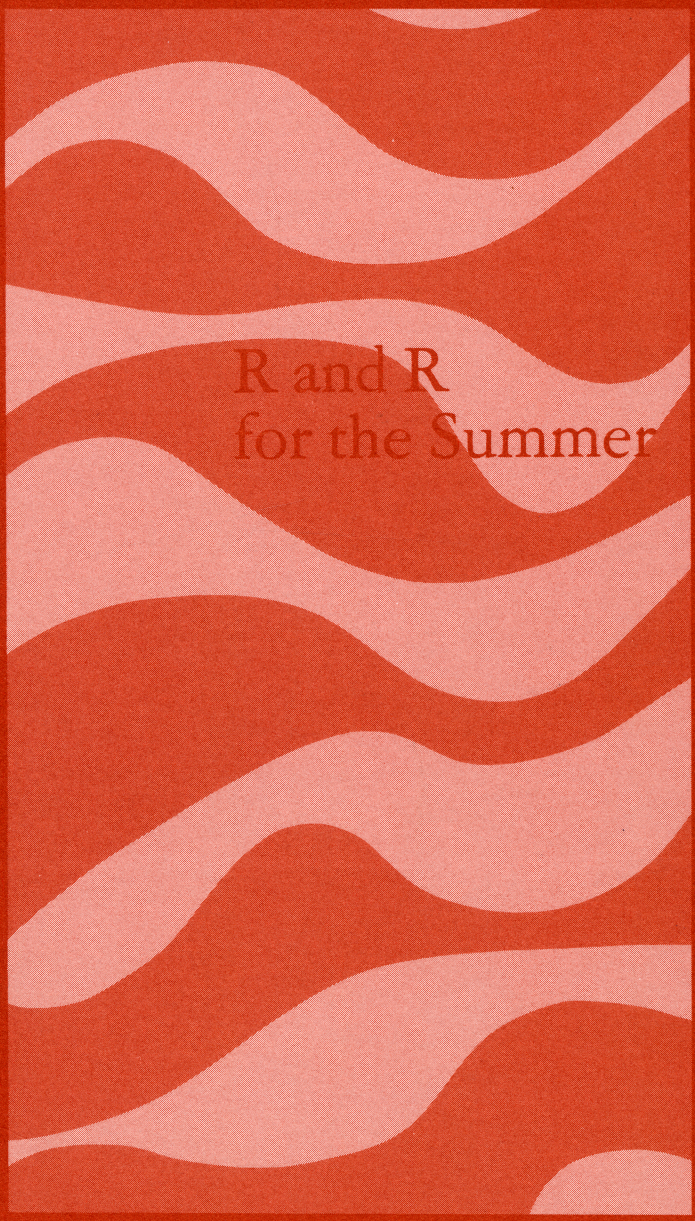
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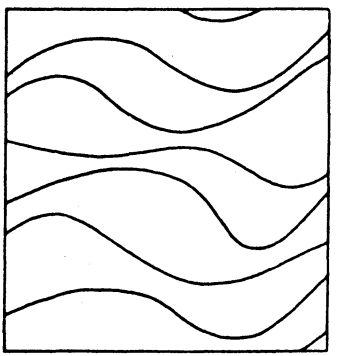
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R and R for the Summer

Resting and relaxing. Regrouping and rethinking. Recreating and refueling. Reading and recuperating. All of these are R and R's for our summer. In both seminary and parish summer has a different feel, a different pace. We tend to live slower in the summer, to pay more attention to our families, to get back in touch with nature and with God, to take care of ourselves physically, spiritually, and mentally. Most of us burn out before we rust out, and were it not for summers I suspect we would burn out all the quicker. So here comes *Currents* for your vacation reading, as companion in your chaise lounge, or as a take-along for the quiet morning at the office. Rest and relax as you grow.

Craig L. Nessan reviews the critique of the two kingdoms' doctrine by Juan Luis Segundo and Walter Altmann. Segundo feels that Luther severed secular authority from justice and made the state autonomous. In his view the church has tended to legitimize the state as long as the preaching of an individualized gospel was not threatened. According to Altmann, on the other hand, Luther tried to return the state to its proper competence in administering secular affairs under God's overall governance of the world. Church and state live in a dialectical relationship, in which each is evaluated as to whether it contributes to justice. The dualism is not between church and state, but between the rule of

God and the rule of Satan. How do you define the gospel? Does it offer salvation to individuals who then decide to work for the redemption of the political order? Or is the gospel inherently political as it offers salvation to individuals and the entire creation?

Roland David Zimany asks, "How can a person justify believing in God today?" The traditional proofs for God's existence could not withstand the critique of Immanuel Kant, but the faithful never were ultimately dependent on such arguments anyway. What convinces them—us!—is the revelation of God's self. Israel wanted to worship as Lord whoever it was who had liberated them. Their faith in freedom as the ultimate good was also a way of saying that hard determinism does not reign. Jesus embodied what was ultimately most important, namely, love in action. The radicality of the Christian claim is not that Jesus is like God, but that God is like Jesus. The Holy Spirit brings about a positive response to the good. A Spirit-led person is given the power not to despair but to become better. And that might be reason enough to believe.

Kenneth Vaux explains the causes and effects of the AIDS pandemic that confronts us with a sobering and shocking reality. AIDS raises issues that involve divine law, natural law, and the political law of the community. Through the "law of Christ" we are yoked in care to all those in society who are oppressed and victimized, including those with AIDS. Civil law safeguards the lives, liberties, and properties of God's people; it reflects God's protective, righteous, and merciful will. With regard to AIDS, government should sponsor rigorous research, provide medical care when private delivery systems fail, and insure dignified and confidential care.

Mary M. Solberg offers reflections on the work of the Holying Spirit. Her life in El Salvador helped her understand our need for forgiveness and the importance of acknowledging our own role in the world's brokenness. She experienced God's promise of forgiveness when Salvadorans accepted her despite her privileged and powerful position. Resurrection points back historically to the Easter event and forward to an "event" we can only picture metaphorically. It is also,

however, a declaration of the meaningfulness of present life. Resurrection begins in life. God co-experiences all of our moments, takes them into God's own life, and there transforms them. Our belief needs somehow to tally with our experiences, painful as well as joyful, and with the lives of those with whom we have experienced life in all its parts.

Axel C. Kildegaard reflects on how his granddaughter is beginning to speak and so become a theologian, fitted out with value judgments and passion. Still to come is her confrontation with the great deceiver and then her appropriation of the Story. To love such a child on the way is to equip her for the journey through the deceiver to the Story. **Gretchen Lara Shartle** reflects on a more sinister picture of evil in a poem dealing with the violence in El Salvador.

