able to "pack the pews" did not escape the attention of Lutherans and contributed to remarks like this one: "It is to the credit of our Church that it does not seek to popularize its pulpits by catering to what the world wants...."[4]

Some Lutherans exhibited a more adventuresome attitude towards neighboring Protestant forms of evangelism preaching, and their curiosity led to suggestions for homiletical contextualization which would benefit Lutheran preaching.

The most specific discussions of sermonic aim, often self-critically applied, revolved around the distinction between "preaching Christ crucified" by "moving the heart," and preaching doctrinally which attempted to address the will and intellect. (This latter form presupposed an already changed heart.) While proclamation should ideally impact all three "faculties," Lutheran sermons were overwhelmingly doctrinal, or head sermons, by the turn of this century.

As a consequence, Lutheran proclamation experienced a distinct shift toward what had been traditionally considered a secondary goal of preaching: sanctification. The move was noted among Lutherans, and H. Douglas Spaeth offered a troubled reflection on the change in an article he entitled, "Do We in Our Pulpit Ministrations Emphasize Sufficiently the Doctrine of Justification by Faith?"[5]

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[2]George Henry Gerberding, *Reminiscent Reflections of a Youthful Octogenarian* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1928), 69.

[3]Susan Karen Hedahl, *"The Pure Word of God": The Americanization of Lutheran Homiletical Invention Theory, 1893-1922* (Ph. D. dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1988).

[4]E. G. Lund, "Pulpit Popularity, Part I," *Lutheran Church Review* 26 (1907): 791.

[5]H. Douglas Spaeth, "Do We in Our Pulpit Ministrations Emphasize Sufficiently the Doctrine of Justification by Faith?" *Lutheran Church Review* 20 (1901):529-43.

This direction in sermonic aim can be most clearly observed through an analysis of a select sampling of homiletical works produced in English by American Lutherans between 1893 and 1922. These dates are significant because they mark the beginning and conclusion of a period which produced a corpus of homiletical concerns related to sermonic aim.

The first Lutheran homiletics manual in America, written in English and founded on eclectic rhetorical principles, was by Professor Jacob Fry of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. *Rules and Notes in Homiletics* appeared in 1893 as a modest 57-page booklet; it was expanded in later editions to over 200 pages.

Fry offers this definition of sermonic aim, grounding it—as did other writers of his time—in the selection of one form of biblical proclamation to the exclusion of others such as "keryctics," "martyretics," and "halieutics."[6]

> The term Homiletics is derived from the Greek *homileo*, signifying both to assemble and converse together.... From this is derived the word Homily which was the earliest form of public discourse in christian congregations.[7]

A later edition of Fry's book provides an even more decided emphasis on preaching for edification as well as a lament for those who fall outside the purview of Lutheran preaching.

> The proclamation of the gospel and the testimony...are intended for the outside world; for those who have not heard of Christ or those who have rejected or been indifferent to his gospel. But few of these hear our sermons, and therefore the preacher's aim is chiefly to feed the flock of Christ and to build them up in their holy faith.[8]

Another homiletics professor of the same era, J. W. Richard of the Lutheran



Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, published his lecture notes for his students in 1893. He defines both sermonic aim and doctrinal preaching this way:

> Doctrinal sermons should not ordinarily be controversial. The pulpit is not the place for gladiatorial combat, but for teaching and edifying. Its chief function is to build up and establish the body of Christ.[9]

E. G. Lund, professor of homiletics at Augsburg Seminary (later the United Seminary), reminds his students of the balance between preaching justification and sanctification:

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[6]In a later edition of his work, Fry defined these respectively as "the public proclamation of the gospel," "to bear witness or testimony," and "the art of persuading or alluring." See *Elementary Homiletics*, Third Edition (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1920), 13-15.

[7]Jacob Fry, *Rules and Notes in Homiletics* (Reading: Henry Bieber, 1893), 1.

[8]*Elementary Homiletics*, 16.

[9]James W. Richard, *Lectures on Homiletics*, Second edition (Gettysburg: Alvin A. King, 1893), 40. Privately printed and bound.

> A saint is justified, that is demonstrated to be just or righteous by holiness, and we would so preach faith and works as to bring them into this connection and relation.[10]

With the publication of Johann Michael Reu's massive *Homiletics* in 1922, there is a complete description of preaching for edification. Like his other homiletical colleagues, Reu defines sermonic aim on the basis of his New Testament exegesis of preaching categories. Reu concludes the book's introduction this way:

> We fully acknowledge that not only the missionary sermon to the heathen, but the evangelistic sermon to the masses who have become estranged from the Church or were never in connection with it... fall under the generic concept of the sermon. But we just as emphatically insist that we have to treat here [throughout the book] only of the sermon as a part of Christian worship, and that this sermon presupposes a Christian congregation, a congregation of believers.[11]

The establishment of sermonic aim as preaching-to-the-converted was rarely criticized or even considered problematic. Only a few voices suggested that such an approach might not be feasible for the future of Lutheranism. However, John C. Seegers (Fry's successor at Philadelphia) reviewed Reu's 1922 work and challenged Reu's notion of sermonic aim:

> Does the composition of the ordinary American congregation warrant the pastor in viewing his sermon as a message being addressed to "a congregation already called and gathered"? Can he presuppose a Christian congregation?[12]

There was only one liturgical opportunity for evangelism preaching, and that was established by worship schedules. Often pastors preached at Sunday morning *and* evening services. Different worshipers attended these services, and Charles Jacobs summarized the importance of the difference for sermonic aim: "Edification, rather than conversion, should be the purpose of the morning sermon."[13] Evening was the time to reach out to the unchurched.

Lutherans at the turn of the century were highly sensitive to the American religious context in which they found themselves. Doctrinal preaching, or preaching for holy living and sanctification, was in general disfavor and found itself in competition with "social gospel" preaching, which did not differentiate between Lutherans and non-Lutherans, Christians and non-Christians.

Some sources even described Lutheran doctrinal preaching as contrary to the democratic nature of American society in general and a negative force for the parishioner to contend with, especially for those haunted by more repressive uses of the pulpit through former European church-state preaching.

Lewis O. Brastow, a Congregationalist and Professor of Practical Theology at Yale, provided an analysis of "The Doctrinal Type" of proclamation in his 1914 survey of American preaching.[14] His discussion shows that Lutherans were out of step with the more liberal notions of Protestant ser-

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[10]E. G. Lund, *Homiletical and Pastoral Theology*. Class notes transcribed by Henrik L. Berg (Minneapolis: Augsburg Seminary, circa 1892), 12.

[11]Johann Michael Reu, *Homiletics* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1922), 14.

[12]John C. Seegers, book review in *Lutheran Church Review* 42 (1923):95.

[13]Charles M. Jacobs, "The Evening Sermon," *LCR* 34 (1915):56.

[14]Lewis O. Brastow, *The Work of the Preacher* (Boston: Pilgrim, 1914).

monizing. Brastow asserted that preaching sanctification alone ruptures the bonds of the universal church by drawing distinctions too sharply between the "insiders" and the "outsiders." The result could only be a deterministic rather than a grace-filled form of proclamation.

Because of the early twentieth-century emphasis on sanctification, produced in part by the crucible of the Americanization process, Lutherans often found themselves at odds with their Reformation ideals. It was, and is, a conflict which is still experienced in American Lutheran pulpits today whenever "preaching" and "evangelism" are spoken of simultaneously.

Given this American homiletical legacy, what changes must be instituted to ensure a sermonic aim which promotes a wide-ranging form of evangelism?

First, there is a need to focus preaching again on proclaiming the crucified Lord Jesus Christ. (It is scandalous, some may claim, to even intimate that this is not "bred in the bone" of all Lutheran seminarians.)

Second, rather than relinquishing an emphasis on holy living provided for by preaching for edification, it is important to preach a spirituality bound to root ethical/catechetical accents. This is particularly crucial in some areas where preaching to new or non-Christians demands a focus on the central features of the Lutheran faith life: the Bible, the liturgical life, the catechism.

Third, a wider homiletical inclusivity is imperative in order to integrate historical and contemporary elements of Lutheran homiletics. This will include not only doctrinal preaching, which Brastow termed the "masculine side of Christianity,"[15] but a proclamation which admits to the mystical, the emotive, the experiential, the eschatological. A developing linguistic pluralism, particularly in the coastal areas of the United States, needs to produce a widening of sermonic horizons as well.

It is important for the church to acknowledge that we are confronted with issues of inclusivity which were not part of the consciousness of original formulations of Reformation sermonic aims.

Finally, what *are* non-Lutheran Christians about in their own forms of evangelism preaching? It is essential to ask the question with a sense of historical pride and a willingness to learn. Seminary curricula, contextual education settings, and continuing education courses provide excellent resources for work in comparative homiletics.

A greater understanding of our homiletical legacy, especially in regard to sermonic aim, will not necessarily "pack 'em in" any more than it ever has. Still, the combination of human pulpiteering and the restless exuberance of the energetic Word have led to surprising outcomes on occasion. By making evangelism a central sermonic aim, we may discover a neglected part of "doing ministry with a global awareness."[17]

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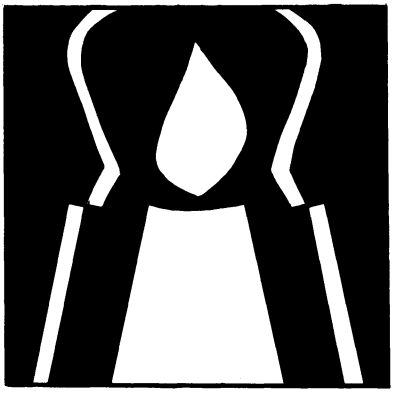
[15]Brastow, *The Work of the Preacher*, 194.

[17]"A Handbook and Directory for Congregational Leaders," 2.

Let There Be Darkness: Staying True to Advent

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Pastors, worship planners, and pastoral psychotherapists who encourage the encroachment of Christmas jolliness into the Sundays of Advent should be charged with priestly malpractice.



Now that I have your attention, I hope I can convince you that facing the darkness in Adventide is essential for healing the soul and preparation for the incarnation of God's Son into our very own being.

As a pastoral psychotherapist, I find my waiting room busiest during Advent; many people experience significant anxiety, depression, despair, grief, and emptiness during this time. Pop psychological

theories report that this trend is prevalent in our Western culture because of the increased expectations and demands of the season. However, this theory alone is insufficient, in my opinion, to explain the depths of our soul-struggle in Advent.

In pre-modern times, when people found more meaning in the seasons, many cultures reserved this time of year for the facing of the darkness. Rites were focused on grief and preparation for death. Facing the dark sides of one's own being was encouraged, enabling the process of *metanoia*, "repentance." Some primitive tribes prayed to the sun gods to come back, fearing that the sun would completely fall out of the sky as it sank lower and lower during the Advent season. They feared that the death of winter would prevail, and that they too would die.

Our lectionary is true to these themes, integrating the seasonal trend of darkness into the themes of "end time" and our preparation for it. We are invited by the Word of God in Advent to see evil not only as something that happens to us, but also as that which we contribute to. Without the serious facing of the shadow in ourselves, we are left to repress it, only to have it act out in disguised ways, wreaking slow and progressive havoc in our homes, our health, and our work.

Therefore, while the public is trying to put on the Christmas "spirit," in the midst of hustle and bustle, parties and programs, singing "'tis the season to be jolly," our soul cries out for a time of solitude to face the darkness, to be permitted to confess and grieve. This is the time to face the shadow and become acquainted with its dynamics. With God's transforming and absolving power, the energies of the shadow can be reclaimed into a creative focus.

People are visually reminded of these dark aspects of life as they drive to and from work in darkness. The unconscious is more inclined to be attracted to stories of war and destruction. People's dreams are full of images of destruction, fear, or abandonment. Conversations revolve around themes of darkness: the sick or the dying, worry about nuclear holocaust, fear of year-end layoffs, concern about crime and corruption—an overabundance of dark subjects. To cover it with sweets, tinsel, wine, or artificial lights will not work. In fact, it may drive some into deeper despair.

Those who set the date of the celebration of the Nativity were indeed inspired. In the season where the winter solstice and the three nights thereafter were the longest nights, they designated December 25 as the celebration of the Nativity. In the midst of the three longest nights comes (not Santa Claus, but) the voice of the angels, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

The first signs of new life come from God alone. Not only can we begin to see the beginning of more light each day, but also God reveals a whole new birth experience beginning with his very own Son. At the deepest darkness God comes to earth.

Those who have genuinely faced this darkness, allowed themselves to grieve, confess, share, and confide, will have the darkness enlightened by the angels' news.

Pastors, worship planners, and pastoral psychotherapists, "Let there be darkness in Advent."

Barn Star

Paul Bauermeister
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Isaiah 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

There is not much to look at when you are driving south across Iowa on a dark night in December. If you are lucky, the road is black and the segmented white line whips past you in little pieces at a regular rapid pace, blip, blip, blip, blip. On either side of the darkness of the highway is the whiteness of the snow, lit up by your headlights, and beyond that whiteness you know there is the larger whiteness of fields, snow-covered, frozen. You can't see that larger whiteness, but you know it's there and you remind yourself how cold it is. Because it is quite late you hope that your engine keeps purring the way it is and that none of those little red lights on the dashboard blink on.

There is not much to look at. Once in a while there is a town, lit up for Christmas, trees inside and outside sparkling with colored lights, stately old frame houses with grand porches and dormers outlined in lights. The points of color are a welcome change from the black and white of the highway. But the last town was way back, and the next one is way ahead, and right now all we have to look at is black highway and white snow and the segmented white line, blip, blip, blip, blip.

Then you see a brightness off on the right. A kind of glow, different from the harshness of the big yard lights some farms have, a gentle, softer kind of light. What could it be? It is up too high to be a Christmas tree, and besides, it is not colored lights, just white lights, in the shape of a five-pointed star. As you pass you notice behind the star the shadowy outline of a big Iowa barn.

So you grin a little to yourself. You have just seen your first barn star. How about that? A barn star. Now it's back to regular black and white again. White snow, black highway, white line, blip, blip, blip, blip, blip.

Since you have nothing to look at, you do have time to think. Why a barn star? Why put a star on a barn? The answer comes easily. The farm family wanted you to see it for as long as you could, so they put it as high as they could, on the big barn. Bless them for knowing about your boredom and giving you something to look at!

With that we are back to black and white, blip, blip, blip, blip, blip. Even though there are four other people in this car with you, you can't talk or play the radio because three of the people are your young children who are sleeping on the folded-down back seat. Back there it is all wrapped-

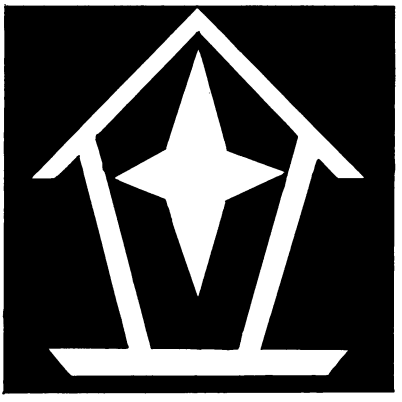
up Christmas presents, blankets, and towheads. Up here it is all black and white, blip, blip, blip, blip, blip.

Then you see that glow again, this time on the left, and this time you smile wisely to yourself because you know what it is. Yup, another barn star. So pretty! Bless those people for their care! And when it is past and you are back to black and white and blip, blip, blip, you discover it is more than a simple kindness they have done. That barn star says Christmas! How fine! Christmas is why the five of you are barreling through the night. When you all get to Grandma and Grandpa's house, warm colors of gold and red and green await you, and your cargo will be received as a special blessing, and you yourself will be received as a minor hero. Christmas! The barn star says Christmas! How very nice!

The next stretch of darkness is a long one, and after you have congratulated yourself on your clever discovery that the barn star says Christmas and then further congratulated yourself on your graciousness for giving a better blessing to the second farm family, you go back again to black and white, blip, blip, blip.

At the same second when you recognize another glow ahead, the whole message of the barn star breaks in on you like a light from above.

Of *course* the Christmas star is on a barn. *That is where the Christmas star belongs*, on a barn, a real barn, full of barn smells from cattle and hay and dryness. God chose for the infant Jesus a barn in which to be born. Not a palace, not a temple, not a quiet birthing room in a sanitary hospital, not even a decent room at the inn, but a *barn*. And God chose a manger for his first cradle, not just to make pretty Christmas cards but so that God might bless forever barns and cattle and hay and mangers with this birth.