Finally, this issue contains a great harvest of book reviews, that might enrich your rest and relaxation this summer or move you to order the books themselves for the winter that is coming.

Meanwhile, I hope that you will recoup, revive, and be renewed all summer long. Burning out and rusting out are not the only alternatives. Try this R and R: Buried with Christ each day, all year long, we are Raised with him and Reborn in our baptisms...

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Liberation Theology's Critique of Luther's Two Kingdoms Doctrine

Craig L. Nessan, Th.D.
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Liberation theology in Latin America has undertaken a thorough examination and critique of the Western theological tradition, especially its Euro-centrism, subjectivism, and intellectualism.[1] Liberation theology insists that theological attention be directed to the historical context of Latin America (not Europe), to the lives of poor people (not the reflection of the thinking subject), and to praxis (not intellectual apologetics). In carrying out their critique, individual liberation theologians have commented on many individual points of doctrine including the continuing political impact of Luther's two kingdoms formula. While some like Hugo Assmann have simply dismissed Luther's thought as hopelessly dualistic,[2] others like Juan Luis Segundo and Walter Altmann have given Luther a more thorough hearing. This paper will concentrate on the thought of these two theologians and offer an evaluation of their arguments based on the writings of Luther himself.

Juan Luis Segundo: The Liberation of Theology

Juan Luis Segundo has attributed one critical failure of contemporary European and North American political theology to its basis in Luther's two kingdoms doctrine.[3] Segundo, drawing on the work of James Preus,[4] charges that Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms tends to depoliticize the doctrine of justification. By means

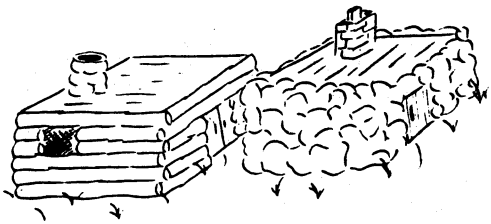
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[1]For further elaboration of this critique, see Craig L. Nessan, *Orthopraxis or Heresy: The North American Response to Latin American Liberation Theology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 43-54.

[2]For example, see Hugo Assmann, *Theology for a Nomad Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), 67.

[3]Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), 142-49.

[4]James S. Preus, "The Political Function of Luther's *Doctrina*," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43 (October 1972): 591-99.



of the two kingdoms doctrine Luther divided society into a religious realm to which the doctrine of justification properly pertained and a secular realm to which it did not. By emancipating the reform-minded princes from their tutelage to Rome, Luther established the political foundation upon which his proposals for reform could continue. The cost of this move, however, was the severance of secular authority from the imperatives of justice and righteousness. This depolitization of the doctrine of justification effectively rendered the state autonomous.

Both Segundo and Preus recognize a liberating moment in Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. Because the temporal entanglements of the Roman Church threatened to make impossible the preaching of the gospel of justification, its power had to be radically questioned. Preus sees a shift, however, in Luther's two kingdoms doctrine from its early "liberating function" over against Rome to a more constricted function commencing with the formation of territorial churches based on the principle "*cuius regio, eius religio*." This constriction of the two kingdoms doctrine bears its bitterest fruit, according to Preus, in Luther's defense of the princes against the peasants in the Peasants' Revolt.[5]

Depoliticizing of the doctrine of justification leads, in Segundo's analysis, to major difficulties in political theologies deriving from the Lutheran heritage. Reinhold Niebuhr held that the two kingdoms doctrine in Hitler's Germany tended to divide the world into a "realm of heaven" for the governance of individual morality and a "realm of earth" to govern official morality.[6]

Current political theologies such as those of Rudolf Weth and Rubem Alves are faulted for their failure to mediate between the revolutionary activity of God in bringing to fulfillment God's own eschatological kingdom and the political activity of humanity in the present. Every causal relationship between human historical activity and the constructing of God's eschatological kingdom is carefully avoided. The current political theologies are far more successful at providing for the "eschatological relativization of any and every existing historical reality"[7] than they are at constructing a definable political program. The failure to identify a clear political agenda insures that these political theologies at best remain neutral and at worst undermine the enthusiasm necessary to generate a revolution.

Segundo applies similar criticism to the political theology of Richard Shaull. While Shaull does not hesitate to articulate the basics of a political program, he does fail to provide a sufficient linkage between this program and the eschatological future to be ushered in by God. When pressed to describe the relationship between what God

[5]Preus, "The Political Function," 593-97.

[6]Reinhold Niebuhr, as quoted by Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, 143.

[7]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, 144.

brings into being and human collaboration, Shaull becomes too vague to suit Segundo.

Luther's freedom of the gospel was not matched by an adequate elaboration of what those freed by the gospel are freed "for." The two kingdoms concept led to an individualized preaching of the gospel within the confines of the church and a neglect of the implications of the gospel for a just society. At the present time the consequences of two kingdoms thinking can be seen in the work of political theologians who sharply distinguish between an eschatological future to be inaugurated by God and any specific political program. Because the two kingdoms schema leads to political passivity, Segundo would argue for its abandonment.

Walter Altmann: God's Kingship in the Church and in Politics

Walter Altmann, theology professor in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil, differs markedly from Segundo both in his interpretation of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine and in his assessment of its potential contribution to a contemporary political theology.[8] While Altmann would agree that Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms has been used to legitimize a number of diverse modern political ideologies (the separation of church and state in the United States, the fascism of Nazi Germany, the dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile), he would argue that this use is a misappropriation of Luther's thought:

> I wish to state very clearly, beforehand, that the dichotomic dualism between church and state cannot be legitimately ascribed to Luther. It is true that he drew a distinction of competences between one and the other, but he has never separated them as autonomous identities. The distinction seemed to be an indispensable task for him. His purpose was very clear: to stand against the corruption of the church which had become a temporal and political power.[9]

Instead of marking a clear separation between church and state, Luther's two kingdoms doctrine is an attempt to return to the state its proper competence in administering secular affairs. In an historical period when the church had usurped massive political power, Luther "turns himself very radically against the political power of popes and bishops (who were often political authorities), against the system of feudal ecclesiastical properties, against the civil jurisprudence of the church, against its complicated and diversified fiscal system, etc."[10] Luther objected that political power was being wielded in the name of the Christian gospel. His proposal for reform was a return of political power to the secular authorities, the very ones whom God intended to occupy these positions. Luther encouraged the Christian nobility to see in their baptism the basis for their calling to exercise temporal authority, to guard against political chaos, and to administer political matters justly. That Luther never systematically separated church and state can be

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[8]Walter Altmann, "Interpreting the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms: God's Kingship in the Church and in Politics," *Word & World* 7 (Winter 1987): 43-58. This article was first presented as a paper at the Consultation of Justification and Justice held December 7-14, 1985, in Mexico City.