But God did not stop with barns and cattle and hay and mangers. God *started* there. And from that barn God's blessing in this Christ Child went everywhere, to everything, to all creation. To oceans and rivers and mountains and trees and fields and houses and factories and offices and schools and shops and hospitals and churches. Even this church. And to all people, even to you, even to me.

The Christmas star belongs on a barn, to remind us of where God started with Christ. And to remind us how far God goes with this blessing.

The message of the barn star is a message of universal, eternal blessing and grace and mercy and love from God that began in a barn under a star with the birth of the infant Jesus.

Well, you still can't talk in this car we are in because of the kids sleeping back there, but you break the rule and squeeze your partner's hand and whisper, "Merry Christmas!"

Isaiah 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Better than a barn star!
Amen.

Prayer for Christmas Eve

Carolyn Lorenz Utech
Evanston, Illinois

Away in a manger,
no crib for a bed

Oh, homeless child, help us to remember
all your other homeless children
and those who are restless or unconnected
or lonely, that we may help in providing
shelter and caring for them.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The little Lord Jesus
lay down His sweet head

Oh, God made human, were you tired
from squeezing your creative force
into the form of one tiny baby?
Thank you for becoming one of us.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The stars in the sky
look down where He lay

As the rest of the universe shone
on Bethlehem that night, so shine
into our lives, dispelling the dark fears
and disappointments and heartaches
that threaten to blot out your light.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The little Lord Jesus
asleep on the hay

How trusting you were to put
your frail self into Mary's hands.
Give us that trust that we may live
confidently by faith in you.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The cattle are lowing
the poor baby wakes

Oh, Jesus, do we disturb you still
with our raging and bellowing
as individuals and as nations?
Teach us to live in peace and harmony.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

But little Lord Jesus
no crying he makes

Did you know about priorities
even then, Jesus? We fuss about
the strangest things—
the cost of Christmas trees and the
busyness of buying Christmas presents,
and the yumminess of Christmas dinner.
Help us know what is important
at Christmas and all year through.
Grant quietness to our souls.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

I love Thee Lord Jesus

And I know that my ability to love you
and to love others is a gift from you.
Thank you for loving us, and help us
share that gift with everyone.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle
'til morning is nigh

Stay especially by those who are sick in
mind, body, relationships, or spirit, and
all those we name aloud or in our hearts.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Book Reviews

REASON FOR THE HOPE: THE FUTURES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGATES. By Katarina Schuth, O. S. F. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989. xiv and 234 pages. Paper. $15.95.

Despite a series of negative statistics, this study of preparation for ordination in the Roman Catholic Church maintains an optimistic tone. The author, a Franciscan nun and a cultural geographer, mapped Catholic education at its 50 theologates (seminaries and similar institutions) through a series of on-site visits and through questionnaires. Chapters include historical background, mission and management, personnel and students, formation programs, and future goals.

In the twenty years since Vatican II the number of candidates for ordination has shrunk from about 8,000 to about 3,600. Candidates for priesthood make up about 60% of the students at the theologates; the rest are laymen and laywomen, plus women religious. Students now average 30 years of age, and fewer have studied at Catholic institutions prior to their seminary years—56% instead of the 95% of 20 years ago. 75.2% have two parents still living together; 18.6 have one deceased parent; only 6.2 come from families of divorce or separation.

Faculties note a neo-conservatism in the student bodies—a lot of interest in vestments and the wearing of habits, and political attitudes reflecting the reactionary side of American society. Yet 54% of seminarians think that women should be ordained, and only 63% find celibacy meaningful. Many faculty believe that the seminaries are no longer getting really excellent students: "The top has been cut off."

Formation programs have increased in sophistication, as they help seminarians to grow in their personal and spiritual life, in academic ability, and in pastoral skills. Models for formation include "integration," in which students develop a capacity for critical reflection on their personal values and the results of their ministry, and "identification," in which students are taught to conform to an objective standard. Most formation models land somewhere between these polar opposites. The best way to teach formation is with a spiritual director.

The challenges are many. 70% of lay campus ministry leaders do not consider priesthood because of the requirement for celibacy. Ministry in Catholic parishes, given the shortage of priests, requires extensive lay involvement, but this is a context experientially unknown by seminary faculties. Seminarians realize they will have to collaborate with the non-ordained, but they feel unprepared for it. By the year 2,000 half of American Roman Catholics will be Hispanic, a large number Asian, and many elderly. Students are eager to work one-on-one; the church needs them to work with groups. Faculty with appropriate formation and academic training are hard to find. Boards of Directors are only beginning to move beyond advisory responsibilities to real governance; they are still 65% clergy dominated. The church must subsidize each student to the tune of $13,000-15,000 a year.

Perhaps it is the dedication, skill, and high resolve of those preparing people for ministry that fill Schuth with hope. Perhaps it is her own openness to a Spirit-filled future. Perhaps it comes from the commitment of those who value the formation given the students—from the faculty who experience personal fulfillment in their teaching and research, and from students who confess they are receiving excellent education.

Two reactions: first, this book could have been of the "Ain't it awful" genre. Since it is not, while identifying honestly all the problems, it may well free the Catholic Church to make the kinds of changes and to commit the kinds of resources that will redeem a very troubled group of theologates. Secondly, while the differences from the Lutheran theological scene are

enormous, there are also some similarities. Were it not for the ordination of women twenty years ago, our enrollment statistics would be nearly as bad. Where we have most to learn from these sisters and brothers is in the area of personal and spiritual formation, but whether their system would work in our less structured context is actually quite dubious.

All of us need to share and support the author's hope that the church will be well served by those who are now preparing for ordained ministry in the Catholic Church.

Ralph W. Klein
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

QUEST FOR SANCTITY: SEVEN PASSAGES TO GROWTH IN FAITH. By Gerald R. Grosh, S.J. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988. 200 pages. Paper. $10.95.

Styles of spiritual direction are probably as varied and as many as there are spiritual directors. This book describes the experience of training spiritual directors and doing spiritual direction at the Jesuit Renewal Center in Milford, Ohio. The center, which Gerald Grosh helped to found, is well known in Roman Catholic circles as a respected retreat community for training in retreat direction and spirituality for both lay and "religious."

Drawing from the theories of Kierkegaard, Erik Ericson, and St. Ignatius, Grosh delineates seven developmental stages which most people pass through as they grow in faith. The first three stages relate to the faith journey of people who have not yet entered into a personal relationship with God. The last four describe the journey after the relationship has been established. According to Grosh, we begin, in stage one, as people of principle for principle's sake who see God primarily as Lawgiver. By the time we reach the last stage we have grown to be people of compassion and self-giving love, able to respond in love to others because we have personally experienced the sacrificial love of God ourselves.

Because of the book's emphasis on a personal relationship with God, it is probably most useful to people who experience prayer in terms of that relationship. For people who see prayer more as the totality of lived experience, the director's frequent suggestion to "take it to the Lord in prayer" may seem a simplistic response, especially if one is experiencing an absence or alienation from God, as in a deep and painful dark night experience. In fact, these people may find the all-knowing and all-knowable God of the author a bit hard to take. The paradoxical, unknowable dimension of God is absent from the book.

All things considered, however, the book is an excellent resource for anyone interested in spiritual direction and the spiritual journey. Grosh uses verbatims—simulated transcripts from direction sessions—to make the material concrete. The director's responses are helpful examples of "listening with the third ear"—listening to underlying meaning and feeling, and reflecting it back to the directee. A study of the verbatims will be instructive to anyone involved in direction, directors and directees alike.

A word to the wise. While the intent of the author is to present a descriptive account of the direction process, we may be tempted to interpret in prescriptively, to try to figure out where we are in the journey in order to advance ourselves through the stages, hoping one day to be able to say we have arrived. This would be a mistake. We need constantly to remind ourselves that the journey is itself the destination. The questions are the answer. In the words of fourteenth century Christian mystic, Catherine of Siena, "All the way to heaven is heaven."

Jane Seagren
Batavia, Illinois

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ITS LITERARY ENVIRONMENT. By David E. Aune. Library of Early Christianity 8. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1987. 260 pages. Cloth. $22.95. Paper. $10.95.

David Aune, Professor of Religious Studies at Saint Xavier College in Chicago, has the ambitious goal of setting the books of the New Testament into the literary world of the first century. That is no easy task. An adequate description draws on the ancient literary and rhetorical theoreticians as well as the surviving literature to describe how ancient Greek-speaking people would read, hear, and categorize the New Testament writings. One must also describe the literary genres accurately, in words that describe the ancient categories to contemporary people. That is no small task in our world, where many people have not read Vergil, Horace, Martial, Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, Menander, Plutarch, Sextus Empiricus, the sillographers, or the Doxographers in English, let alone in Greek or Latin. Let me say at once, Aune is up to the task. The editor of the series, Prof. Wayne Meeks, made a wise choice in inviting Aune to write this volume.

No short review can describe the riches of this volume. Its value derives from the task attempted and the author's competence. A short introduction makes clear that "every book of the New Testament reflects to varying degrees an accommodation between Jewish religious and ethical values and traditions and Hellenistic forms of linguistic, literary, rhetorical, and conceptual expression. The Christianity of the New Testament is a creative combination of Jewish and Hellenistic traditions transformed into a *tertium quid* ("a third something"), that is, a reality related to two known things but transcending them both." Aune points out that we are only now beginning to know the literature of the "lower classes" of the Roman Empire. Christianity was at home in those lower classes. We can now place it into the context of its world, the world of the *hoi polloi*. Literary genres and forms are also social conventions which determine what meaning readers (or auditors) anticipate and draw from a text. For that reason a knowledge of literary genres is essential for a correct understanding of the New Testament's original sense. Aune defines genre as "a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring configuration of literary features involving form (including structure and style), content, and function." Forms are "primarily constituent elements of the genres that frame them."

Aune describes and evaluates the NT documents in the light of the genres of the Hellenistic world in seven compact and illuminating chapters. Four NT literary categories are discussed in the light of ancient extra-biblical documents and the Old Testament: (1) Gospels and Greco-Roman biography; (2) Luke-Acts and ancient historiography; (3) Early Christian letters and homilies in the light of ancient epistolography; and (4) The Apocalypse and ancient revelatory literature. There are Greco-Roman analogues to the NT documents in every case! I will not attempt to describe his conclusions in detail here. In each case Aune describes the relevant ancient literary types, lists their constituent parts, and enumerates their characteristic features and goals. He then contrasts the New Testament documents with this literature. There are no footnotes, but Aune provides frequent references to ancient texts and extensive selective bibliographies at the end of each chapter.

I am enthusiastic about this book. It is the first volume since Paul Wendland's *Die urchristliche Literaturformen* (1912) to focus on the literary genres in the light of the surviving literature of early Judaism and the early Roman Empire. Aune's scholarship is impressive. His reasoning is in most cases persuasive—though I wish he had considered ancient utopias in relation to the Apocalypse, not just ancient revelatory literature. Sections of this book will be required reading in seminary courses. Pastors who wish a refreshing way of rethinking the nature of NT texts should read Aune's text. It is an impressive and useful book, a valuable addition to any exegetical library.

Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE REVISED ENGLISH BIBLE WITH THE APOCRYPHA. New York: Cambridge/Oxford University Press. 1,296 pages. Cloth. $21.95.

When the complete New English Bible was published in 1970 (the New Testament had appeared separately in 1961), it bore the stamp of its principal editors: C. H. Dodd for the New Testament, Sir Godfrey Driver for the Old. The REB updates and replaces the NEB; it is a major improvement.

It was the Old Testament of NEB that came in for the most criticism because it frequently emended the text without informing the reader and because it adapted many controversial etymologies of Hebrew words based on Arabic parallels (this tendency was credited to Driver). The most notorious of these cases was Judg 1:14 and has now been corrected.

NEB As she sat on the ass, she broke wind, and Caleb said, 'What did you mean by that?'
REB She dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb asked her, 'What do you want?'

Another problem due to a dubious etymology appeared in Zech 13:5.

NEB I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil who has been schooled in lust from boyhood.
REB I am not a prophet, I am a worker on the land, for the land has been my possession from my early days.

Footnotes indicating textual changes have been made far more complete in the REB. In addition, "thou" has been replaced as the pronoun of preference for God, and the language for humans has been made somewhat more inclusive ("friends" instead of "brothers" in Paul). The REB includes the titles for the Psalms, an acknowledgment of their role in the canonical text; NEB had dropped them. Unfortunately, REB continues to rearrange the order of verses in some books (Job 24:2,6,3,9 and Job 41:1-6 follows 39:30), but Isa 52:14 no longer appears after 53:2. Consultation with writers and poets has greatly enhanced its literary grace and readability.

In general, the editors replaced the unusual or shocking with something more "mainstream."

Gen 11:1
NEB Once upon a time all the world spoke a single language....
REB There was a time when all the world spoke a single language....

Song of Songs 2:1
NEB I am an asphodel in Sharon....
REB I am a rose of Sharon....

Finally, a few "howlers" have been detected and removed, making for more comfortable public reading.

Job 7:20
NEB Why hast thou made me thy butt?
REB Why have you made me your target?

Job 18:11
NEB The terrors of death suddenly beset him and make him piss over his feet.
REB Terror of death suddenly besets him so that he cannot hold back his urine.

The Revised English Bible is a major improvement on an already very good version. It will soon be joined by a new edition of the RSV. Take and read.

Ralph W. Klein

REALISM AND HOPE IN A NUCLEAR AGE. By Kermit B. Johnson. Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 1988. vi and 133 pages. Paper. $8.95.

Kermit Johnson, retired Chief of U.S. Army Chaplains, writes from the tension between the two worlds of the "warrior" and the "peacemaker." He speaks in terms of a series of tensions, each of which highlights the degree to which our world has divided into warring camps. "Enemy-thinking," Johnson suggests, is rampant, not only in the Pentagon but also in the peace movement.

Those with interest in chaplaincy may start with the appendices, where Johnson describes his own struggle to reconcile chaplaincy with prophetic ministry. His is an attempt to define a chaplaincy *to* the military as distinct from a military chaplaincy that serves as a tool *of* the military.

The book's title describes a fundamental tension: a "realistic" assessment leads us to confront the possibility (or probability) of nuclear holocaust, but "hope" demands that we begin from our encounter with God. For Johnson, that encounter should not lead to apocalyptic despair, to triumphalism, or to smug withdrawal. It should lead to a sober assessment of the world in which we live and a commitment to act in it. Like Barth, Johnson is inclined to break windows in churches so we can see what we should be looking at. He sees "sober assessment" putting us between Munich and Sarajevo—avoiding "appeasement" on the one hand and a spiral of violence that leads inevitably to war on the other. He is convinced that renunciation of nuclear weapons is the most realistic option available and that continued dependence on nuclear deterrence is both unrealistic and immoral.

The argument is clear and passionate, and it may provide a basis for dialogue across the tension of warring camps.

Steven Schroeder
Cedar Falls, Iowa

PEACE AND THE JUST WAR TRADITION: LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVES IN THE NUCLEAR AGE. Edited by M. J. Stelmachowitz. St. Louis: Concordia, 1987. 119 pages. Paper. $8.95.

"Justifying War in the Nuclear Age: Some Lutheran Perspectives on Armed Conflict" would be a more appropriate title for this collection of essays published under the auspices of LCUSA. It is misleading for "peace" to have such a prominent place in the title of a book that gives so little attention to the concept, except in a purely negative sense.

The introduction by Lindberg highlights sections of the *Augsburg Confession* to orient discussion in a Lutheran context. Lutheran theology, according to Lindberg, "liberates us from both the illusion that the next technological breakthrough will save us and the despair that nuclear holocaust is just around the corner." This could be a promising basis on which to criticize "Star Wars"; it does not, however, serve that purpose in this book.

Essays by Berg, Brand, Meilander, and Vessey are unqualified justifications for deterrence strategy, and they assume that nuclear weapons are "givens" and that our primary concern in discussing them must be deterring attack by the Soviet Union. Brand *begins* with two "fundamental facts": nuclear weapons and antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union, then rejects the concept of the "global village" as misleading. He prefers an image of a "nervous, agitated, tense, and fragmented" global *city*. This does not bode well either for peacemaking or for urban ministry!

Childs and Jersild provide the best essays in the collection. Childs in particular, with his "ethic of anticipation," lays the groundwork for a reappropriation of the traditional "two kingdoms" approach that sees the eschatological future of God's kingdom speaking to the affairs of history. Political institutions are not *orders* of creation so much as fragments of a *fallen* creation subject to criticism and transformation. Childs calls for a "pacifism of reconciliation" grounded in the conviction of an open (and transformable) future. Jersild, through repudiat-

ing the label of nuclear pacifist because he maintains that a "minimal" nuclear deterrent is necessary, argues that "the only realistic use of just war criteria is to demonstrate that the use of force with the immense destructive power of nuclear weaponry is unjustifiable."

Lindberg, Childs, and Jersild offer theological bases on which to criticize existing policy and are cognizant of the distinction between a Lutheran understanding of the one God's two rules and traditional just war theory. A careful reader could pick up on those essays and develop a critical perspective both on current policy and its theological justification. Unfortunately, the bulk of the essays join in what Childs calls "a view of the future of history that is closed to any hope of lasting peace of justice."

Steven Schroeder

ETHICS: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY. By James W. McClendon, Jr. Nashville: Abingdon, 1986. 400 pages. Cloth. $22.95.

This book is confessional in origin and ecumenical in scope. McClendon works within the "baptist" tradition, but he works with the conviction that his material will be of interest even to those who are not direct heirs of that tradition.

This volume is the first of a projected three-volume systematic theology. McClendon is convinced that systematic theology has been horribly remiss in "leaving ethics till last and then leaving it out entirely." He begins his constructive effort with a discussion of ethics. For McClendon, ethics is "finding the shape of the common life in the body of Christ." Ethics should be the first chapter in any systematic theological enterprise, for only if we have found the shape of the common life in Christ can we begin to investigate the doctrines and dogma that support that common life. Only then can we understand the apologetic and speculative positions that such a common life calls forth.

Like Stanley Hauerwas (another colleague working in the "baptist" tradition), McClendon elaborates a different paradigm for ethics: ethics as a matter of being. For those used to an ethics-as-action paradigm and for those used to the even more truncated paradigm of ethics-as-action-in-tough-cases, McClendon's proposal is uncomfortable. The ethics-as-action paradigms allow us to play our grand moment on stage, and then bow gracefully into the wings and that comfortable darkness of moral neutrality and ethical disengagement when the moment of crisis passes. But if ethics is no mere matter of doing, but more a matter of being, then we are in trouble. If ethics is a matter of who we are—or aren't—then we are always morally on call. If ethics is a matter of identity, then the moral theater is no proscenium, but theater-in-the-round with a continuous script.

McClendon elaborates three strands in his presentation of ethics: an organic, a communal, and an anastatic strand. Simply put, he is saying that we are formed, malformed, or transformed by what we love or do not love, by what we belong to or are a part of, and by what we believe in or don't believe in. In the book McClendon articulates the Christian dimensions of each strand: the organic strand and the embodied self, the communal strand and the social self, and the anastatic strand and participation in Christ's resurrection. These strands are best understood narratively. He illustrates each with a story: Jonathan and Sarah Edwards (organic), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (communal), and Dorothy Day (anastatic). In illustrating each strand with a story, McClendon challenges us to articulate our own stories. This, he is convinced, is what ethics is all about.

McClendon's book is unfinished, because he alone cannot complete it. Only the readers can bring the book to a close, as they try to understand the three strands of ethics in their own lives, in the communities of which they are a part, in their participation in the body of Christ. The book is a challenging one, particularly to those who are not direct heirs of the "baptist" vision. Attend to it with care—and a sheaf of blank pages.

Martha Ellen Stortz
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

PAX ROMANA AND THE PEACE OF JESUS CHRIST. By Klaus Wengst. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1987. x and 245 pages. Paper. $14.95.

Wengst, Professor of New Testament at the University of Bochum in West Germany, examines the effect of social status and geographic location on early Christian attitudes toward the *Pax Romana* that prevailed from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius.

In the first section he makes clear that he is writing history from below, that is, from the position of the oppressed. Wengst regards the effects of the Roman rule of the Mediterranean world as beneficial only to the ruling classes. Peace was only achieved by military victory and oppression and maintained by almost constant warfare or conquest on the borders of the empire. (The parade example is Tacitus' description of the conquest of Britain.) *Pax et securitas* really meant oppression, heavy taxation, slavery for the peoples of the provinces, exploitation of their agriculture and natural resources which flowed to Rome, and forced labor to construct roads, bridges, aqueducts, and baths. Urbanization is not a blessing, but the destruction of local culture and industry. Roman law turns out to be a means of domination through the support of class distinctions. One can summarize Wengst's interpretation as a *tour de force* in which the Pax Romana is peace achieved by violence or militarism.

Wengst then examines how the New Testament reflects attitudes toward Roman rule. In line with much recent interpretation Jesus is presented as a Gandhi-like protestor against Rome. The Kingdom of God is given a largely "political" interpretation, though Jesus does not advocate rebellion. Paul is ambivalent. He questions the "peace and security" slogan of Roman propaganda, yet advises Christians to obey the government. Wengst does not ask whether Paul affirms some of the social values of Roman rule or borrows thoughts from popular philosophy (he never refers to 1 Thess 4:9-12!); nor does he ask whether he represents the artisan or even the upper classes.

Luke is upper-class pro-Roman. He presents the Roman military as friendly to the ruled, defenders of rights, etc. (Wengst does not ask about the similar presentation in Q). 1 Clement regards Rome as benevolent; any opposition from Rome is abnormal. Here the church is already modeling itself on Roman social layering (the laity appear as a group for the first time in Clement!), acclimatizing itself to the political environment. In the same decade as Luke and 1 Clement the Apocalypse is the most anti-Roman document in the New Testament. One cannot account for the variety by saying that the writers reflect different periods in the life of the church. Rather we must ask the question whether the peripheralized, the marginalized, and the oppressed do not become an important hermeneutical category for distinguishing the spirits.

This book is heavily documented. It is an excellent work because Wengst takes a position, thinks it through to the end, and then applies it to the twentieth century. But it also raises questions. I wish to raise only two. (1) Wengst's reading of the Roman world is one-sided. He holds that everything regarded by most scholarship as a benefit of the Roman world is an evil. He can only maintain that by over-interpreting the evidence. The aqueduct at Caesarea was built by soldiers of the VI and X legions, not by forced labor (inscriptions on the aqueduct itself make that clear). Wengst does not ask what the alternatives to Roman rule might have been. The Parthian empire to the East was no better. The movement of peoples outside the borders was not caused by Rome, e.g. the Celtic thrust into Asia Minor long before the Romans controlled it. Certainly the history of Palestine itself 103 to 60 B.C.E. was not a period of peace—even when Jews ruled Jews. (2) Wengst is too optimistic about his hermeneutical proposal. In effect, he combines Jesus and the Apocalypse. But is it so clear that the Apocalypse is on the side of the poor and oppressed? Its author betrays a hatred of Roman culture and business. Are Luke and Clement, to say nothing of Paul, really wrong in their evaluation of Roman rule? In my opinion the jury is still out.

Edgar Krentz

ETHICS AND COMMUNITY. By Enrique Dussel. Translated by Robert R. Barr from Spanish. Theology and Liberation Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988. 260 pages. Cloth. $26.95. Paper. $13.95.

Dussel takes as axiomatic the legitimacy of doing theology from the perspective of the poor. But he acts as if that perspective were monolithic and its theological and ethical implications were both uniform and undebatable. As a consequence, this book consists merely of a set of theological claims and ethical assertions. Though I found myself in agreement with most of Dussel's conclusions, he is not thereby freed of the ethical task of making critical and constructive arguments in support of them.

This lack of argumentation shows in both parts of the book. In the opening section, which focuses on ten themes in theological ethics, Dussel delineates quite clearly his positions on such foundational issues as the relationship between the church and the state and civil disobedience. He does not, however, compare his conclusions to those of other liberation theologians, and he frequently implies that any contrasting point of view must be rooted in a theology of domination. That of course may—but only may—be the case. Such a judgment requires defense. Compelling arguments can be made in favor of several of Dussel's conclusions, but he does not develop such lines of reasoning.

In the second half of his work, he presumes that his conclusions follow in self-evident and incontestable fashion from the communal life of faith. Here he examines ten "disputed" questions. But his reasoning is faulty. For example, in regard to the justifiability of revolutionary violence Dussel simply begs the question. He asserts that a nonviolent prophet and martyr like Oscar Romero upbuilds the church with his blood, but concludes that such an individual cannot be a political hero and that such means cannot prove adequate to the task of liberation, at least not in all historical circumstances. Such an analysis does not settle the disputed question at all. Even though I concur with his conclusion in this particular case, I find little solace in his reasoning, particularly in his neat compartmentalizing of church and state. Indeed, many liberation theologians have demonstrated that the perspective of the poor directly challenges such crude, two-kingdom frameworks.

Dussel identifies several of the most important economic issues, both theological and ethical, of our time. His examination of the work ethic, transnationals, the arms race, economic dependence, international loans, *and the institutional violence of all these structures*, is very helpful in so far as it clarifies issues that block life in community. I look forward to the day when the passions that fuel such clarity of vision are channeled into full-blown ethical arguments.

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WHEN THEOLOGY LISTENS TO THE POOR. By Leonardo Boff. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. xi and 147 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

This collection of essays will be most valuable to those involved in "pastoral" practice grounded in solidarity with the poor (meaning, of course, pastors, but also "activists" inside and outside the church).

The first essay connects contemporary theologies with Vatican II's shift from "ecclesiocentrism" (church-centeredness) toward "mundocentrism" (world-centeredness). For Boff, one of the most important ways to distinguish among post-Vatican II theologies is to determine whether they take Vatican II as a point of arrival or as a point of departure. Boff clearly places liberation theology in the latter category: "The theology of liberation," he writes, "is an acceptance of the meaning of the Council in a framework of the religious and political interests of the poor."

The *practice* of the theologian constructs his/her theological framework. Neither the practice nor the framework can be understood apart from the social and historical context within which construction takes place. For Boff, liberation theology is rooted in the 16th century struggle of Bartolome de las Casas to affirm the humanity

of indigenous people *against* the tendency of the 16th century church to dehumanize them and "baptize" their slaughter. Human rights, in a biblical sense, are to be identified with the rights of the oppressed. There is a kind of "hierarchy" of rights, but it begins with those at the bottom, those that are most fundamental. Boff insists that the rights of the poor are founded not in human nature (as the North American and European revolutions of the 18th century insisted) but in the nature of God. The rights of the poor are the rights of God; denial of rights is a denial of God. To deny the humanity of the oppressed is to deny the divinity of God. Boff finds "allies" among those who work "at the base" and sees the denial of God not so much in atheism as in idolatry. This book helps us think about the forms idolatry takes in the modern world.

Boff takes the centrality of the world seriously. His Franciscan spirituality resonates with strands of Lutheranism that affirm secularity. Not unlike Luther, Boff sees resurrection in the heart of crucifixion. This focuses attention on humanity, even to the extent of equating resurrection with fully human life, and it incarnates the Franciscan embrace of death as sister. It also makes for a strikingly "mundocentric" outlook that gives rise to a practical theology of the cross from which Lutherans and others have much to learn.

Steven Schroeder

LEXEGETE. LECTIONARY SOFTWARE FOR STUDY OF THE BIBLE. YEAR A GOSPELS. Edited by David Buehler. Dartmouth, MA: Tischrede Software, 1986. [Rev. version, 1989.] 22-page manual in ring binder; three 3-1/2" Macintosh diskettes or three 5-1/4" MS DOS diskettes. $59.50.

The computer is changing work habits and research possibilities, gradually making its way beyond personal and financial record-keeping in parish administration into the professional work of the clergy. LEXEGETE is a user-interactive exegetical and liturgical computer program to aid preaching on the lectionary Gospels. Two volumes are available, Series C Gospels (Luke, 1989) and Series A (Matthew, rev. ed., 1989). This review, based on the revised manual and unrevised diskettes, evaluates the Macintosh version of the Matthew lectionary as exegetical aid and as computer program for the busy pastor. Tischrede Software also puts out an MS DOS version for IBM-compatible computers.

Exegetical aid for preaching. The editor, Rev. David Buehler, has enlisted contributions from some 35 Episcopalian and Lutheran parish pastors, professional exegetes, liturgiologists, and teachers of preaching. Many names will be familiar: O. C. Edwards, Sherman C. Johnson, Arland Hultgren, Walter Taylor, Robert F. Capon, Richard E. Koenig, Jay Rochelle, and James Bailey, to name a few. The contributors interpret the Gospel for each Sunday and major liturgical observance (Christmas, Name of Jesus, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, All Saints, etc.) under the following rubrics: [Biblical] context, [philological and exegetical] Analysis, Strategy [for preaching], References [contemporary scholarship for further in-depth study], and Music Suggestions [hymns from the *LBW* and the Episcopal Church's *Hymnal 1982*]. Some writers suggest additional reading and worship enhancements beyond hymns, and cite relevant material from literature or theology. The advisory board includes George Forell, Will Herzfeld, Fred Meuser, Ambrose Moyo, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and others. Buehler has gathered a significant group of writers and advisors.

The exegetical treatment varies in depth considerably, as it does in printed commentaries by different authors; yet every discussion presents valuable material to stimulate the preacher considerably. This computer program invites the user to edit and rearrange the textual interpretation, to add one's own ideas, to expand, correct, or deepen the insights from other sources, to develop it into an outline and then expand it into a completed sermon. Preachers can copy the material for each Sunday to another diskette while preserving the original unchanged. The user's file, thus developed and expanded, will grow into an invaluable resource as time goes on. LEXEGETE invites this kind of treatment; it

will become a valuable permanent resource returned to again and again.

Software Presentation. The Macintosh version comes on three diskettes, very tightly packed. The 1987 version has a number of flaws in the data entry. Spelling here and there is poor (wasn't the material run through a spell checker?). The Analysis section frequently cites Greek; the Greek font leaves much to be desired, not having all accents, no iota subscripts, and inadequate breathing marks. Perhaps future updates will use LaserGREEK (the Macintosh standard) or SMK Greek Keys (preferred by classicists). But give LEXEGETE high marks for using Greek! (The MS DOS version transliterates the Greek). The Hebrew font used occasionally is much better. A "Mini-Manual" comes with the software. It identifies each writer, gives abbreviation symbols and an excellent English Language bibliography on Matthew (I hope it was used in the update to be published this year). LEXEGETE contains MacWrite files, which one can easily open in Microsoft Word 4.0 (the word processor I much prefer) or other word processing programs.

This is a first, a computer commentary on the liturgical Gospels that aids in preparation for preaching and leading worship. It does not give prepared sermons or sermon outlines, but invites the user to think and interact with it. Issued in the two most widely used micro-computer operating systems, it deserves wide use. (PC Write is included with the MS DOS version, a useful acquisition.)

Buehler, developer of this software, deserves thanks. Even better, he deserves support through the purchase of this software. At the moment he is barely breaking even. An advertisement in *Lutheran Partners* 5.5 (September/October 1989):23 offers both Year A and Year C for $59.95. That's two years for the price of one. Buy them, get a good homiletical tool, and enable the preparation of LEXEGETE Series B and, eventually, the inclusion of the first two lessons also. You'll be glad you did.

Edgar Krentz

THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: AN INTERPRETATION. By Luke T. Johnson. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1986. xiv and 594 pages. Paper. $19.95.

This book is a strange mixture of introduction, exegesis, and theology. It is difficult to know for whom it is intended. The author states, "for those who want to understand the origin and shape of the New Testament writings but are unable to find a comprehensive introduction that is neither repellingly technical nor appallingly trivial." According to the dust jacket, these two questions are consistently addressed: "Why is there a New Testament in the first place?" and "Why does it look the way it does?" Johnson prefers an "Experience-Interpretation Model" to the historical model. Therefore, historical judgments are often missing or treated as not too important.

The book begins with a description of the "Symbolic World of the New Testament" (Roman rule, Hellenistic culture, Judaism) and of the "Christian Experience" in which the resurrection of Jesus plays the major role. These pages are one of the strengths of the book. After the treatment of the various books of the New Testament, there is an Epilogue, "The New Testament as the Church's Book," in which the canon is discussed.

The work is rich in information and interesting to read. However, the theological student needs more material than the book provides, yet the college student may get confused because too much is being discussed. The book also is quite uneven. Some parts of the New Testament are treated with much more detail than others (2 Corinthians has only 11 pages). The "two source" solution of the Synoptic problem is assumed but only briefly discussed and explained. Johnson says, "I treat the Synoptics together because they share not only the same symbolic universe but even the same narrative framework," but then each Gospel has its own chapter (Luke is taken together with Acts) because Johnson's "approach is closer to that of literary criticism." The most original part is the section on "Some Canonical Theses" in which he states that "it is the nature of

a canon to be closed" and rejects a "canon within the canon." Lutherans have usually emphasized that there is no closed canon. Can an interpreter really operate without such a "canon within the canon"?