[9]Altmann, "Interpreting the Doctrine," 47.

[10]Altmann, "Interpreting the Doctrine," 47, with reference to Luther's treatise, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate" (1520).

illustrated by his repeated admonitions to Christian rulers to live up to their God-given calling. Not only did Luther seek to dignify the public vocations of political authorities, judges, educators, and soldiers; he also continued to admonish them in the name of God to live up to their calling.

Where Segundo sees in Luther's two kingdoms concept the basis for a strict separation of church and state, Altmann argues for a dialectical understanding of their relationship:

> Thus the so-called "two kingdoms" can be distinguished regarding their duties and means, but they overlap each other in terms of space. Besides, they are together based on one foundation—God is the Lord of both—and they have a common goal—the good of all humanity. Church and state are therefore instrumentalized, limiting and binding themselves reciprocally. The state limits and regulates the church as a social institution (for example, in matters of property). The church proclaims God's will to the state (for example, criticizing its arbitrariness or calling it to work for social, political, and economic transformations).[11]

While Luther's specific advice to the Christian nobility may appear to be at times tragic if not wrong, one cannot fairly accuse Luther of a strict separation of church and state.

In interpreting Luther's two kingdoms doctrine, Altmann emphasizes that Luther's worldview was fully pre-modern. Luther operated unquestioningly within the idea of "Christendom." Secular authorities were, for Luther, still functioning within a temporal order under the direct rule of God. Thus Luther offered without hesitation his counsel and advice to those holding office, especially if they were Christians. The notion of an autonomous secular state functioning independent of divine control would have been incomprehensible to Luther.

Altmann differentiates Luther's dialectical model of the relationship between church and state from: (1) a model depicting a clear separation between church and state, and (2) a model establishing an alliance between church and state. Models which separate between church and state can lead either to the demonizing of politics and to withdrawal from the political arena, or to the rendering of politics as fully autonomous. As examples of this model, Altmann mentions both the National-Socialism of Nazi Germany and the principle of the separation of church and state in the United States.[12] In criticizing the model of the separation of church and state, Altmann approximates Segundo's position regarding the negative consequences of depoliticizing the gospel. The essential difference, however, is that Segundo directs his criticism at Luther whereas Altmann describes a misappropriation of Luther's thought.

Altmann also differentiates Luther's model of the relationship between church and state from a model which attempts their alliance. Altmann argues that such an alliance between church and state leads inevitably to the domination of one by the other. Attempted alliances eventually result either in the domination by the church over the state (e.g., certain periods of the Middle Ages) or in the domination by the state over the church (e.g., the establishment of Lutheran state churches in Germany and Scandinavia and the use of the church by the state in the colonization of Latin America). Neither the separation of church and state nor the alliance of church and state are able to challenge the use and abuse of power.

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[11]Altmann, "Interpreting the Doctrine," 47.

[12]Altmann, "Interpreting the Doctrine," 50.

Segundo directs his criticism at Luther whereas Altmann describes a misappropriation of Luther's thought.

Each of these models serves to buttress the position of those holding power.

The model which Altmann defends is a dialectical one. History as a whole is understood as a battleground between God and the devil, in which humanity and creation are inexorably involved. God stands for justice, truth, hope, and faith, whereas the devil and the devil's idols seek to work injustice, untruth, despair, and sin. The individual human being, the church, and the state are caught up in the struggle between the new reality belonging to the kingdom of God and the old reality belonging to the rule of Satan. While the final eschatological victory of God has been guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ, the outcome of a given historical instance in the ongoing battle between God and the devil remains in doubt. In this model one evaluates church and state on the basis of how they contribute to the cause of justice. In spite of widespread criticism of Luther as one who was subservient to political authority, Altmann applauds several instances in Luther's preaching where he directly challenged the perceived abuses of political rulers.

Altmann rejects all dualistic approaches which separate between gospel and politics, church and state. The devastating consequences of all dualistic approaches can be read from the annals of Latin American history. Only the dialectical model allows the church to decide at a given moment for a position of (1) critical-constructive participation, (2) critical-passive resistance, or (3) critical-active transformation vis-à-vis the state based on the criterion of what best serves the cause of justice.

Evaluating Liberation Theology's Critique

The following five theses are offered as proposals for guiding contemporary discussion of the two kingdoms beyond its present contradictions and confusions. Insofar as they are correct, they may have a wider application to the entire twentieth-century discussion of Luther's two kingdoms teaching.

1. It is necessary to distinguish between Luther's own understanding of the two kingdoms in his own historical situation and the use that has been made of the two kingdoms as a "doctrine" in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Too often the writings of Luther have been used facilely by theologians in their eagerness to draw contemporary political lessons based on the authority of Luther.[13] Ulrich Duchrow has documented at length the emergence in Germany of Luther's two kingdoms concept as a "doctrine" late in the nineteenth

[13]Cf. the comments of Karl H. Hertz, "Introduction," in Karl H. Hertz, ed., *Two Kingdoms and One World. A Sourcebook in Christian Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), 9-11.

Social and political chaos was for Luther a seed sown by Satan.

century.[14] Whether articulated by confessional theologians with emphasis upon political authority as an "order of creation," or by liberal theologians with emphasis on the autonomy of both social institutions and the natural order, the primary consequence was the same: the subservience of the church to the established political order and the withdrawal of religion into the private sphere.[15] Increasingly the nineteenth-century dualism between an autonomous public order and a privatized religious devotion came to be superimposed upon the two kingdoms categories of Luther.[16] It is this nineteenth-century dualistic interpretation of the two kingdoms which has become the basis for extensive debate in the twentieth century, especially because of its impact on political ethics in the course of two world wars.[17] It was not until the controversy surrounding Luther's concept of the two kingdoms in the wake of German national socialism in the 1930s that the elements of Luther's teaching coalesced into the technical designation, "the doctrine of the two kingdoms."[18] Since this doctrine of the two kingdoms was used as an ideological support for acquiescence to the Third Reich in Germany under Hitler, it has been subject to severe criticism for leading the church into political quietism.[19]

2. The inherent differences between the worldview of Luther out of which he developed his two kingdoms schema and the current understanding of things political seriously limit its usefulness for the construction of a contemporary political ethic. The presuppositions which guided Luther's two kingdoms thought diverge enormously from post-Enlightenment presuppositions about what is politically possible.

For Luther, it was God's providential hand which directed history and insured that evil would be judged not only at history's close but also at decisive moments within history. The significance of the human will and human actors in shaping the outcome of specific historical periods was

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[14]Ulrich Duchrow, Wolfgang Huber, and Louis Reith, eds., *Umdeutungen der Zweireichelehre Luthers im 19. Jahrhundert*, "Texte zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte" (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976).