Johnson suggests that the "NT writings be regarded as crystallizations of reflection on Torah in light of the experience of Jesus the Lord." They are "the indispensable prism through which Torah is to be read and understood." It seems to me that the NT claims to be much more than that and was so used by the church throughout the ages.

Is it really Pauline that "The 'righteous one who by his faith will live' is first of all Jesus"? Ephesians and 2 Timothy are treated as if they were authentic letters written by Paul or under his immediate authorization. Jude might come from "a follower of Jesus in Palestine during the first generation of the Christian movement." Johnson does not discuss the views of other scholars.

Wilhelm C. Linss
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JESUS AND THE ECONOMIC QUESTIONS OF HIS DAY. By Douglas E. Oakman. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, Volume 8. Lewiston, NY/ Queenston, ON: Edwin Mellen, 1986. xv and 319 pages. Cloth. $59.95 (series price $39.95).

Study of the historical Jesus has recently taken a new turn. Scholars reconstruct the social and political situation in Palestine to illuminate aspects of Jesus' life and teaching. Oakman's doctoral dissertation is a striking case in point.

After briefly describing the new sociological awareness in research into Christian origins, Oakman devotes two chapters to a discussion of land ownership, agricultural labor, land productivity, the type of crops grown, and the distribution of economic gains from the agricultural system. He concludes that land was concentrated in large latifundia in Palestine controlled by the wealthy elite. This resulted in wealth earned from the land flowing into the cities (Rome and Jerusalem are named), with the consequent impoverishment and growing indebtedness of the village peasantry. Most lived on a subsistence level. He paints a grim picture.

Oakman's sketch is valuable, through I have some reservations about it. There is a surprising paucity of reference to ancient sources in his notes. More serious, Oakman at times runs together evidence from before and after 70 C.E.—though he is careful to point out that only after 70 C.E. is there evidence of extensive land holding officially in the hands of the Roman State. There is not much discussion in this section of relations between the populace of the Gentile city territories (e.g. Scythopolis, Sepphoris, Ptolemais, Dor, Apollonia, Ashkelon, Gaza), and the Jewish population, which did not occupy most of the coastal plain, large sections of the Galilee, and Samaria. Oakman notes how difficult it is to estimate the tax burden on the average peasant freeholder. And there is almost no ancient data to evaluate whether the peasantry were more anti-Herodian than anti-Roman, more anti-Jerusalem than anti-Rome in the early first century.

The second part of this work examines the teaching and activity of Jesus in the light of Oakman's reconstruction of agrarian life. Oakman reconstructs how Galilean peasants would understand the parables of growth and other agrarian imagery, then evaluates the social implications of Jesus' contacts with other people. Jesus stresses God's providence, implies a devaluation of labor, and hints that God's rule undermines the current order of production. Jesus advocated remission of debts, a lessening of oppression by the landowners, and a new moral order of reciprocity and sharing. Himself a semi-rural artisan, Jesus probably had broad social contacts in villages, the estates in the Plain of Esdraelon, and probably also in the urban centers of Palestine. Jesus' ministry was thus a bid for social power on behalf of the disenfranchised, without advocacy of revolution. He called for new economic behavior to remove the exploitation of the poor.

Edgar Krentz

THE JEWS IN LUKE-ACTS. By Jack T. Sanders. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1987. xviii and 410 pages. Paper. $19.95.

Sanders sets out to describe "how the author of Luke-Acts portrays the Jews, *in toto* and *in partibus*, and to try to explain why he portrays them as he does." Luke-Acts is, he holds, a major resource for Antisemitism in the New Testament. By "Antisemitism" he means "a fundamental and systematic hostility toward Jews" (a definition borrowed from John Gager).

The argument is made in two ways. Part One proceeds thematically, investigating Luke's portrayal of various groups inside Judaism: Jewish leaders, Jerusalem, the Jewish people, the Pharisees, and outcasts and other peripheral elements in Jewish society. All these groups (except the marginalized) oppose God and are uniformly hostile to Jesus and the church's leaders, whom they try to kill—though Luke leaves room for some to accept Jesus. Luke's sympathies lie entirely with the marginal groups: outcasts, Samaritans, proselytes, God-fearers. They are the conduit through which salvation comes to the Gentiles.

The Pharisees are the exception to this picture. The Gospel differentiates between friendly and hostile Pharisees. Acts 15:15, the key passage, shows that Christian Pharisees cause the church problems. (All non-Christian Pharisees in Acts are friendly to the nascent church!) From that base Sanders argues that it is the "friendly Pharisees" who become Jesus' severe critics in the Gospel. The Pharisees *en bloc* are not linked with the "legists" (Sanders' translation of νομικοι) in 11:39-52, and so are not made responsible for Jesus' death. It is the legalist Christian Pharisees who are really Luke's antagonists. Torah fidelity and true repentance are mutually exclusive. Paul, the only Christian Pharisee portrayed sympathetically, is the unique non-Torah oriented Pharisee.

Part Two is a "Systematic Analysis," a one-theme commentary on Luke-Acts portrayal of the Jews, containing numerous sharp-sighted comments on specific passages. Future interpreters of Luke-Acts must of necessity argue with its specific interpretations. Often Sanders reads the text *in malam partem*, revealing as much about his own views as Luke's.

Part Three, "Concluding Observations," focuses the argument. Sanders rejects the theory that Jews persecuted the Lukan community, though the *birkat ha-minim* supports the concept of Jewish opposition. The real issue addressed is Jewish-Christian opposition (by Christian Pharisees) to the inclusion of Gentiles in the church. Luke does not distinguish Jewish Christians from Jews. Hence the rabid Lukan anti-Judaism.

Sanders argues his case passionately. But his fascinating reading of Luke-Acts raises a major problem for the historian which Sanders does not solve: Is Luke really concerned with anti-Semitic attitudes in an ethnic sense, or is the problem that occasions his style of writing actually a problem of community self-definition? In what geographical context must one then set Luke-Acts in the first century? Sanders' conclusion implies that Luke is not anti-Semitic, but anti Jewish-Christian. After all, Luke scarcely opposes either Peter or Paul, both Jews.

Edgar Krentz

THE FIRST SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS: THEIR HISTORY AND THEOLOGY. By Leo Donald Davis, S.J. Theology and Life Series, Vol. 21. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987. 342 pages. Paper. $17.95.

Davis has provided historians and theologians alike with a very useful volume, whether as a textbook or as a reference tool. It might seem like an obvious format to write chapters on each of the seven great councils, from Nicaea I in 325 through the Fourth in Chalcedon in 451 on to the Seventh, on iconoclasm, in 787. As Davis points out, all of this material on the Trinitarian and especially Christological controversies has been thoroughly covered elsewhere. But, as he rightly noticed, until now no single book pulled it all together in a convenient form organized around the councils, and in English.

Davis not only narrates the flow of the controversies well, but also points the reader

further with brief and judicious comments at the end of each chapter about the pertinent literature on each council. Readers from the West, such as Lutherans, will find three benefits here. First, it is a helpful resource for the common foundations of our Nicene and Chalcedonian faith. Second, it will introduce the intricacies of Orthodox Christology after Chalcedon, with heresies such as the Monothelite view that Christ had only a divine will, not a human one. Third, it will replace the stereotypical Western view that iconoclasm was simply about images or pictures with the realization that it was all about Christ, his divine and human natures. Thus, the final and major value of this fine book is ecumenical understanding.

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NEW STUDIES IN BONHOEFFER'S ETHICS. Edited by William J. Peck. Toronto Studies in Theology, Vol. 30. Bonhoeffer Series, No. 3. Lewiston, NY/ Queenston, ON: Edwin Mellen, 1987. xv and 284 pages. Cloth. $49.95 ($39.95 series subscription).

Paradoxically, the very work which Dietrich Bonhoeffer hoped would make a lasting contribution to theology and life in the world beyond Hitler's incarnate nightmare has received but cursory attention by comparison with interest in the prison correspondence and the early works on Christology, ecclesiology, and discipleship. The *Ethics* is the single focus of this collection.

Clifford Green reports on the reconstruction of the *Ethics*. A new chronology of the composition of the book is possible because of thorough analysis of handwriting and paper types found in the original manuscripts compiled by Eberhard Bethge. Robin Lovin uses the newly discovered sequence as a backdrop for correlating the personal and political milieu of the author with his work. Larry Rasmussen finds the beginnings of the Bonhoefferian "ethics as formation" in the *Ethics*, not as the central method of the book but as related to the Christocentric vision of humanity, nature, and history which predominates. Both "ethics as formation" and "ethics as command" comprise the two great subordinate themes of the book. Writing on the treatment of the issue of euthanasia, editor William Peck interprets Bonhoeffer's strong protest against National Socialist policy not only as a protest of the hour, written before the "final solution" would eclipse all other enormities of Nazi inhumanity. Bonhoeffer's words should also be seen as a contribution to the generation which would survive the Holocaust and be responsible to rebuild humane culture and civilization. This same responsibility for the future and faith in God's future in Christ, despite every horror and every sign of human decomposition, is the basis for Bonhoeffer's teaching that suicide is wrong because we have a gracious and faithful God. John Godsey discusses the *Ethics*' treatment of love of God and neighbor—love of the real, incarnate God in Jesus Christ who meets us in the real, unlovable, non-ideal humanity of the neighbor—as the connecting thread of Bonhoeffer's entire theology and life. Bonhoeffer's taught and lived doctrine of love is, Godsey believes, that element in Bonhoeffer which guarantees continued interest and use of that theology enunciated in the *Ethics*. Charles West looks especially at the use of the "Two-Kingdoms-Doctrine" (*Zwei-Reiche-Lehre*) and a theology of positive engagement based on Bonhoeffer's critical acceptance of the Melanchthonian "third use of the law." These Lutheran confessional categories dynamically inform Bonhoeffer's theology of responsibility under grace and form a bridge with both the Calvinist stance of critical engagement with the world and contemporary theologies of liberation.

This book examines the *Ethics* as an enduring and relevant contribution in its own right, and not just as an appendix to the prison correspondence.

Guy Chr. Carter
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UNDERSTANDING MODERN THEOLOGY. By Jeffery Hopper. 2 Volumes. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1986 and 1988. 338 pages, notes, index. Paper. $24.95 for both volumes.

This work introduces students to the cultural shift that makes modern theology different from premodern theology. Christian faith and its symbols were born amidst a premodern worldview that is now out of date. The problem is that popular Christianity still believes in the premodern way. To believe in the premodern way today is to commit idolatry (I:2). Only a distinctively *modern* theology will keep us from idolatry.

This is Hopper's thesis. The books, however, spend little time developing the thesis. Most pages report a survey of developments in Western science and philosophy. We review the careers of Galileo and Kant along with a couple dozen other *non*-theologians in order to describe what modern theology is. This could be a classroom text on the history of modern thought to describe the *setting* in which modern theologians must work.

We can distinguish modern from premodern thought on two counts. First, due to the influence of science, modern thought *rejects the idea of divine action in the world* and substitutes reliance upon natural laws. No more miracles! The question for modern theologians is this: How then does God act? He summarizes briefly the answers to this question given by Schleiermacher, Tillich, Kaufmann, Ogden, and Barth. If God acts uniformly in all events or through our subjective interpretation of all events, we can eliminate the notion that God acts miraculously in some events and not others. Disbelief in miracles is a "cultural change" (II:33) which has become an axiom of modern theology. The working assumption is that we have sufficient ground to make theological judgments on the basis of what happens in our cultural context; and we can do so regardless of the warrants arising from within the tradition itself.

The second distinguishing characteristic of modern thought is *historical relativity*. The modern maxim is this: We must interpret the Bible in its original historical context. Hopper seems to assume that the Bible can no longer be seen as having divine authorship. It must be seen as a human document. The implication for theology is that we must revise our doctrine of revelation. No longer can we think we have propositional truths about divine realities. We must rely upon a symbolic use of language and see our theological beliefs as constructions of human thinking. This humbles theology. Modern theology becomes "more modest, less dogmatic, more open to the theological suggestions of others."

Hopper says "the iconoclasm of modern theology does not mean the repudiation of the doctrines of Christian tradition but a continuing critical assessment of how and what they mean today." This statement is accurate, but the mood of the work is clearly one of chauvinism in favor of modern theology. When he describes our premodern ancestors he does so in patronizing terms, characterizing their world as small, dogmatic, legalistic, secure, and with "dehumanizing potential." Worst of all, our premodern Christian forebearers were absolutists. We moderns allegedly know the truth about how the natural world works and the truth about the relativity of culture, so we can now say: "Whenever religious doctrines, rituals, documents, and the like, are treated as having absolute status—an attribute belonging to God only—there is idolatry." And this statement is found on the same page as another line: "Modern theologians recognize the limited character of their own teachings and know that theological claims should be made humbly!"

Had this book been approached with the humility is prescribes, it would have included a sympathetic examination of the premodern roots of the Christian faith which we moderns are supposed to *re*interpret.

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THE LIVING WORD. By James D. Dunn. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1988. ix and 196 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Dunn is Professor of Divinity at the University of Durham and one of the more prolific New Testament scholars today. And what he writes is worth reading. *The Living Word* contains the W. H. Griffith Thomas Lectures delivered at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, in 1987. The names are significant, for they alert the reader that these lectures were delivered by a scholar who comes out of the Evangelical tradition in England to an audience that values that tradition highly. Read in that light, these lectures are highly interesting and quite provocative.

The lecturer was asked to discuss "something in the area of biblical interpretation." Dunn used the occasion to consider aspects of New Testament interpretation in relation to scriptural authority. He regards interpretation as a dialogue between the Scriptures in their historical context and the modern interpreters in theirs. Implications follow. Interpretation must be historical and critical because the NT texts are conditioned by their context! One dare not paper over the immense variety that is present, since the NT does not present an absolute and unchanging form of the gospel. But NT interpreters in the church must also be critical of themselves in the light of the traditions in which they stand. The authors' original intentions in the NT become useful for critiquing that tradition.

The next three lectures discuss the gospels as oral tradition (valuable historical material, but not handed on primarily as history), Jesus and Paul as liberal or heretical in their contexts (they in fact were!), and the problem of pseudonymity (the outcome of Jewish understanding of tradition as a vital force).

Dunn appends other articles to these lectures: "The Authority of Scripture according to Scripture" (a discussion of the Benjamin Warfield tradition) questions the adequacy of inerrancy as a category to describe the Bible. Dunn sharply separates himself from the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (a group that has, *mirabile dictu*, even attracted some Lutherans to its fold!). Dunn is squarely in the tradition of the Reformation on biblical authority and interpretation. The original printing of the article led Prof. Roger Nicole of Gordon-Conwell Seminary to respond with an article defending Warfield; Dunn prints the letter he wrote Prof. Nicole in response. The final chapter, "Levels of Canonical Authority," is in many ways the most interesting in the book. Dunn reflects on Prof. Brevard Childs' recent program in canonical criticism. Dunn appreciates Childs' concern, but argues for multiple levels of authority in the NT: tradition-historical, final author or composition, canonical level, and ecclesiastical level. Dunn argues that the second is most important for the exegete, the fourth most influential in the church. But the final author or final compositional level should norm the ecclesiastical.

Edgar Krentz

JUSTICE IN LATIN AMERICAN THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION. By Ismael Garcia. Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 1987. 210 pages. Paper. $13.95.

This work is divided into two parts: "Justice in the context of liberation" (chapters 1-3) and "Justice and its interpretation for economics and politics" (chapters 4-5). The two parts conform to the author's stated purpose: "(1) to clarify what 'justice' means to four major liberation theologians [Assmann, Bonino, Gutierrez, and Miranda], and (2) to describe the implication of their understanding of justice for their economic and political life." In the first chapter, he seeks to hold up how the centrality of justice and human rights moves and motivates the method, content, and history of Latin American liberation theology.