[15]A summary of Duchrow's documentation is found in Hertz, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, 70-75. A complementary discussion of the privatization of religion in the nineteenth century, with special reference to its impact upon women, is Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman New Earth. Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 196-204.

[16]Ulrich Duchrow, "Die sogenannte Zweireichelehre—Hilfe oder Hindernis?" in Ulrich Duchrow, *Weltwirtschaft heute. Ein Feld für Bekennende Kirche?* (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1986), 26-32.

[17]Cf. Ulrich Duchrow and Wolfgang Huber, eds., *Die Ambivalenz der Zweireichelehre in den lutherischen Kirchen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, "Texte zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte" (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976).

[18]Hertz, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, 157.

[19]Among the first to attack consequences of the two kingdoms doctrine was Karl Barth. See the comments of Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin—God's Court Jester. Luther in Retrospect* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 112.

minimized.[20] History, according to Luther, is a drama in which God is the director and human beings mere actors, whose willing and acting are held within quite narrow parameters.[21] Luther held that the end of the age was very near and that the warfare between God and Satan would be particularly intense as this world came to an end.[22] Social and political chaos was for Luther a seed sown by Satan. For this reason Luther favored an established order which provided for stability.

Luther was convinced that the given political authorities had been instituted by God for the purpose of punishing wickedness and maintaining peace, law, and order. No passage of Scripture was quoted more frequently by Luther in relation to politics than Romans 13:1: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Luther's confidence that God was the one who sanctions the authority of those in power gave a fundamentally conservative slant to many of his political utterances.

For Luther both the territorial rule of the nobility and the feudal economic system were accepted as given. Luther could not begin to imagine a participatory form of government. The world was an ordered hierarchy with God at the pinnacle and the territorial ruler as God's chosen representative for administrating temporal affairs. Democracy as a political alternative simply remained inconceivable to Luther. Likewise the feudal economic system was immutable.[23] What Luther had to say about the innovations of early capitalism was highly critical. "Of the far-reaching economic revolution which was gradually transforming Germany from a nation of peasant agriculturalists into a society with at least the beginnings of a capitalist economy, he had no conception whatsoever."[24]

Luther also believed it was the Christian's duty to suffer injustice.[25] It is only for the sake of defense of the neighbor that disobedience might be justified. However, even in such a case, he preferred a word of admonition rather than the use of force or rebellion.[26]

Each of these presuppositions differs enormously from modern political presuppositions. While the presuppositions of Luther can serve as a foil over against which a modern viewpoint may be challenged and reexamined, nevertheless a vast gap separates his thought from post-Enlightenment political presuppositions. The activity of God is no longer seen in such providential, even interventionist, terms. No longer are

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[20]See, for example, Luther's comments regarding the outcome of war in Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed" (1523), *Luther's Works* 45 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962):126.

[21]Cf. his discussion of God's raising *ein Wundermann* in Martin Luther, "Dr. Martin Luther's Warning to His Dear German People" (1531), *Luther's Works* 47 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971):17f.

[22]This is the thrust of the interpretation of Luther by Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther. Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Berlin: Severin & Seidler, 1982). A good summary statement is found on page 86. Cf. also footnote 3 by translator Charles M. Jacobs to Martin Luther, "Admonition to Peace. A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants in Swabia" (1525), *Luther's Works* 46 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967):18.

[23]Cf. the description of the persistence of a rigorous feudalism in the area where Luther lived in Lewis W. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation 1517-1559* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 26-27.

[24]Walter I. Brandt, "Introduction" to Martin Luther, "Trade and Usury" (1524), *Luther's Works* 45:233.

[25]Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 33-34.

[26]Luther, "Temporal Authority," 118f.

political decisions shaped by an imminent apocalyptic eschatology. No longer are specific political leaders understood as instituted by God. Political democracy and modern economic systems (whether capitalism, socialism, or communism) have supplanted the territorial rule of a feudal nobility. The servile attitude by which Christians willingly suffer injustice has now the French, American, and Russian revolutions as alternatives. No longer is admonition of a ruler given such significance; instead, checks and balances within a system of law set limits upon political leaders. All of this is to underscore the gap which separates Luther from modern political understandings and to caution against facile attempts to apply Luther's political thought to contemporary political issues.

3. A dialectical model of understanding Luther's two kingdoms schema is more adequate than a dualistic model. A dualistic model separating church and state fails to comprehend the many tensions and complexities found in Luther's political thought. If there exists any dualism in Luther's two kingdoms concept, it is the opposition between the rule of God and the rule of Satan (as elaborated by Altmann with reference to Duchrow), not any dualism between church and state.

The church has as its task the proclamation of the gospel of redemption in Jesus Christ through Word and sacrament. The state has as its task the preservation of temporal order and justice against the threatened chaos of the devil. Both church and state are to be mutually supportive of one another in ensuring that they each fulfill their assigned task. Therefore it is proper for the church to admonish the temporal rulers in the fulfilling of their God-assigned duties. And it is likewise proper for the church to resist the state when it threatens the church's freedom to proclaim the gospel. The state has as its responsibility the protection of the church's freedom to preach the gospel. And it properly resists any attempts by the church to undercut its responsibility for temporal rule. One of Satan's ploys, according to Luther, is to confuse either church or state into usurping the task assigned by God to the other. The two kingdoms schema was developed by Luther in order to clarify the proper task of each and to unify them in their common assault upon Satan's power.

A dialectical model of understanding Luther's two kingdoms schema is more adequate than a dualistic model.

The way in which Luther applies this two kingdoms teaching in any given instance is complex and decisively shaped by the particularities of that situation. Only a dialectical model can do justice to the complicated arguments Luther employs in defending a specific course of action. A dualistic model cannot begin to appreciate the complex line of argumentation offered by Luther in "Dr. Martin Luther's Warning to His Dear German People" (1531) as he comes to defend resistance to the emperor.[27]

[27]Luther, "Dr. Martin Luther's Warning," 30f.

By articulating a dialectical model, Altmann more adequately represents the complexities of Luther's two kingdoms thought than does Segundo's dualistic interpretation.

4. The constant and decisive factor which lends clarity to all of Luther's diverse utterances on political affairs is his consistent defense of the freedom to proclaim the gospel. Perhaps the greatest misunderstanding of Luther's two kingdoms writings has resulted from viewing them primarily as political rather than as theological. Contrary to the position of Segundo (and Preus), the argument for a shift in Luther's political viewpoint from radical (against Rome) to conservative (as he obtained the protection of the Electors of Saxony) is unwarranted. Luther's political position is perfectly consistent when measured by the criterion of what best guards the free proclamation of the gospel.