The second chapter explores the relationship of liberation and justice on three "levels." The first level, economic and sociopolitical liberation, deals with liberation in the area of sociopolitico-economic theory. Theories of "structural functionalism" (with an emphasis on "modernization") and "developmentalism" (distinguishing between "industrial" and "peripheral" nations) predominantly set the tone for

the international economy. Liberation theologians adopt "dependency theory" as a means to expose the domination and exploitation inherent in the other two theories, and to allow the Latin American poor to freely create a socialist/egalitarian society which more directly addresses their human needs and longings. The second level, historico-utopian liberation, deals with the vision of liberation theology. It is best summed up as "democratic socialism," accenting the twin concerns for political freedom and economic well-being. It is the poor who take a leading role in shaping the vision into concrete reality. The third level, faith and liberation, explores the religious dimension of liberative justice. God acts in history for "the well-being of all of creation" and especially for the poor. Christianity needs to recognize its social dimension, and faith and justice are to be regarded as intrinsically related. The church, which often has a propensity of siding with the rich and powerful, is called to repentance and conversion.

Chapter three juxtaposes the concept of justice in liberation theology with alternative forms of justice: natural law, positive law, and natural right. Each in its own way is incomplete in liberating from the "status quo" and hence does not adequately address the "needs of the poor." "If there is one issue all liberation theologians come together on, then it is their religious conviction that the core of divine revelation makes the needs of the poor the criterion of justice."

The final two chapters, which comprise the very brief second part of Garcia's work, make some salient points on what all economic well-being and political freedom might entail in Latin America. In terms of economic justice, the limitation of goods and services needs to be recognized, raising critical concerns about property ownership. Goods and services exist for the common good, and this will entail greater appreciation for the values of a true economic democracy, the right to work, and egalitarianism. Political justice is best described in terms of the order of democratic socialism. Political power must seek to empower the poor and the marginal and enhance the right of every person to freedom.

The reader of Garcia's work will probably have some pressing questions left unanswered. Nevertheless, this ought not detract from a truly masterful examination of the concept of justice as it is understood in Latin American liberation theology—the task which Garcia set out to accomplish.

Michael Hoy
Wausau, Wisconsin

THE GOSPEL IN PARABLE: METAPHOR, NARRATIVE & THEOLOGY IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS. By John R. Donahue, S.J. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1988. 254 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

Donahue knows very well the history of parable research and offers sage comments on that history: Adolf Jülicher's break (1888/1899) with 19 centuries of allegorizing and his use of rhetoric to get at the ethical content which he believed was at the heart of the parables; the research of C. H. Dodd and J. Jeremias (in the 1930s and 1940s), who stressed the eschatological more than the ethical; the work of Amos Wilder and Robert Funk (in the 1960s), featuring the power of metaphor not only as a literary device but even more as a theological and hermeneutical category, noting with Paul Ricoeur and J. D. Crossan (in the 1970s) how parables provoke disorientation and reorientation. Along the way Donahue locates himself in this tradition.

He also recognizes the contributions of sociological criticism as practiced by people like Gerd Theissen and John Riches and of cultural anthropology as used by Bruce Malina. And he appreciates the value of audience criticism (reception theory). But he himself approaches the parables using primarily the tools of redaction criticism and that form of narrative criticism called close reading.

He devotes a chapter to each of the Synoptic Gospels, paying particular attention to the parables unique to each Gospel. These chapters take the reader into the worlds of Matthew, of Mark, and of Luke, casting fresh light on the Gospels and on the parables imbedded in them.

The parables in Matthew focus on the ethics of discipleship and the peculiar justice of the kingdom and yet oddly invite readers to take an "ethical holiday" as they enter the world of the parables and live within that world for a refreshing moment. Mark as a whole is "a parabolic narrative," and Mark's Gospel (like the individual parables) presents a world full of paradox and wonder, where readers' normal way of viewing life is challenged, so that they can be opened up to God's gift. In his parables, Luke invites readers "to enter a world ruled now by grace in which the consequences of a graced life unfold."

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THE JUST DEMANDS OF THE POOR: ESSAYS IN SOCIO-THEOLOGY. By Marie Augusta Neal, S.N.D.deN. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987. v and 142 pages. Paper. $8.95.

Neal defines theology as "the search for God that rises out of human experience." Theology is never apolitical, for it either supports and bolsters the *status quo* or it critiques and seeks to transform it in order that altruism, not self-interest, might prevail in the socio-economic and political order.

Professor Neal is concerned about the global poor, especially the poor of the so-called "Third World," and how they might work to transform the prevailing system to make it just and human. Such a transformation must be premised on "[s]hared authority" which "is an experiment in process."

Neal lists five elements which what she calls a theology of world community would require. The most distinctively theological one is the fifth:

> A shift of emphasis from who God is to where God is in considering the immediate future. While we cannot know God fully in any historical era, we can discover manifestations of God's presence in reading the signs of the times.

Refuting the myth that there are not enough material resources to meet the needs of all, and, hence, a "life-boat" ethic in the "First World" would be in order, Professor Neal uses statistics from reputable sources to show that the issue in our time is considering "new forms of economic development." The litmus test of 'true' religion "is whether one's religious commitment includes a social calling, beyond a willingness to help alleviate the results of poverty, to participate in the elimination of its causes."

This collection is a valuable tool for anyone wishing to pursue the timely question of a global common good and how it relates to the fundamental confession that God acts in history to bring about justice for both the poor and the rich. Neal has included an extensive bibliography.

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Wartburg Theological Seminary

POST-REFORMATION REFORMED DOGMATICS. Volume 1: PROLEGOMENA TO THEOLOGY. By Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987. 365 pages. Paper. $12.95.

This is the first of a projected three-volume treatment of Reformed scholasticism, the period from the mid-16th to the late 18th centuries. This volume, divided into two parts, offers an introductory essay on the study of Protestant scholasticism and its historical antecedents in medieval and Reformation theology followed by a detailed analysis of the Reformed Scholastics' understanding of the relation of theology to piety (religion) and knowledge. The development of a Protestant scholasticism and its use of philosophical categories and argument is seen not as a digression from early Reformation theology but as both natural and necessary. The churches of the Reformation required a process of theological consolidation in order to exist cohesively as churches in their own right. It was not only the polemical onslaught of the Counter-Reformation but, and perhaps even more, the need for Reformation theology to secure a place for itself in the modern university which drove

Protestant thought to develop a rigorously scientific method of investigation and self-scrutiny. The author holds that Post-Reformation theologians can hardly be called to task for doing just that. The more extreme biblicists of Reformed scholasticism, most notably Francis Turretin, are identified as late codifiers of the period and not representative of the earlier creative thrust of Reformed thought.

Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics promises to compare favorably in detail with I. A. Dorner's 19th century standard work, *History of Protestant Theology*. The Subject of Muller's scholarship deserves more thorough and sympathetic treatment than it usually receives in the seminary survey or graduate seminar on early modern theology. American religionists who follow the continuing debate over the history of biblical inerrancy sparked by Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture*, will want to consult Muller as well.

Guy Chr. Carter

MOVING FRONTIERS. READINGS IN THE HISTORY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH–MISSOURI SYNOD. Edited by Carl S. Meyer. St. Louis: Concordia, 1986 (second printing). 524 pages. Paper. $13.95.

This book challenges the so-called "frontier thesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner ("The West and American Ideals," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 5 [October 1914]), according to which the American churches were molded in both order and outlook by the frontier experience. Meyer's own thesis, found in the introductory preface, comes close to that of Sydney E. Ahlstrom (*A Religious History of the American People* [New Haven: Yale, 1972], 453-54), who claims that, for certain European confessional groups (e.g. Lutherans), the very opposite may have been the case: the frontier experience of geographic and cultural anomie may have served to solidify the hierarchical, doctrinal, and European content of religious life in the New World. According to Meyer, the Old Lutherans who founded the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States following the initial Saxon immigration to Missouri in 1938 reacted to the rural/urban geographic frontier, to the communications frontier proposed by the language barrier and the new opportunities opened up by the mass media of print and radio, but specifically and emphatically *not* to the new theological frontiers of the new land with its Puritan theological substratum.

This is not only a source-book of Missouri Synod history; it is a significant artifact of that history. The selections are broadly representative of all phases of the denomination's life, from the European origins to its organization and early growth to ecumenical relations and the global mission of that synod. There is one glaring omission. The single most controversial document ever issued by Missouri which continues to characterize the Synod's doctrinal position and to frustrate attempts at a truly national unity among American Lutherans is referred to but not printed, viz. Franz Pieper's "A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod" of 1932. This omission is especially curious, given the three in-depth essays on "A Brief Statement" written by Meyer himself and published two years prior to the publication of this anthology.

What is needed is a new edition of *Moving Frontiers*, and not merely another reprint. Meyer's own verdict on the work holds true: "The volume has shortcomings.... These shortcomings will not be such, however, as to vitiate the work or nullify its aims." The idea of re-editing classics in American church-historical spadework really ought to catch on sometime and somewhere in American theological publishing. This "shortcoming"—not of the book but of its transmitters—may yet be put to rights by Concordia church historian Quentin F. Wesselschmidt and colleagues, who are considering a sequel to *Moving Frontiers* as part of the 150th anniversary of Concordia Seminary. It is hoped that such a companion to the work of an earlier generation of Concordia scholars will show how the frontiers have continued to move.

Guy Chr. Carter

EARLY CHRISTIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE. By Robert L. Milburn. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988. xviii and 319 pages. Cloth. $48.00.

Robert Milburn, "sometime University Lecturer in Church History at Oxford" (as the dust jacket puts it), surveys the entire field of early Christian accomplishments in the arts and architecture. In eighteen chapters he discusses symbolism, house churches, catacomb art (primarily Roman), glyptic art in stone and ivory, church architecture, mosaics, textiles, gems, coins, metalwork, glass, ceramics, and book illustrations.

It is an impressive book. Milburn's range of knowledge is both broad and deep. He is necessarily selective in sites and objects covered; an informed reader will find most of the significant ones discussed somewhere in the book, e.g., the best known Christian sarcophagi, the Cleveland Museum's Good Shepherd and Jonah sculptures; churches erected by Constantine (Bethlehem, St. Peter's Jerusalem) and Justinian (Hagia Sophia, St. Catharine's at Mt. Sinai, etc.), the churches in Salonika, Santa Sabina in Rome, the early church underlying the cathedral at Aquileia in North Italy, Qalat Siman, in Syria, etc. He mentions the curious "double church" at Aquileia and refers to parallels in the North Adriatic regions, but does not mention the one recently excavated in Geneva. (He does not discuss Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee or the churches in the Negev.) He gives a separate chapter to Fonts and Baptisteries (deservedly), but scatters the information about martyria through the chapters on church architecture.

Milburn discusses early mosaics in Rome (Santa Maria Maggiore) and Ravenna (Orthodox and Arian baptistries), though Salonika and other sites are briefly described. Aquileia's mosaic is mentioned in relation to the church, but not in the chapter on mosaics. I miss a discussion of painting, whether icons or frescos. The minor arts are not slighted. In the chapter on ivories he carefully describes, among others, the Diptych of Anastasius and the throne of Maximian (without picturing him in the mosaic from Ravenna).

Milburn has considered his reader's needs carefully. Four line maps locate the key sites that contain monuments. 194 black-and-white illustrations illuminate the written text. (It is a pity that some could not be printed in color.) A bibliography guides the interested reader to major works of scholarship; Milburn avoids the temptation to comprehensiveness that merely threatens the reader. At the same time, footnotes point to publications that give comprehensive treatment of specific structures or works of art.

No reader who looks for a comprehensive introduction to the art of earliest Christendom can find a better guide.

Edgar Krentz

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY. By Daniel A. Helminiak. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987. xvii and 235 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

This book is divided into three parts, the first dealing with the contribution of psychology, the second with the contribution of theism, and the third with the contribution of Christian belief. Helminiak describes the first part in terms of "authenticity." Spiritual development is *human* development and is therefore within the purview of psychology. He offers a lucid account of psychological theories of development, including those of Erickson, Grant, Levison, Gould, Piaget, Kohlberg, Fowler, and Loevinger. The one weakness of the section is that it offers no particular account of *mechanisms* of development, opting instead to outline *stages* identified by various theorists. This weakness can be rectified by readings from the theorists themselves.

The most significant contribution of the second part, which Helminiak describes in terms of "holiness," is the argument that growth in holiness is not parallel to spiritual development: holiness is an entirely different dimension and is possible at any spiritual level. The two processes are more perpendicular than parallel. Helminiak's concern with distinguishing different dimensions and the disciplines proper to their

study is especially evident at this point. Spiritual development is not a specifically religious phenomenon; it is a *human* phenomenon. Growth in holiness, on the other hand, is specifically connected with theism and is therefore an object for theological study.

The first two parts are concerned with developmental processes that are not uniquely Christian, but the third shifts to consider the specific contribution of Christianity, which Helmeniak understands in terms of "divinization," drawing heavily on Lonergan's work.

The book is exemplary in its struggle for clarity, even where its argument is not totally convincing—distinguishing where distinctions need to be made, defining disciplines, then using them to illuminate one another where they intersect.

Steven Schroeder

THE RHETORICAL COMPOSITION AND FUNCTION OF HEBREWS 11. By Michael R. Cosby. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989. xii and 132 pages. Cloth. $25.00.

Scholars have long held that Hebrews is an example of rhetorically influenced prose, perhaps the most cultured Greek in the entire Greek Bible. Michael Cosby assumes that the scholars who identify Hebrews as a homily are correct, and examines the rhetorical devices used in Hebrews 11 to give emphasis to key ideas and persuade the hearer/reader to accept the argument.

He argues that Hebrews 11 uses an example list, a typical persuasive device of Greek and Roman rhetoric, as Pseudo-Cicero, *ad Herennium* 4.62 illustrates. Hebrews 11 is unusual because of its length. Anaphora, the repetition of the same initial work, lends emphasis to 11:3-31, while 11:32-40 is characterized by asyndeton (absence of conjunctions) and isocolon (members of a sentence of an almost equal number of syllables). At times paronomasia, polysyndeton, antithesis, hyperbole, and circumlocution also occur. In short, the writer uses many oral rhetorical devices to underscore his invitation to fidelity.

It is good to see someone going beyond the attempt to assign a text to forensic, deliberative, or epideictic oratory and beyond a discussion of the rhetorical divisions of a speech to ask about the "figures of speech and thought" to which ancient rhetoric paid such great attention. Cosby is, in general, persuasive. I do have a few negative comments. He identifies 11:1-2 as a rhetorical definition. Are exempla lists regularly introduced by definitions? Or should it instead be identified as the thesis or proposition that the exempla are to demonstrate? 11:32-38 is an example of praeteriteo, rhetorical omission (*paraleipsis* in Greek), not so identified by Cosby. He argues that the subsections in 11:33-38 have a sort of "staccato rhythm when delivered orally." He bases that, so far as I can tell, on the asyndetic character of the language and on the omission of adjectives and descriptive dependent clauses. But nowhere does he ask about prose rhythm, the use of long and short syllables to affect feelings. Do these words use iambic, anapestic, or spondaic rhythms? Is there evidence of clausulae formed rhythmically? Is the old *esse videatur* rhythm condemned by ancient rhetoricians avoided here? Nor does Cosby ask about the presence or absence of hiatus (the latter preferred in literary prose).

Finally, I missed certain key works from his bibliography: R. Volkmann's *Rhetorik der Griechen*, E. Norden's *Antike Kunstprosa*, L. Palmer's *The Greek Language*, F. Blass's edition of Hebrews analyzed according to its prose rhythm, and L. Spengel's *Rhetores: Graeci*. Any student of Greek rhetoric must use these works.

Edgar Krentz

All books reviewed in *Currents* can be obtained through Augsburg Fortress Church Supply Store at LSTC, 1100 East 55th St., Chicago, Illinois 60615; (312) 752-1766.

Preaching Helps

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany—Good Friday, Series A

Masks and Discoveries

The format this issue is a bit different from what we have been following for the past couple of years. James Bailey (Associate Professor of New Testament) and Ralph Smith (Assistant Professor of Liturgics), both profs at Wartburg Theological Seminary, suggested a collaboration in which the exegetical and homiletical would pour out of their individual containers and seep into one another. The result is a set of more integrated studies, and so we do not have the division into "First Reading" and "Pastoral Reflection."

And in order to give to Jim and Ralph the space they deserve, we are not offering separate "Prophetic Voice" pieces in this issue, either. Don Prange, who ordinarily pens "Prophetic Voice," is however continuing his meditations on the lectionary from the viewpoint of economic justice, and he will be happy to share those with you if you simply write to him at Box 311, Nora, Virginia 24272.

I am always interested in feedback (bio- or otherwise) and would like to hear your comments on the format of this particular issue and any other messages you have for me and our contributors. Let's stay in touch!

Jim and Ralph wrote some paragraphs introducing their work, noting that this issue of Preaching Helps spans three segments of the church calendar. They all move us toward Easter, the central festival of the year. More than ordinarily we are all conscious of that forward

movement in these days. And they suggest that that movement can itself be the source of proclamation, particularly as we move from Epiphany via Transfiguration into Lent and from Lent via Passion Sunday into Holy Week.

Jim and Ralph offer a compelling master metaphor: "The Christmas/ Epiphany cycle celebrates God's 'unmasking' and begins to unfold its implications for humanity. Lent invites us to be unmasked before God and one another. Holy Week and Easter in turn reveal how the unmasking of the divine and human are joined in the person of Jesus through cross and resurrection. The drama of the events is profound; our witness to them in worship and preaching can be rich and full. Matthew's Gospel offers texts which draw constantly on the power of contrast to ask what it means for us to be human and for God to be God in Christ. The readings from John on Lent 2, 3, 5, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday function similarly. Knowing who God is, knowing who we are—that is the invitation."

So Jim and Ralph invite us to attend to the unmasking, the unveiling, the discovery. And they do so in words and images and suggestions which are at once rich and forceful.

Thanks to them for their good work on behalf of all of us. And best wishes to you and yours as you work with congregations on the most holy task of unmasking the Truth by which alone we live.

Yours,

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor

Sixth Sunday After the Epiphany February 11, 1990

Psalm 119:1-16
Deuteronomy 30:15-30
1 Corinthians 2:6-13
Matthew 5:20-37

The Gospel readings for Epiphany 6 and 7 together comprise a literary unit filled with antitheses. With the words, "You have heard that it was said... but I say to you...," Jesus heightens the tension between the traditions of Israel (the law and the prophets) and himself. On the surface the contrast seems stark, almost an either/or dichotomy. Yet verse 17 makes it clear that the issue is not to abolish the past but to fulfill it. It may be worth following the Roman lectionary to include verses 17-19 in the reading.

It is important to note the historical context for Matthew's Gospel. These words of Jesus are directed to Christian communities in Antioch of Syria, sorting out their identities in the shadow of Jewish synagogues. Both sets of communities, Jewish and Christian, are in transition after the traumatic events of C.E. 70 (Rome's destruction of Jerusalem). Rabbis are beginning to urge a more meticulous adherence to the commandments of the Law as the way to be God's holy people in a godless and temple-less world. Thus, "law-abiding" Judaism accents what makes Jews "separate" from their unholy environment.

Matthew's Gospel also is concerned about what makes God's people distinctive, but the accent falls on the community's commitment to "right relationships" (righteousness) motivated by God's overabundant, indiscriminate love (see 5:45-48). The contrast is between a way of holiness and a way of love and mercy.

The first four antitheses in verses 21-37 relate directly to the church's mission in the world. The character of its life together serves or negates its witness to others as a "city set upon a hill" (vv. 14-16) or as what some have named a "contrast community." Smoldering anger or resentment (vv. 21-26), unchecked lust (vv. 27-30), easy divorce (vv. 31-32), and deceitful or illusive use of verbal commitments (vv. 33-37) swiftly devastate relationships and communal life. It is not enough to avoid murder, adultery, divorce without good reason, and false swearing.

The first three examples clearly spotlight circumstances wherein others are demeaned and depersonalized. In verses 21-26 Jesus is not saying, "Don't be angry at all." Avoidance of anger is impossible and probably unhealthy. The present participle in verse 22 (*orgizomenos*) in fact describes a person's continuing anger or failure to let go of resentment towards another in the Christian community. Therefore, Jesus is warning against petty resentments which a person allows to fester and increase. Soon these issue in verbal abuse—"You numbskull; you fool!"—and just that quickly the other human being is discounted.

Jesus attacks this insidious nature of anger and the failure to take it seriously ("it's nothing like murder"). First he addresses the tendency to live by the "letter" of the law. By deliberate exaggeration he seeks to shock his hearers into recognizing the utter seriousness of smoldering anger. Though in fact people of his day would not be dragged into court for this kind of resentment, Jesus declares that all guilty of nursing anger against another will be subject, if they persist, to a human court and then a supreme court, and finally the divine court (v. 22). In addition, the words of Jesus in verses 23-26 invite Matthean Christians to direct their energy away from anger into reconciling activity. Nursing anger divides community; reconciliation unites.

Like anger, lust is a terribly powerful feeling which unchecked can be destructive. Here again Jesus exposes its seriousness by hyperbolic language (vv. 29-30). As in the next example on divorce, Jesus calls for relationships where women and men are persons of identity and self-worth, not objects to be used and discarded.

The fourth example in verses 33-37 is also important to the functioning of community. Jesus

categorically insists that all swearing and oath-taking is to be avoided (there is evidence that oath-taking got out of control in the first century). Matthew 23:16-22 suggests that such oath-taking was adversely affecting the Matthean church. Oath-taking could easily slip into deceptive speech which hid real motives and undermined communal exchanges. In contrast, Jesus calls followers to simple and honest agreements with no appeal to God's name or holy things. Straightforward speaking or withholding one's word of promise promotes community by expressing honest concern for the other.

By these four examples Matthew does not portray Jesus as offering new commandments designed to regulate the community's behavior. If God's will expressed in commandments is reduced only to accomplishing or avoiding specific activities (don't murder, don't commit adultery), then it is possible for people to be in control and meet the demands. Thus the scope of the commandments is limited. The will of God is fragmented and the gift of wholeness which God intends for creation is threatened.

But if, as Jesus suggests, God's overabundant love lies behind these commandments and has the power to draw people into "right relationships" which enhance responsible freedom and life together, then finally all participants are obligated to others in terms of this kind of love. Then all will be alert to their own destructive forces (resentment, lust, control of another, defensive use of language) which can distort the Christian community and thwart its power to witness to the character of life as God intends it.

Seventh Sunday After the Epiphany
February 18, 1990

Psalm 103:1-13
Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18
1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23
Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus' teaching on non-retaliation and love of enemy directs the Christian community's attention to unfriendly outsiders. The first four antitheses discussed for last Sunday's Gospel were concerned with "right relationships" within the Matthean community. Now as culmination of the series the Matthean Jesus takes on the thorniest of human problems—the desire for revenge and the deep need to hate an enemy.

This text posed the sharpest challenge to the Christian communities addressed by Matthew's Gospel and still does for every contemporary community of Christ. Can Jesus' vision of God's spendthrift love motivate Christians to be surprisingly counter-cultural when it comes to retaliation and enemies? This provides the supreme test for the "contrast community."

In Matthew 5:38-42 Jesus quotes the commandment (see Exod 21:22-25) which seeks to limit revenge by matching the penalty to the crime—"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Behind Jesus' words lies the assumption that setting limits on revenge tends not to work. The human desire for retaliation is so strong that it triggers an unending spiral of violence. This was particularly the case in the first century world, where both Jewish and Greek men vehemently defended their honor and that of their group.

In the face of all this, Jesus' exhortation, "Do not resist the evil person," is quite daring. He offers four illustrations of what this might mean. Although none depicts a life- threatening circumstance, each situation would easily spark the flame of revenge in first century Jewish males: an insulting blow to the right cheek with the back of the hand, the loss of a poor person's

inner garment in a legal procedure, being compelled by a Roman soldier to carry baggage for one mile, or the drain from endless begging and borrowing by others.

The specificity of these examples demonstrates that revenge can be avoided, and in fact Christians can choose to act in ways helpful to the offending person. With its open-ended list the text invites Christians today to envision concrete situations where they too can break the vicious spiral of revenge. Christians have freedom to avoid allowing their actions to be simply nasty reactions to the other person.

In the final antithesis Jesus quotes the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18), along with the conventional wisdom, "Hate your enemy." In Jesus' day few Jews would have experienced any qualms about despising the Romans who occupied their country. Today as well it is not too difficult to hate our enemies.

Verse 44 is again surprising. It urges Jesus' followers to love their enemies in a quite concrete way—to pray for those who persecute them. In other words, loving the enemy is not asking the impossible—feeling kindly and warmly towards an enemy. This is psychologically impossible. Rather, Jesus is inviting people to decide and then act in positive ways not because this will necessarily change the enemy into a friend but because such loving finds its model in God's impartial love. Otherwise Jesus' followers act no differently from people who claim no vision of God's way with the world.

As children of God, Christians share in the character of God and represent divine activity in the world. Verse 48 offers a summarizing word. Christians are to be "perfect" (*teleioi*) not in a moral sense but in patterning their lives after God's undivided or totally impartial love (Lk 6:36 uses "merciful").

For people today who are inundated with ways to work at "feeling good" about themselves or others the message is clear: love is an act of the will. It is something we choose to do for the sake of another. The example of marriage comes to mind where we mutually promise to live and act toward one another out of love no matter how circumstances (for better, for worse) or feelings change. In a time when we exalt feelings, saying that we choose to love (unlike "falling in love") can in fact be a radically freeing word. It is impossible at times to avoid feelings of revenge and hatred toward "enemies." But that is exactly the point: we are not called to avoid the feelings.

Jesus opens us to a freedom which keeps us from being controlled by our enemies or being trapped in responding to them "in kind." His vision and life can transform our categories of enemies into people also loved by God and thus potential brothers and sisters to us. Homiletically one might make use of the story of the rabbi who asked his pupils, "How do you know when night has ended and the day is about to begin?" The students argued, searching for a correct response. One said, "Can it be when you look in the distance and see two trees, and you are able to tell that one is a fig tree and one a palm tree?" The rabbi answered, "No." Another student said, "Can it be when you look in the distance and see two animals, and can discern that one is a goat and one a sheep? Then you know that night has ended and the day is about to begin." Again the rabbi responded, "No." He explained: "It is when you can look on the face of any man or any woman and see there a brother or sister. Because if you cannot do that, no matter what time of day it is, it is still night."

The Transfiguration of Our Lord February 25, 1990

Psalm 2:6-13
Exodus 24:12, 15-18
2 Peter 1:16-19 (20-21)
Matthew 17:1-9

The signs are there: God calls Moses to Sinai and after six days speaks from the cloud; "after six days" Jesus calls Peter, James, and

John to the mountain where Moses and Elijah speak with him, and the divine voice from the cloud confirms his identity. One cannot fully understand who Jesus is apart from the traditions of Israel. Matthew above all is the Gospel writer concerned to speak in the context of Judaism.

In his post-70 C.E. Syrian context Matthew seems quite aware of Judaism's emphasis on the law of Moses as the foremost revelation of God's purpose. For Jews, all goes back to Sinai. But in Matthew's Gospel another claim is put forth. It is Jesus who reveals God's will in a fresh and final sense. The church knows him to be the messiah, Son of the living God (note Peter's divinely inspired confession at Caesarea Philippi, 16:13-20). Jesus is superior to all who went before him, including Moses and the prophets.

The Transfiguration story confirms Jesus' divine character and mission. The privileged three disciples are privy to his eschatological glory, a revelatory experience so exposed to the divine that they become overwhelmed with awe. Matthew tells us that "they fell on their faces, and they feared greatly" as an immediate response to hearing the divine voice out of the cloud reiterating the precise words spoken at Jesus' baptism, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Jesus is the Son of God.

As the figure who fulfills the whole history of Israel he holds audience with Moses and Elijah. This is why Peter uses the church's title, "Lord;" he is talking with the one who exercises all authority in heaven and on earth (28:18). But the paradox remains. In the Matthean narrative suffering still lies ahead for Jesus and the disciples. For them and us, transfiguration offers a momentary glimpse of glory. It is akin, perhaps, to the sacramental "glimpse" of the risen Lord in our midst. The sin and suffering of the world have not disappeared when we leave the table, but we have experienced the healing power of this gift of life.

On this Sunday of transition from Epiphany to Lent, the clouds, voices, and visions of people from the past seem almost like a troubling dream foreshadowing the event still to come: "Tell no one the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." We know the rest of the story, of course, although Easter is still six weeks away. Our Lenten forty days of waiting and preparation stand between, and only with Easter does the meaning of this mountain transfiguration become clear. We will learn who Jesus is.

What Matthew may want us to understand is the difference between our dreams and visions of who Jesus is and what God has to say about who he is. The key to the event comes in the words, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him." The implication is that we are to forget all the things we think Jesus is, forget what we want him to be, and *listen* to him. It is helpful to explore how in our time we see only what we want to see, hear only what we want to hear while God is saying, *this* is my beloved Son, the one who taught, healed, suffered, died. Listen to him. Lent will be a time for such listening.

Life can never be the same after contact with this Jesus. He opens our eyes and gives us insight into ourselves and the human community, revealing what truly lies in our hearts whenever we listen to him. Jesus has a way of threatening the old and promising the new, of impelling us to reorder our priorities. It is a baptismal call (the words at Jesus' baptism) and a call to confession of faith: This is my beloved Son... born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead, buried. Listen to him.

Ash Wednesday
February 28, 1990

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

The Ash Wednesday liturgy (in the *Minister's Desk Edition*), even if there is no custom for imposition of ashes in your congregation, shapes

how the texts are heard and how the sermon ought to function. The confessional experience needs room to "speak for itself." Subsequent proclamation should take that seriously.

What is at issue in Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (a literary unit)? Here Jesus paints outrageous caricatures of "hypocrites" who engage in the three central acts of piety (almsgiving, prayer, fasting) for the wrong reason. They give alms, pray, and fast in order to be observed and praised by others. To apply terms from psychological research, they are "extrinsically" rather than "intrinsically" motivated. They do one thing (e.g., pray to God) for the sake of another (to be praised by humans) rather than doing something for its own sake.

The three examples of the hypocrites are obvious exaggerations. Jesus employs such humorous caricatures (e.g., hypocrites have their gifts of alms in the synagogues dramatically announced by trumpeters) to trigger self-reflection on the part of his hearers. Where do they fit in the range of possibilities between the two pictured extremes, from blatant concern for public recognition to the total elimination of all self interest? Jesus' exaggerations, like cartoons, make unambiguous and obvious what in us and others is much more ambiguous and subtle. An exaggeration attacks the self-deception of "hypocrites" (meaning actors or pretenders).

So it is not what we do that is called into question but why we do it. The text's repetition reveals Jesus' seriousness about this problem of ostentatious piety. Our deep need to be approved and accepted can contaminate the most fundamental acts of piety. We can transform them into a competitive exercise to give more money or to pray longer and more eloquently or to make larger sacrifices than others. But doing so discloses the issue of faith. We fail to trust that our acceptance and worth are bestowed by God. Moreover, our engaging in pious acts for the wrong reason divides rather than unites us with other members of the community.

Thus Matthew presents us with a difficult paradox. On the one hand, Christians are called to public witness of their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Yet on the other, they are not to do so by "practicing their piety before others in order to be seen by them." Matthew communicates a radical refusal to justify faith by way of public demonstrations (anticipating next Sunday's story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness). How is the Ash Wednesday liturgy not an example of the very ritual action the text seems to deplore?

The Christmas/Epiphany season has said that God has come and set us free. That pronouncement is remembered and made anew in our baptism, in each act of confession and forgiveness, in the meal of bread and wine. We're free, washed clean, forgiven. What are people like who are free, washed clean, forgiven? They do not, says Matthew, look like hypocrites (actors) who disfigure themselves in order to be noticed by others; they do not act like hypocrites who give alms in order to be praised by others; they do not talk like hypocrites who pray out loud to be heard and admired by others. We are not people who play a role. Because we are free, washed clean, forgiven, we can be ourselves. We can be honest.

Our problem is not that of the hypocrites who disfigure their faces to hide their self-righteousness. Our problem is that behind our pleasant faces we hide an incredible amount of pain, loneliness, anger, despair. Our hypocrisy may be that we do not give one another the freedom to break down the walls that hide it, and thus we allow it to destroy us from within.

So here's the invitation: we are asked to journey to a cross and resurrection not because we must but because we are free to, not because someone else expects it of us or even that we expect it of ourselves. We make the journey because we can sing the words of the old gospel hymn (*LBW* 346): "He lives—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought; My sin, not in part, but the whole, Is nailed to his cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"

First Sunday in Lent
March 4, 1990

Psalm 130
Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12 (13-16), 17-19
Matthew 4:1-11

If Lent is a time for our "unmasking" as human beings, one cannot get more basic than the creation story in Genesis. Paul provides the typological bridge from the creation narrative to the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness by his contrast of Adam with Christ, trespass with free gift. What are we to make of the creation story on this first Sunday of Lent?