Against Rome's entanglement in temporal rule and the resulting abuses which overshadowed the church's primary task of gospel proclamation, Luther thundered his protest against indulgences, relics, the system of benefices, annates, the papal bureaucracy, investiture, papal regalia, the use of the interdict, special masses, etc.[28] Luther defended the temporal rule of political office holders in order to stem the tide of the Roman abuses which obscured the gospel.

Although ordered by Prince Frederick to remain at the Wartburg, Luther felt himself compelled to defy this order and return to Wittenberg in order to protect the gospel from the onslaught by the fanatic "Zwickian prophets."[29] For the sake of the gospel Luther asserted his right to religious freedom even when banned by the church and designated an outlaw by the emperor. Luther also advocated defiance of the order by temporal rulers which would have had his books publicly burned, this again because his books witnessed to the right proclamation of Christ's gospel.[30]

Even the position taken by Luther during the Peasant's Revolt can be understood as consistent when evaluated on the basis of what best guarded the free proclamation of the gospel. While the Roman Church of the sixteenth century had to be challenged for obscuring the gospel of Christ, for the same reasons it was the peasants and not the princes who obscured the true gospel during the peasants' uprising.[31] Luther sided with the princes against the peasants because they were the ones who, in his estimation, best guaranteed the conditions under which the correct proclamation of the gospel might continue.

A final example of the consistency of Luther's application of his two kingdoms concept is his support in the 1530s of possible resistance to the emperor in the eventuality that military action be taken to suppress the Protestant movement.[32] Luther saw such resistance justified in self-defense against the machinations of the pope who was manipulating the emperor.[33] Again Luther's foremost concern is the preservation of the freedom to proclaim the gospel.

This brief survey of some of the political positions taken by Luther reveals a

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[28]Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate" (1520), *Luther's Works* 44 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966):139-217.

[29]Gritsch, *Martin—God's Court Jester*, 124f.

[30]Luther, "Temporal Authority," 111f.

[31]Luther, "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants" (1525), *Luther's Works* 46:50-52.

[32]Gritsch, *Martin—God's Court Jester*, 126-28.

[33]Luther, "Dr. Martin Luther's Warning," 30.

consistency in his application of the two kingdoms concept when understood principally as a theological construct in defense of the gospel. While the two kingdoms schema clearly also bears political consequences, these must be seen as secondary to Luther's primary theological interest.

The greatest misunderstanding of Luther's two kingdoms writings has resulted from viewing them primarily as political rather than as theological.

5. Unresolved in the contemporary debate about the two kingdoms concept of Luther is the question of whether or not the gospel of Jesus Christ does have intrinsic political significance. To return to the arguments of Segundo and Altmann, it is appropriate to ask: Is the heritage of Luther's two kingdoms "doctrine" really responsible for the "fastidious depolitization of the doctrine of justification" (Segundo)? Is the criterion employed by Altmann in his evaluation of the proper use of the two kingdoms, i.e., whether or not it contributes to the cause of justice, faithful either to Luther or inherent in the gospel itself? Or is it perhaps the case that the New Testament gospel itself already is a depoliticized gospel?

Fundamentally at issue in the controversy over Luther's two kingdoms writings is the very definition of the gospel itself.[34] Already in the New Testament there appears to exist a tension between Jesus' proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and, for example, Paul's preaching of the gospel of justification. Much depends on one's understanding of the nature of the salvation promised by the gospel. If the gospel of Jesus Christ offers salvation first to individuals who then subsequently may (or may not) work politically for the redemption of the political order, then it is fair to say the gospel itself is depoliticized, regardless of what Luther and his interpreters have subsequently done to expound it. If, however, the gospel of Jesus Christ offers salvation not only to individuals but also to the entire creation (cf. the Hebrew idea of shalom), then it would appear the gospel itself insists on expression not only in the lives of individuals but also in political life. The entire debate about Luther's two kingdoms concept revolves in this way on no less an issue than the very definition of the gospel itself and the nature of the salvation which this gospel promises.

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[34]Karl Barth faced this issue directly in his essay, "Gospel and Law" in Karl Barth, *Community, State and Church* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968), 71-100.

Believing in God Today

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Two centuries ago, Napoleon's scientific adviser said that God was no longer a useful hypothesis for explaining the universe. In the 1960s, even theologians were proclaiming the "death" of God. Yet belief in God persists, and not only among TV evangelists and the uneducated.

How can a person justify believing in God today? What is it that the word *God* might refer to or symbolize? Let me propose some answers to these questions, after first looking at some weaknesses in traditional approaches to understanding God.

Language about God

When we talk about God, we often use words that give "him" human features. But the reality of God is a mystery. Thoughtful people have never claimed to be able to comprehend the ultimate mystery of God fully; nor can we capture it within the definitions of our language.

You might ask, then, why talk about God at all, if we can't capture God within the definitions of our language? My answer is, because that mystery has been experienced, and the core of that experience cries out to be talked about.

Our religious language has inherited from primitive times the practice of attributing human characteristics to both God and nature. One way of making the forces that were outside the primitive person's control a little less fearsome was to treat them as through something human were at work in them. So humanlike wills were attributed to things in nature. A tree did not just drop its dead branch on you; it was angry with you and it *threw* the branch at you. All of nature was filled with life and will and purpose and many other characteristics that were projected onto it by people. People did the same thing with God. It was their way of acknowledging forces that were at work outside their control.

Since those times, science has explained a lot. But there are still many aspects of our experience that are not dealt with by science, and the word *God* may still be appropriate in connection with them. Talk of God still acknowledges powers in the universe that continue to be outside our ken and beyond our control.

Concepts of God

Because the Ultimate is beyond our comprehension, one really should not attempt to define God. But one needs to have some idea of what one is talking about. Based on my reading of the Bible and of Christian theologians, let me propose three ways of thinking about God.

1. One way in which I would define God is "the unpredictable potential for perfection in the world." Here I combine the notion of God's *unpredictability* (if the Ultimate makes itself known, we do not know when that will occur) with *potential* (and therefore a degree of freedom which keeps the world from being totally deterministic), and an ultimate, not-humanly-devised *standard* of the way things should be at any given moment as time changes.

2. Talk about God could point to a more ultimate ground of our existence than what we are normally aware of.

3. It could be a way of recognizing and celebrating the extra-ordinary in life, as attested by poetry, art, music, and other disciplines in the humanities.

When traditional theology depicted God as being outside the world, that probably was its way of distinguishing the weighable and measurable aspects of the world from other aspects of reality that do not lend themselves to that kind of control by human beings. Some of those uncontrollable aspects were recognized and talked about as "God at work." Traditional theology put God outside the universe, working on it. God could just as reasonably be located within the universe, if God is associated with the uncontrollable aspects of our experience.

When we talk of God in human terms, we must also remind ourselves of the highly figurative, symbolic, analogical, even metaphorical nature of what we are doing. We should not be too ready to think of God as a larger-than-life invisible man—or even as an additional entity at all.

Paul Tillich was particularly bothered by the notion of God as an additional entity. Such a notion implied that, in our daily existence, we normally have to deal with people and books and chairs and God and squirrels and trees and cars.... So conceived, God is just one more thing we have to cope with in the world, one more being among the plethora of beings and therefore unworthy of the status of God.

For Tillich, God was the "Ground of Being." God is what underlies all that is. God enables being to be. God is that which reconciles the polarities we experience in existence, polarities such as the relative vs. the absolute, the dynamic vs. the static, autonomous vs. heteronomous, reasonable vs. emotional—those kinds of tensions that are always with us in the world. God might be thought of as the right balance between those tensions (although Tillich did not phrase it that way), which is more profound than the tensions themselves.

Traditional Proofs are No Longer Valid

Let me mention two traditional approaches to theological truth which in my opinion no longer hold up.

1. First Cause

One is the argument for God as First Cause. We feel we need to explain how things got started. By the time I was in eighth grade, when I asked, "Who made the world?" and the answer was "God," I found myself asking, "Then who made God?"

The answer was, "God always existed." But if God always existed, why couldn't the universe always have existed? It seems to me that once you understand the concept of infinity, you can apply it to the universe just as well as you can apply it to God.

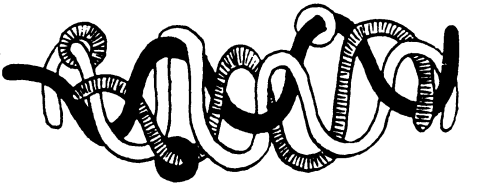
That argument runs into some trouble with the "big bang" theory, which is the most current explanation of how things got started. This theory designates a point when the universe and time came into existence. But the truth about the universe may be closer to a version of the Hindu view: we may have a pulsating universe. Some scientists claim that the expansion of the universe is going to stop and that eventually the universe is going to contract into a "black hole," like the ones into which various burnt-out stars are contracting. John Wheeler, a former Princeton physicist, has suggested that when those "black holes" contract as much as they possibly can, they will do something like going through the eye of a needle and then shoot out from the other side. It could well be that the "big bang" we are talking about was simply the most recent in a *series* of "big bangs" in the universe: that the universe *in toto* is pulsating; and the fact that we can point to the most recent time it shot out does not mean *that* is the time it really got started. It could be infinitely pulsating.

The point is, we cannot answer these questions. And belief in God should not be based on them. If God is so remote all you can say is that God got things started, it seems to me you don't have a terribly meaningful God.

2. Design

Another argument for the existence of God is the argument from design. The argument states that there must be a God, because there is so much order in the universe. And there is a considerable degree of order, at least in *our* world. The question is whether that order is an exception or not.

A counter-argument runs as follows: If you look along the coastline at the ocean and see the waves washing in and out, what you see is essentially chaos: water going up and down with no particular pattern in it. But in any given sweep of an ocean wave—



after it has gone all the way up on the shore and has come back down into the ocean—the water creates a pattern in the sand. The water flows back into the ocean in an orderly manner. One can argue that this situation is analogous to the reason why we see order in the world. We are one sweep of water in an otherwise chaotic cosmos, with shooting stars flying in every direction and all sorts of stuff elsewhere in the universe not doing anything terribly purposeful. We just happen to be lucky enough to have some order. The laws of probability have worked in our favor in this instance, and they alone explain why there is life here and not on Venus or Mars, for example.

One of David Hume's arguments against the existence of God also deals with design or purpose in the universe. He says that if the cause is proportionate to the

effect, and if the effect is only finite, then why must the cause be infinite? If you see a little footprint in the sand, you are likely to say a little child made that footprint. A large footprint would be the effect of a large person. If we are the effect of God, what is true about us is that we are finite. Why should it follow that something infinite created us? If we were all infinite, then we could say something infinite created us. But since we are just finite, our cause may be no more than finite, also. Those are sufficient arguments to make me, at least, want to look elsewhere for a basis for belief in something more ultimate in the universe.

Learning from Kant

We also need to take into consideration some things Immanuel Kant (fl. 1780) taught. He argued that if God is an entity, then we cannot know the essence of that entity. Kant talked about not being able to know the "thing-in-itself." For example, I cannot know a cat, because I am not a cat. All I can know about a cat is the exterior features of a cat or how a cat behaves. But I have never been a cat, so I do not know how a cat feels. I cannot know the thing-in-itself. That applies to my knowledge of you and of chairs and of everything else. What we know about something is what our sense perceptions pick up. But that does not get into the essence of the thing (if there is an essence to be found). So to talk about knowing God is clearly questionable. If you cannot reach the essence even of the finite, it is unlikely that you could do any better reaching the essence of the infinite.

More importantly, Kant made us aware of how we know things. His approach to the process of knowing was different from that of his predecessors, and much of philosophy since his time has followed his approach. He pointed out that it is not simply the case that we know because our sense perceptions register what is going on. In addition to receiving sense date (e.g., by touching things or by letting light hit our eyes), our mind works with them. My mind, for example, sees depth, even though all of the light hits my eyes on one plane, as it comes through my pupils. My experience of living has caused me to expect some depth and, consequently, to find depth.

Hume had raised the question of causality. He said we could not prove one thing causes another. When you watch one billiard ball hit another, for example, and the first one stops while the other starts to move, that observation does not prove causality. You just see one billiard ball stop and another start. As closely as you look at those two billiard balls, you never see something labeled "causality." It could be that in the infinite wisdom of God, those billiard balls were internally programmed in such a way that, at one precise moment one particular day, one billiard ball was to start rolling and the other was to stop; and there would be no actual event of one hitting the other.

Since both of these alternatives were unsatisfactory to Kant, he developed his own explanation: "causality" is one of those things which our mind uses to interpret the data around us. We don't prove causality; we assume it. We tell ourselves that in order to understand all the sense data we receive, we should try to find causes for everything that happens. Then our experiences will make sense. But when we do that, the point is that we do not simply pick up sense data. We immediately mold it along the lines of categories our minds are accustomed to using.

Our minds have many such categories. We know something about potential, for example, although we have never seen a potential. There are innumerable ways in

Truth becomes what you are willing to commit yourself to.

which our mind sifts data and works with it, and that categorizing keeps us from ever reaching the naked truth.