Taken together, the readings clarify our "place" in creation. They address the issue of identity. We are not beasts (Adam names the animals in this second creation account), nor are we angels, nor gods (the temptation of the snake). We are human beings, male and female. But the gospel also draws upon the exodus theme. Matthew has already quoted Hosea 11:1 to interpret the flight of Jesus' family in terms of the calling of God's son, Israel, out of Egypt (2:15). In the baptismal story the divine voice clearly designates Jesus the beloved Son. Now in the wilderness, like Israel before him, Jesus as the Son of God has his identity tested: "If you are the Son of God...." The stark environment of the Judean wilderness offers no props or guideposts. It is a place without structures, where the fragility of human existence is exposed and bedrock choices must be faced.

The story poses the fundamental question: "On what will Jesus base his identity as the Son of God?" The first temptation faces Jesus as a biological creature (consider the typological link with Adam and Eve). Matthew reports his hunger after forty days of fasting. Now, like the Israelites in the desert for forty years, Jesus is invited by the tempter to tap his power to satisfy survival needs. Israel succumbed to this temptation; Jesus does not. He quotes a Deuteronomy text which asserts that life is more than eating and drinking: "A human being shall live not on the basis of bread alone, but on the basis of every word coming from the mouth of God." The second assault on Jesus urges him to test God: let God protect you no matter how reckless your behavior. The final temptation offers him all the kingdoms of the world if he will worship the devil. The lure of worldly goods and power can be enticing, but Jesus resists and avows sole dependency on God for strength and direction.

Hebrews 4:15 has it right in characterizing Jesus as one "who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Adam and Eve were tested in the garden and failed. The Israelites were tested in the wilderness and failed. Jesus, according to Matthew, re-enacts this experience as God's Son, withstands the seductive temptations, and so reconstitutes the people of God.

"Unmasking" is a good word to describe the temptation story. All is stripped away, and Jesus' identity is tested. The tempter, however, is dealing with a mistaken identity. Jesus' identity is rooted in his relationship with God, and it will lead him into a ministry of service and suffering for others. In our times the community of Christ is also tempted to base its identity on the wrong things—on possessions, prestige, power. In our wildernesses, whatever and wherever they may be, we are often provided the chance to glimpse what we seldom see clearly, that our life and mission as the people of God is lost apart from Jesus Christ, whose identity is freely shared with us. Getting our mission right follows from getting our identity right.

"Keeping Lent" is a phrase one does not hear quite so often today as in the past. It's not that self-sacrifice (in the healthy sense of servanthood) has gone out of style, or that the season lacks content, nor even that our sense of self-discipline has disappeared. What is missing is the "rhyme and reason" that creates a sense of integration between what we do during these six weeks leading up to Holy Week and Easter and the rest of Christian life.

The origins of Lent are baptismal, and Baptism is the origin of our identity. Baptismal identity seems too simple, too basic to be the

focus for a season of the church calendar. So we have tried to create new content for Lent through the years. The resulting diffusion is what has made Lent an artificial time for many. Yet it is not difficult to return to the baptismal center. Although none of us may be in a catechumenate actually preparing for our baptism, we are baptismally identified, and that affords the opportunity for Lent to be a time of "affirmation of Baptism" for all of us.

How can we as individuals and a community spend six weeks affirming our baptism? A key may be to see this season as a time to consider the links between the individual and communal dimensions of Christian life. Baptism unites us with God as unique individuals while simultaneously uniting us with a community of others who have been baptized—a contrast community. This results in a tension between our personal and corporate experience of God which is always present. The tension is most evident to us when we feel alienated from a given Christian community and so turn inward, believing that our private devotion will be sufficient to sustain faith. Yet at all times, good and bad, it is the private-public tension rooted in baptism that provides the source of the lively dialogue that *creates* Christian experience.

Lent can be a time for us to consider the links between our personal spiritual life and the spiritual life of the community. Experiencing the similarities and differences creates the kind of dialogue that allows what Luther called the "externality of the Word" to come alive for us. Surprising things can happen. But that is exactly what the season promises.

Second Sunday in Lent
March 11, 1990

Psalm 105:4-11
Genesis 12:1-8
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 4:5-26 (27-30, 39-42)

It is best for preaching to focus on the literary shape and movement of the stories in the Gospel of John. This is not to deny that historical events lie behind these stories, but to recall that the Johannine narrative has been crafted retrospectively (about C.E. 95), reflecting on the long and bitter battles of a Christian community. The struggles pivoted on what could be claimed about Jesus. The Johannine community argued for high claims about Jesus' divinity, confessions which proved costly since not all groups agreed.

The Johannine stories for this reason tend to revolve about the identity of Jesus as the Son sent from God. They lift up numerous titles to name Jesus, disclosing the double tendency of some coming to deeper understanding of who Jesus is while others remain in the darkness of unbelief. The story of the Samaritan woman likewise centers on this revelatory encounter with Jesus. Like others in John it is a well-crafted narrative, skillfully using misunderstanding, irony, double-meaning, and expanding symbols. For example, "water" in the conversation connotes far more than H_2O. The narrative divides into scenes (vv. 1-6, 7-15, 16-26, 27-30, 31-38, 39-42) and actually unfolds like a stage drama.

The preacher does well to take seriously the movement of the story. Preaching a sermon which deductively explains it is far less effective in conveying the mood and force of the drama than shaping the sermon in ways responsive to the form. The Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus can become our encounter. Her moment of truth can become ours.

Jesus meets the woman at the well, and she is taken by surprise—just as we are caught off

guard whenever the truth confronts us. The Samaritan woman tries very hard to play a few conversational games with Jesus, but he simply will not let go of the truth. There is no moral lecture, no advice, no judgment, no exploration of her feelings, no quoting of religious teachers of the day, just a simple narration of the truth, a statement of the way things are.

It is difficult to respond to this haunting, confronting, bothersome story. The woman at the well hears Jesus speak to her most vulnerable point, the place where she has sought meaning and fulfillment, the point where her values and beliefs really function: in what she is actually doing with her life. Confused by Jesus' responses yet realizing the surprising power of the truth, she tries to back away gracefully: "When the Messiah comes we will be shown all things." "What could he possibly say to counter that!" she may have been thinking. Surprise. "I am the one of whom you speak."

Jesus reveals to the Samaritan woman who she is, and he reveals who he is. There is nothing more to the truth than to know who we are, who God is, and to recognize the difference. Jesus met the woman at the well. Our well is right in the midst of our assembly, in Word and Sacrament. When we come to the table, our well of confrontation, Jesus knows everything we've ever done. Everything. Everything we've ever done! That should be enough to scare us to death. The question is whether it is also enough to surprise us to life.

Third Sunday in Lent
March 18, 1990

Psalm 142
Isaiah 42:14-21
Ephesians 5:18-24
John 9:13-17, 34-39 (or 1-41)

Isaiah 42:14-21 touches on a favorite theme for Second Isaiah: the people's blindness to God's purpose. The blindness/seeing theme dominates the Gospel reading as well, playing a part in the larger Johannine motif of light/darkness (see 1:4-11; 3:19-21; 8:12-20; 9:1-41; 12:35-36, 46-48). Just prior to this story Jesus declares himself to be "the light of the world" and those who follow him walk not in darkness but "will have the light of life" (8:12). Yet in the Fourth Gospel not all "see" who Jesus is (and, therefore, who *they* are).

The drama in chapter nine serves a specific role in John. It is the concrete and ironic illustration of how a blind person "sees with increasing clarity" while "ones who claim sight plunge into progressively thickening night" (so Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*). As with the story of the Samaritan woman, it is here important to analyze the literary development and then fashion one's sermon in a manner congruent with it.

By scene three of the drama (vv. 13-17, in which the man born blind is interrogated by the Pharisees), we suspect we are involved in a trial proceeding. The opponents accuse Jesus of not being from God since he healed on the sabbath. But as the scene ends, their opposition nudges the blind man to see more in Jesus: "He is a prophet." Indeed, by the end of the entire drama this man born blind who initially witnesses to Jesus simply as a human being acknowledges much more than that. Ironically it is the opponents who push the man to greater clarity and boldness about Jesus. He professes Jesus to be a prophet, then as one from God, and finally he worships him as the "Son of Man." In contrast, the ones who presume to "see" in the final analysis stand outside faith in Jesus. This is made clear in Jesus' last response to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." The flow of the drama moves, for some, from blindness to spiritual sight to confession and worship of Jesus Christ. For others it ends in blindness and confoundment.

Irony is a feature of the story to ponder. The entire literary design builds on situational irony where persons unwittingly end up testifying to the opposite of what they intend and effecting the opposite of what they want to have happen.

The scene in verses 24-34, in which the healed man is brought before the Pharisees yet a second time, is filled with irony. The audience senses the growing frustration of the opponents. They have not been successful in getting anyone to confirm their accusation of Jesus. Now they repeat their interrogation of the blind man in all its detail. But rather than intimidating the man, this second round of questions emboldens him. At one point he dares to pose the ironic question to the opponents, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? *Do you too want to become his disciples?*" The man holds his ground and even confronts his judges. They react swiftly, vilifying him and expelling him from the synagogue.

For the Johannine church this story mirrors its own struggles. Community members have made their Christian confessions at great cost in the face of opposition. Yet they know that following Jesus brings them into "the light of life." We as Christians in the United States cannot be painlessly drawn into this story. Its power only grips us when it leads us to ponder the cost of confessing who Jesus is in our own context. In John's Gospel, "the light of life" includes the way of love but also the way of truth. For us this implies contending against hatred and lies wherever we meet them in our society, church, and in ourselves. In the best and worst of times confessors of Christ are on trial in the world. This Johannine story reminds us of that reality.

Drawing on John's seeing/not seeing theme, the movement of Lent can help us realize that sometimes it is difficult to have the vision to see beyond the present moment. Sometimes it is difficult to see how what we have been has made us what we are. Sometimes it is difficult to see what event the immediate future may bring. Sometimes it is difficult, as they say, to see the forest for the trees. And sometimes it is difficult to see anything at all. Yet this Gospel is about seeing, seeing who Jesus really is and what that in turn allows us to see about who we are.

John realized that such sight did not come easily. So the Synoptic Gospels' style of narrative was not enough for him. He provides an account rich in theological reflection and interpretation (some might say a bit too rich!) for the sake of illuminating what Jesus said and did. It is all for one purpose: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:30-31).

Believe what? See what? Recognize what? "Behold the lamb of God".... "After me comes a man who ranks before me for he was before me".... "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes you with the Holy Spirit." Perhaps being able to see has less to do with the eyes than with the heart and mind. John's rich metaphors speak to both. May we be granted his gift of recognition.

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 25, 1990

Psalm 43
Hosea 5:15-6:2
Romans 8:1-10
Matthew 20:17-28

Hosea makes it clear that the calamities facing Israel have been brought about by God in order that things might get set right. In last Sunday's Gospel, when Jesus was asked why the man was born blind, his response made a point not unlike Hosea's: "that the glory of God might be manifest in him." God's apparent absence is affirmed as a sign of presence.

The implied involvement of God in human affairs is distressing. One might paraphrase "I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me," as God saying, "I'm going to pick up my marbles and go home until they wake up to the fact that they can't do without me, until they come crawling back." It is a causal view of God at work among us that doesn't sit well.

One way to respond is to get so self-conscious about God's will that you cannot even brush your teeth without worrying whether God wants you to do it up and down or side to side. It's the point of view that prompts some to say as they pull into a parking place that God left time on the meter for them, or, more troubling, that illness or suffering was caused by God either to punish or to force a certain action. Is there another way to respond? Jesus takes the disciples aside. They are at a fork in the road. One path leads to Jerusalem and consequences which they do not understand despite Jesus' explanations. The other leads somewhere else. Jesus has chosen to go to Jerusalem, to be obedient. It is a moment of grace, a decision to be free. And it alone makes us free as well.

There is no way to know whether a particular decision will bring joy or pain, be in accordance with God's will or contrary to it. Perhaps there are too many forks in the road, too many junctions. As Robert Frost said, being one traveler we cannot tread them all. But there are some clear hints about which paths we might try: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant; and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

There may be some insight in Frost's analysis that "two roads diverged in a yellow wood... and I, I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." Yet our freedom depends not on making the "right" decision but on understanding (hearing) what happened in Jerusalem. The disciples had difficulty getting it straight. A closer look at the Gospel reveals a pattern Matthew adopts from Mark: Jesus predicts his suffering and death a third time, but the disciples still do not understand. Verses 20ff suggest that James and John in particular misunderstand Jesus' words. They permit their mother to intercede for privileged positions in the new kingdom.

It is unclear why Matthew, altering the Markan version, depicts their mother making this request. Commentators usually explain this change as Matthew's way of sparing the disciples. But is more behind this alteration? Matthew 27:55-56 later mentions the mother of the sons of Zebedee among the women who "followed Jesus from Galilee in order to serve him [Jesus]." Was Matthew intending to portray the mother also as a disciple who could share in the honor only through the enhanced position of the males in her family? Matthew's placement of her at the crucifixion provides her an opportunity to understand the suffering not previously grasped in 20:17-28.

The dialogue between Jesus and the two disciples in verses 22-23 proves ironical, with the audience of the Matthean Gospel comprehending far more than do the two sons. James and John hastily respond that they are able to "drink the cup" (Mark also speaks of "baptism"), not sensing "cup" as a symbol of horror and suffering (cf. Mt 26:39). The indignant reaction of the other disciples perhaps intends to lay bare that they too are pursuing similar ambitions, only the Zebedee boys got their request in first!

The final segment of the story indicates that the way of discipleship does part company with the way of the world. Following Jesus to Jerusalem puts a different spin on the conventional notions of "greatness" and "power." Jesus' memorable saying in verses 26-27, expressed in poetic parallelism, claims "greatness" is mediated through "servanthood," and "firstness" is manifested only in "lastness" (being a slave). The text ends by clarifying that such a new vision draws its vitality from the pattern of Jesus' own ministry: Jesus as "Son of Man" (the glorious figure) worked out ministry and redemption precisely in service and self-sacrifice.

The road to Jerusalem is understandably "the one less traveled by." Yet it is the one which leads to life as God intends it.

Fifth Sunday in Lent
April 1, 1990

Psalm 116:1-8
Ezekiel 37:1-3 (4-10), 11-14
Romans 8:11-19
John 11:1-53

Certain occasions remind us of our limits. Standing at an open grave sobers us. Face to face with death we feel feeble and defenseless. Who can finally withstand death? The odds are the same for all of us: one death per person. The Ezekiel passage, addressed to people absent from their own land and subservient to their enemies, speaks of a vision of dry bones, skeletons without flesh, sinews, and skin. "Can these bones live?" Can God do what humans cannot? Does God have power to bring life back to the dead?

In the Gospel Jesus is faced with death, that of his friend Lazarus and his own impending death. He comes to Bethany, near Jerusalem, and we are told that it jeopardizes his own safety. Yet questions are still asked, "Why didn't he come sooner? He would have been able to keep Lazarus from dying. Why did he delay?" As the drama of the story unfolds, so does the turning point in the Johannine Gospel.

This final Johannine "sign" carries theological import. By returning Lazarus to life Jesus demonstrates his power over death as the Son of God. Who he is and what he can do inspire faith in Martha and others. Martha's conversation with Jesus brings the resurrection theme to expression. "Your brother will rise again," Jesus declares. "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day," Martha replies. Then comes Jesus' solemn promise, "I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in me, though that one die, yet shall that one live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." Jesus can snatch life from death. Resurrection is not only a hoped-for event in the future; it enters into hopeless situations in the present through the presence and power of Jesus.

But at this point the greatest irony emerges. Precisely this trip to the Jerusalem area to return Lazarus to life precipitates Jesus' own death. We are informed of Caiaphas' ironic words, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." The high priest's words far outrun what he intended, for Jesus' death, the church knew, benefits not only the Jewish nation but also the Gentile world. And there we have it in Johannine fashion: Jesus' granting life to Lazarus causes his own death. But the church realizes that it is Jesus' death which results in the resurrection, which in turn gives substance to Jesus' claim, "I am the resurrection and the life."

And it is the utter humanity of the story's details that capture us. Jesus wept. "Take away the stone." "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." The details are simple, direct, unqualified. The stone of this tomb and the wall between life and death that it represents clearly anticipate the stone of Jesus' tomb, a stone rolled away only by the power of God.