Here is the important point. There is no such thing as a brute fact outside ourselves that we can know for sure, because in the process of encountering the fact, our mind is playing games with it. Our mind sees it in depth, assumes causal relationships are involved, assumes the fact is part of a larger "whole," thinks of absence, sets limits, conceives of what *might* be there, etc.

The eventual conclusion is that there is not any single universal truth we can be sure of. We create our own reality by the way we interpret the world around us. We don't "create" in the sense that we make something appear out of nothing (unless we are hallucinating), but we "create" our reality simply by the way we interpret our experiences. Our interpretation is the reality we know.

People from very different cultures will interpret very differently and will know a very different reality. Thanks to one of my students who took a sociology course, I know about a small, obscure tribe that does not acknowledge continuity over time. The people of the tribe will see a green apple on a tree at one point in time, and when they see that same apple after it has ripened, they will consider it to be another apple. They do not know they are dealing with the green apple that has become ripe. And if the apple becomes rotten, they will think it is a third apple. They do not assume it is the same apple going through changes as time passes. That way of looking at the world is going to affect the way they interpret the world around them. We would argue that their interpretation is not correct. And even if our arguments should prove more persuasive in this case, the point is that we still never reach the naked truth, to have it confirm our argument. We get only as far as our particular interpretation of that naked truth.

This has two important implications for religion. It means religious people do not have a single truth that is clearly the right interpretation of ultimate reality. They have only *their* interpretation of ultimate reality. For the same reason, an atheistic interpretation of the world is also simply one interpretation.

Truth

Truth becomes what you are willing to commit yourself to. This applies to science as well as to any other discipline. We tend to say something is scientifically true because 99 times out of 100 the experiment will produce a particular result, and we accept those 99 times as evidence of truth. Sometimes the really important scientific breakthroughs occur, however, when one scientist refuses to ignore that one exception. It seemed as though there was nothing wrong with the experiment; it should have produced the same result in all 100 cases. What is the one instance telling us that the other 99 are missing? As long as the scientist is thinking in this way, the claim made by the 99 experiments is not true for him or her. He or she has not committed himself or herself to accepting the results of those experiments.

The same kind of situation applies in any realm of life. What we commit ourselves to and act on or treat as being true is true—until something comes along that shatters our model of the world and makes us reexamine it, modifying the way in which we understand the world.

Understanding the Spiritual

Since we interpret the world around us in the way our mind works, we tend also to assume that spiritual matters—or mystery of any sort—must fall into the same mental categories as the physical. Since we are accustomed to cause-and-effect relationships, we assume that cause-and-effect relationships apply at the spiritual level, too. Maybe they do not. Because the weighable and measurable world is the one we know how to grapple with, our mind is accustomed to certain categories of thinking, categories based on the way we deal with tangible realities. It does not automatically follow that the non-weighable and the non-measurable fit into those same categories. Accordingly, there does not *have* to be a cause of the extraordinary. We should be able to experience grace, for example, without expecting to identify its cause.

Reason

Finally, reason is no sure guide for overcoming these problems.

First of all, on a worldwide basis people cannot even agree on what the rules of reason are or ought to be. Westerners generally accept Aristotle's approach to logic, including his Law of Excluded Middle, according to which a declarative statement is either true *or* false and cannot be both true *and* false, or where something must be either present or absent. People in India and China who have not been raised in Western schools do not know about that law. They are quite capable of conceiving of something as being both present and absent. They refuse to pigeonhole things into the categories we use, and they would simply not agree with all the rules of logic we use in our reasoning. As a result, reason will not bring us to a conclusion we all can automatically agree on.

Reason will not bring us to a conclusion we all can automatically agree on.

But even in the West, where we might agree on the same rules, reason is simply not dispassionate. We human beings are not just thinking machines but are emotional, culture-laden, committed totalities. Our reason cannot be detached from the rest of our self. Our emotions and our self-interest color the way we reason. And all of our weaknesses come out in what we reason about or in how we reason.

I think the truth of that claim was evident in former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, who did not win the Vietnam War for us, although he should have. Many people in Washington thought he would, because when he would look at slides of the way the war was going in Vietnam, he might get to slide number forty and say, "Wait a minute. Go back to slide ten. There is something on slide ten that contradicts what is on slide forty." When someone has a mind able to grasp all of that information,

you figure he just might be able to win the war for us.

The problem was that he had blind spots, as we all do. According to David Halberstam in *The Best and the Brightest*, McNamara insisted on viewing the war as merely a logistical problem, where you find out where the enemy is, get three or four times as many men and as much matériel to where that enemy is, and then blast them out of existence. If you do that often enough, you eventually eliminate the enemy. But the war was more than a logistical exercise. Another important component had to do with morale. Yet McNamara would not take into consideration the morale of the South Vietnamese troops, who were not always so anxious to fight on behalf of their government. They dragged their feet, did not get to where the enemy was located while the enemy was there, and totally botched up McNamara's logical, rational approach to winning the war.

Finally, reason has a more basic ground. Judgment of what is reasonable is based on even more basic assumptions. These are the assumptions our culture—or our subculture—has taught us to rely on, and these are the assumptions we use when we decide what is reasonable. Reason becomes a servant of them, and it is trapped there.

Knowledge of God

If we cannot know the thing-in-itself, and if reason cannot be relied on to lead us to the right presuppositions, how can we know about God at all?

Revelation

We can if God reveals Godself. If a stranger saw me sitting somewhere, that person would know very little about me other than what could be guessed from my clothing and my "body language." The stranger might start developing ideas about me and might start projecting onto me notions of what I might be like, but that would be just a projection of the stranger's own imagination. Until I moved, talked, acted—in other words, until I revealed what I was like—the stranger would not be in a position to say anything significant about me with any certainty.

I want to claim that, in an analogous way, the Ultimate cannot be known unless it reveals itself, and that the Ultimate *does* make itself known—through people's behavior, when people get new ideas, and by people's interpretation of events. I would further claim that the Ultimate has made itself known most completely in the behavior and teachings of one man, namely, Jesus of Nazareth.

Freedom

Let me give some examples from the Bible. Many slaves have escaped from their masters. When the Hebrew slaves escaped from bondage in Egypt, however, they did not regard that event as just a lucky escape. They believed something more ultimate had been with them and had led them out. That "something" was their God. By naming it, they were also identifying freedom as something ultimate and the forces that make freedom possible as something worthy of being God. Perhaps for the first time, through the Hebrews human beings became aware of freedom as ultimate.

These Hebrew tribes felt a need not only to worship whatever it was that liberated them from bondage but also to institutionalize it. They started the practice of freeing their Hebrew slaves every seven years. They did not respect human freedom so much that they abolished slavery, but they remembered that they were once in

bondage and that God had led them out "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm," and they felt a need to acknowledge the ultimacy of freedom.