Like death itself, walls separate and divide, limit and confine. And when others build them against us they can be as upsetting as anything we experience, for they create that lonely feeling of being shut out with so little we can do about it. We are all accomplished wall-builders. We build walls against others with our many ways of saying, "I don't want to talk about it!"; in our hiding of what we don't know, or our hiding of what we do know; in the fears we are unwilling to share. There are also the walls we build for ourselves as much as for others—all our rationalizations, our defensive devices for explaining away our drinking too much, our selfishness, our idiosyncrasies. Finally there are the walls that separate us from God. Walls, life, death.

The affirmation of Martha, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died," is a confession both of human helplessness in the face of death and hope in the power of Jesus. We can have no confidence that we can make whatever light and love we have prevail against the darkness. Left to ourselves the darkness will

always prevail and the walls resist all our efforts to break them down. And we know that the darkness will one day settle in upon us too as we are sealed in by the walls of a tomb.

But for God it is possible to raise us in newness of life. In the crucifixion we see the darkness which overcomes us also, and in the resurrection we see and hear God's intention that the light and life of Christ will prevail against the darkness, and that before this intention of God even the gates of hell will give way. To trust in this witness, to have its affirmation at work in our lives even if only tentatively, is to know the weight of darkness and to live in spite of it.

Death may still seem to hold sway over life today, but for the people of God the life-giving power of the resurrected Christ emboldens us to live, trusting that no enemy—not even death—can ultimately defeat us. The promise is amazing: "whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." Jesus asks, "Do you believe this?" His question to Martha is our question as well. The promise of resurrection gives us freedom to risk living fully and faithfully in the present. We are God's Easter people in a Good Friday world.

Passion/Palm Sunday
April 8, 1990

Palms Liturgy
Matthew 21:1-11
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
Psalm 31:1-5, 9-16
Matthew 26:1-27:66 (with parts)
or Matthew 27:11-54

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the fast-paced events of the Passion are a confusing mix. We want to shout our "Hosanna!" because we know the whole story. Yet we hear the crowds screaming, "Crucify him!" and realize that those words are also ours. The story of the Passion is one of false expectations and dashed hopes, of fine intentions and cowardly actions, of religious and political expediency and back alley plots. The world is grim, and evil is evil.

It is useful to recall that each Gospel writer, responsive to his own historical context, narrates the Passion in a distinctive manner. Though similar to the Markan account, Matthew's offers alterations and additions, accents that can be described in the following ways: 1) Jesus is portrayed as a majestic figure who calmly and resolutely affirms his destiny as part of God's will; all unfolds according to the Scriptures. 2) Responsibility for Jesus' death lies with the Jewish leaders, especially the chief priests and elders (not the scribes who were more directly precursors of the rabbis of Matthew's own day). 3) Jesus' disciples, who serve as a model for Matthew's church, are explicitly mentioned and remain people of "little faith" as they all flee under duress. 4) Special attention focuses on Judas as Jesus' betrayer, while a more favorable light is cast on the Roman official Pilate (and his wife); only Judas addresses Jesus as rabbi, the other disciples call him "Lord." 5) Women are portrayed as faithful to Jesus to the end. 6) Through his death Jesus becomes more accessible to the Gentile world—Pilate's wife has a dream about Jesus' innocence, the centurion and others at the cross confess who Jesus is, and the tearing of the temple curtain symbolically represents direct access to God for all peoples. 7) The crucifixion takes place as an awesome event, evoking fear, involving eschatological images, and anticipating the resurrection victory.

These interlocking themes make the Matthean Passion narrative complex and realistic. Not just one person or group is responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. Judas betrays him, the other disciples desert him, the Jewish leaders plot, the crowd cooperates, and Pilate complies. In and out of all these human choices and historical turns Matthew wants his audience to recognize the "footprints" of God. An earth-changing event has taken place in Jesus' crucifixion, and being at the cross allows people to sense its awesome character.

Yet we more easily see ourselves shouting "hosanna" than "crucify him." How could the

people have been so blind? Didn't they understand who Jesus was? Why did it have to happen this way? Why couldn't it have been different? Why wouldn't they understand? Yet in Matthew's sharp picture of the confrontation and conflict the form of the questions raised is never, "Why?" but "For what purpose?" Every action and word becomes a sign of God's power and Christ's glory in the midst of a hostile world.

It is the hostile world that must be taken seriously, for there are no delusions here. The actions of Pilate, the chief priests and elders, and all the others were not the result of people sitting around a table enjoying their wicked scheming. These were people like us who honestly thought they were doing what would be best for everyone under the circumstances. Most evil, serious evil in the world, is done by people who think they are doing good. Evil is not very popular when seen clearly for what it is, out in the open.

Jesus' last words in Matthew were words of despair. There was a moment of silence, of darkness, of abandonment. It is important not to minimize that moment. For his death was as real as our own will be. On the human level he had been defeated. It simply is not true to say that such love as he had could not be overcome. It was. He was killed. God had to make a new beginning—in the resurrection. And God did.

Truth, justice, and love, even in Jesus of Nazareth, can be trampled. Among us love does not always triumph. Evil is strong indeed. Therefore our hope cannot be romantic optimism, nor the trick of positive thinking. Our hope is in God's power to begin again, to renew destroyed life. The time between Passion Sunday and Easter morning is the time to purify our hope of all false props. It is the moment for us to learn to love not the gifts of God, but God. Being at the foot of the cross issues in confession of Jesus: "When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God'" (27:54).

Maundy Thursday
April 12, 1990

Psalm 116:10-17
Exodus 12:1-14
1 Corinthians 11:17-32
John 13:1-17, 34

The paschal triduum which opens with the Maundy Thursday liturgy plumbs the depths of the heart. The worship of these three days cannot be approached from the perspective of explanation or doctrine. The hard reality of our identification with the people of these stories—the disciples, Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate, Barabbas, the crowd—means that we experience the gamut of human emotions as well as the harsh truth of our capacity for self-delusion and inflicting pain on others. Yet Jesus is the focus of it all.

Once again the readings draw on traditional typology. The Exodus passover story and the killing of the lambs is coupled with John's deliberate chronology creating the identification of Jesus with the sacrificial lambs. The footwashing in John (from which our festival name "maundy"—Latin, *mandatum*, command—comes; i.e, Jesus' "new command" that the disciples love one another) is linked with Paul's version of the institution narrative in Corinthians. The meal context underlies all three readings. To eat and drink in remembrance is above all a ritual act. Doing it simply *is* our witness. It may be an appropriate time to let the readings and communion speak for themselves, without homiletical comment, even if one chooses the option to begin the Maundy Thursday liturgy with the sermon (see the *Minister's Desk Edition*).

Let's now concentrate on the Gospel. This text ushers in the "farewell discourses" of chapters 13-17 before the Passion account begins in chapter 18. Here the Johannine narrative theatrically slows down to concentrate on Jesus' final words to his disciples. The disciples need to hear what they will understand only later, after the resurrection.

In verses 4-5 the footwashing scene is depicted with rubrical precision. Each movement is highlighted: Jesus gets up from reclining at the meal, puts aside his outer garment, ties a towel around his waist, pours water into a basin, and begins to wash and dry the disciples' feet. If this were filmed, the camera would zoom in on these actions. In hushed silence we would watch. The footwashing provides the initial and telling scene for chapters 13-17. All the rest follows as dialogue and discourse.

Verses 6-11 introduce the dialogue. Peter blurts out, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" In Greek the possessive pronoun "my" is pulled forward in the sentence and placed immediately after the pronoun "you." Peter's question thus reads, "Lord, do you my feet wash?" Peter cannot fathom how Jesus, master and teacher, can do what only a servant might do for his teacher. Jesus dramatically reverses the roles (Johannine contrast). He does the menial task as a symbol of his love for his disciples.

But do the disciples, and we, understand? Jesus' discourse (vv. 12-20) makes explicit the meaning of the footwashing. For John it alludes to Jesus' self-giving about to be epitomized in his death. But at least one scholar has suggested something more. In the ancient world service was offered to the one with position and power, not the other way around. John 13, it would appear, presents two contrasting pictures of service: that of Peter and all of us who assume the superior is served by the inferior (the model of the world) and that of Jesus, who recasts service as activity among friends. The "new commandment" expressed in 13:34 is further elaborated in 15:12-15 where Jesus names his disciples as "friends." Jesus chooses the friendship model, not that of master-servant. He comes to the world as "friend." Thus, the menial task of footwashing in the context of friendship is not a humiliating chore but a joyful act of love.

Our "unmasking" continues. This text exposes our ways. We so often choose structures of servitude in the hope that we might be served. But Jesus invites us to live differently. He, our teacher, kneels to wash our feet. He has become our Friend and allows us to live among friends in the Christian community. It follows that we dare to wash the feet of one another.

Footwashing can be included as a liturgical act in the Maundy Thursday service. If prepared for and done in a way which does not force people to participate (although a culturally foreign act, it can still speak in the contemporary context) it can become a powerful symbolic witness for the gathered community. Indeed it embodies what we as the church claim we believe. We sit around the table with the Lord as equals, as friends who dare to serve one another in ways which recklessly forget about the rank and status of the world. Our pecking orders don't matter when we have been befriended by the One who holds all authority and power. All eat and drink by his invitation.

Good Friday
April 13, 1990

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

The Johannine Passion narrative shares many episodes with the Synoptic Gospels. Yet there are striking differences. John omits, for example, mention of Jesus' sharing bread and wine as his body and blood, his prayer in Gethsemane, the Sanhedrin's night session, Simon of Cyrene, mockery by passers-by, Jesus' cry using Psalm 22:1, and the centurion's confession.

To a greater extent than the other Gospel writers, John has pictured Jesus during the Passion as a majestic figure. During the garden arrest Jesus takes the initiative and responds to the inquiry for Jesus of Nazareth with the words "I am he" (the Greek in 18:6 is simply *Ego eimi*, echoing the revelatory speech of the deity in Second Isaiah). We are told "they drew back and fell to the ground." The Johannine Jesus goes to

the cross knowingly and with authority. The cross is his hour of glorification (see 12:23ff). The dying Jesus has accomplished the mission for which he was sent from the Father. His last words are "It is finished" (*tetelestai*).

Moreover, John has heightened the drama of many scenes, including the memorable one between Jesus and Pilate. In the Synoptics Jesus barely responds to Pilate. He remains silent before this Roman official with power over his life. But in John Jesus talks freely, and a fascinating and revealing conversation with Pilate ensues (18:29-38). Face to face with Jesus, Pilate asks rather bluntly, "Are you King of the Jews?" Jesus responds, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" Jesus artfully changes the direction of the dialogue from the outset. By the end of the conversation John's audience knows that Pilate, not Jesus, is on trial. The final exchange has Jesus speaking of his coming into the world. Jesus' words prompt Pilate's haunting question, "What is truth?" No matter how readers interpret Pilate's inflected tone in voicing this question, it is obvious that the Johannine Gospel has already provided its audience with the answer. The "what" and the "who" of truth are revealed in the person and mission of Jesus.

Betrayal, denial, fear, and confusion are the specific context for the event of the cross which now occurs. But it was the little things, insignificant in themselves, constituting three years of shared life, that provided the broader context for the human drama: like the disciples laughing together, cooking meals for one another, walking the countryside, throwing a cloak over a sleeping companion on a cold night. It was all the little things that made betrayal and denial possible, for without all that there would have been nothing to betray, nothing to deny. The "truth" of who we are emerges in the context of our intimate relationship with Jesus as Lord, day after day, the good and bad alike being given meaning by his presence.

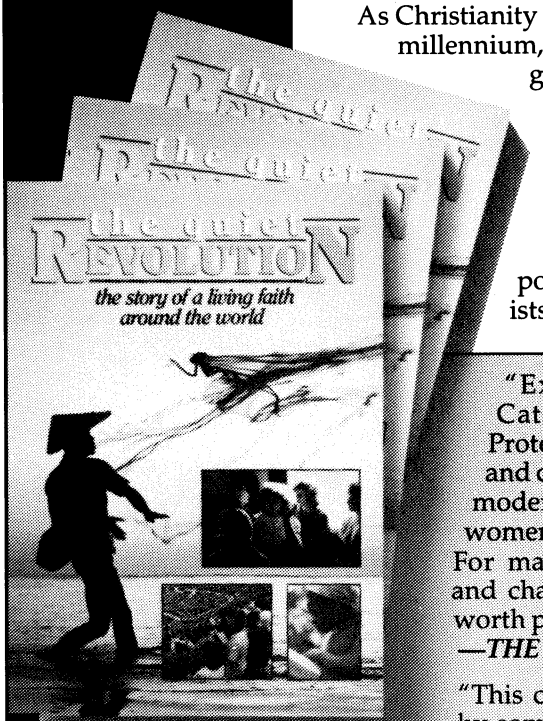
So we should be able to see a bit of ourselves in Peter, standing in the courtyard, just far enough from the fire not to be seen. Each of us knows something about denial. We should see a bit of ourselves in Judas, too, leading the soldiers to a scene of betrayal in the garden, for each of us knows something about betrayal. And we should see a bit of ourselves in the crowd gathered at the foot of the cross, bystanders looking on safely from a distance. Each of us knows something about standing safely at a distance.

We're tired, you and I, so tired of waiting... tired of hearing about the poor and hungry... tired of hearing about Namibia, South Africa, Iran, Iraq, Nicaragua... tired of hearing about teenage pregnancies and AIDS and Alzheimer's disease... tired of hearing about someone else's needs. "Just leave us alone!" It is a response revealing that we do not have to look far to see our denial and betrayal.

We need this holy week to suffer together, to be reminded that there is no shortcut to new life, to celebration and joy. For us, as for the first disciples, it is the little things, all the little things we share as the community of Christ, that enable us to walk together through the valley of the shadow of death. If we stand safely at a distance, remaining anonymous, the Passion seems to have little to say.

Edited by
ROBIN KEELEY

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Being Intentional

Dr. Jerry L. Schmalenberger
President, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

My wife and I attended a party last year at the home of our friends, Sam and Linda Giesy of Huntington Beach. Another guest, Gary Wheeler, an ordained ELCA minister and executive with Lutheran Social Services South of Los Angeles, greeted me and introduced himself. During the ensuing conversation he mentioned that I was an important reason for his being in the ordained ministry!

While I had long forgotten it, many years ago I had conducted several "Men for the Ministry" retreats at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. Gary had participated in one of those retreats. This was not the first time an ordained minister had introduced himself to me in this manner. It's always a delightful surprise when that happens.

Several years ago, some thought there was a surplus of pastors in the Lutheran Church in this country. Now it seems we have lost our enthusiasm and intentionality for recruiting prospective clergy. I believe we need to regain the offensive in locating the very best candidates for ordained ministry in our parishes and organizations. Happily, I sense a healthy trend in our new church toward a much stronger emphasis on ordained ministry as a "call" rather than as a "profession."

Dr. Victor Gold, professor at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, developed the following guidelines to help friends of the seminary recruit students for the ordained ministry. He suggests that prospective seminarians are people who:

a. sense God's call to the ordained ministry of the ELCA
b. express their Christian faith through lifestyle, values, concerns, interpersonal relationships, and intra-community activities.
c. have a basic familiarity with Scripture and prayer, and use both in daily life.
d. have a basic knowledge of Lutheran theology and tradition.
e. practice their Christian faith by regular participation in the life of a Lutheran parish.
f. have some knowledge of ELCA polity.

It is time that we develop a national strategy for recruiting top-notch candidates for ordained ministry. We need to be at our synod church camps, holding before them this important cause. In fact, we ought to hold the call to ordained ministry before *all* of our youth ministry conventions, where the ground seems to be so fertile for the Spirit's calling. We need to encourage our campus pastors in private, state-sponsored, and church-related schools and colleges to conduct retreats on this subject. Certainly, a section of our confirmation ministry curriculum ought to be devoted to how God calls some to be parish pastors.

The bishop's office in each of our synods could sponsor an event in their synod for clergy and the best ministerial candidates, which would be devoted to teaching and counsel by the bishop on ordained ministry as a call from God.

The eight seminaries of our church can be important resources in programming any kind of synodical or college event for recruitment purposes.

Gary started me thinking, back there at that party in Huntington Beach. If God's Spirit so often works through us when we are not even aware of it, how much more could the Spirit accomplish if we went about the task of recruitment with real intentionality?!

Thanks to you, Gary Wheeler, for making this seminary president much more aware of his responsibility as an instrument of the call of God for future pastors in this new church.

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