They had a "Jubilee Year." Scholars debate whether it was just "on paper" or whether they actually observed it. On paper, every fifty years they were supposed to free all their slaves and cancel all debts. Room was thereby provided for movement and for starting again. Freedom was being acknowledged as rather crucial.

They probably were not aware of it, but faith in freedom as the ultimate is a way of saying that hard determinism does not reign. The world isn't so deterministic that there are no possibilities for human initiative.

Morality

The Hebrew God also had standards of morality. This was the Hebrews' way of saying that morality is built into the way in which individual people and societies function best. Morality, too, is basic.[1]

This emphasis on morality becomes very clear when you compare the Hebrews with their Canaanite neighbors, who worshiped the god who would make the crops grow. The Canaanites were very concerned about getting their crops to grow, and they engaged in fertility rites to make that happen. But their god was not very concerned about how they dealt with one another. Moral sensitivity was rather unique to the Hebrews, in their part of the ancient Near East.

The Hebrews were not the first to develop moral laws, however. In Babylonia, even earlier, the Code of Hammurabi had been developed. Over 600 commandments cut into *steles* were erected in the middle of villages so that people could read all the rules by which they were expected to live. The rules ran the gamut from what coat to wear when visiting the king to prohibitions against killing your neighbor.

The Hebrew advance was to suspect that all of those rules were not of equal value. They selected ten which have done a pretty good job of lasting, including the first one, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." What they were claiming was that there is a best way, and if you are not oriented toward that way you are oriented toward an idol, i.e., toward something that is basically not best. What your orientation is, what you count as most important, is going to affect how you treat other people and how you treat yourself. So it is very important to be guided by what is ultimately best.

People who will accept the Hebrew interpretation of what is moral commit themselves to that morality, and that morality will certainly be right in their eyes. It is a moot point whether other moralities are equally viable or whether they are mistaken. Believers commit themselves to the particular point of view of their religion. Or at least, they use it as a starting point in their ethical thinking.

Jesus

When Jesus came onto the scene, something similar occurred. People looked at Jesus and said, "My God!" Some people found in Jesus a person who seemed to be embodying what was ultimately most important, namely, love in action (which is another way of talking about God as the not-fully-predictable power of moral freedom).

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[1]I understand this assertion to mean not that there is a God who also is concerned about morality but that moral perfection is God—or is at least part of what is meant by "God."

Jesus was a person who could create a community from among people on the fringes of society who did not consider themselves worth anything. He was sensitive to the value of the spirit over the letter of the law. He himself seemed to live out of a power other than himself, relating himself to his "Heavenly Father" and not being preoccupied with getting into his Father's good graces but just responding to his Father's love.

Whatever it was that Jesus' followers found in him, the more they tried to explain how he could be so impressive, the more they could not put him into the same category with everyone else. They finally came up with the metaphor "Son of God."[2]

Watching Jesus' behavior, Christians were saying, "This is telling us something about God; it is telling us that the ultimate is love." That assertion says more than may immediately come to mind, because love is always a relationship. So it says that whatever this ultimate is, it relates to us. It makes itself known.

Christians would say the ultimate makes itself known in Jesus. The radicality of the Christian claim is not that Jesus is like God (as though we know what God is like and then decide that Jesus serves as a good example), but that God is like Jesus. All that Christians know about the ultimate, they find in Jesus. At least, some theologians would phrase it that way.

Conceiving of God as love, as a result of seeing divine love in Jesus' behavior, led to breaking the bondage to the demands for conformity to the letter of the religious and moral law, by recognizing the need for inner, psychic freedom first, based on what might be called "prior acceptance."

In other words, it is not required that you work very hard to make yourself acceptable to the ultimate. You can't. You keep failing. But the early Christians found themselves relating to a God who really loved them, in a way that enabled them to love other people. This happens all the time on psychiatrists' couches. People come to believe they are acceptable and thereby become freed for others, rather than feeling that their first objective must be to work hard to be good, in order to gain the acceptance of others.

Jesus' appearance made it possible for personal harmony and wholeness to develop through faith and trust in an accepting God. The resulting change would be so new to a person that the person would speak of being "born again," a phrase which has been trivialized but which nevertheless captures the profundity and the reality of the change under discussion.

Experiential Knowledge

Why am I saying all of this in connection with believing in God? The reason is that belief in God is not simply accepting propositions or getting additional pieces of information. The revelation that comes from God is a revelation that one participates in.[3] One participates in a relationship with this Ultimate, and one experiences something of the best in the process of doing so.

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[2]Note: a metaphor. The doctrine of the Incarnation claims that the ultimate does take concrete form. The ultimate, Christians believe, is not just abstract principle. As a consequence of that belief, we are committed to working for a better society, where the ideal is actualized. Until it is, the ultimate is not as fully pervasive as it might be.

[3]This is the basis for my answer to the epistemological question about how one can claim to have knowledge of God. It is also the basis for a response to at least part of Kant's assertion that we cannot know the thing-in-itself.

Christian theology also speaks about sin, the origins of which are as much a mystery as God is. The best is not always sustained. But the claim is that the impact of the ultimate does prevail sometimes and will prevail in the long run.

Coming Kingdom

Persons who are able to love can love more than themselves. They start wanting all of society to be transformed. The Christian symbolism in this regard is the coming of the "Kingdom of God." Jewish symbolism refers to the coming of the "day of the Messiah." Both are looking forward to a time when all these ideals and abstractions will be made concrete in a social setting. The "Kingdom of God" is probably a metaphor for God, and as such it implies that the ultimate is essentially social, too.

The notion of the coming Kingdom says something else about God. It suggests that God is also in the future. Jürgen Moltmann once suggested that there are two ways of looking at the future. One is to view it as an extrapolation of everything that has already taken place, with the past just hurtling onward and forcing the future to be whatever the logical outcome of the past would make it. The other is to claim that God's future is more like an advent. God's future comes at us from the other side, with something new, unexpected, and better than we would have anticipated.

This view of God's future provides a continuous basis for hope. It calls us to be open to the new, because the Kingdom will not be what we already know. The Kingdom is going to come in those unexpected standards and actions that we are not considering at the present time. If only traditional Christians could be open to the new! Then they would really be working through and with the Spirit.

Work of the Holy Spirit

It is always a mystery why anyone responds to revelation—why, for example, anyone sees something really important going on, revealing God's will (or what God is like) in the Berrigan brothers' burning of draft cards, while most people look the other way or do not see anything important, or see only evil. Theology says that a positive response to the good is the work of the Holy Spirit—which is one way of acknowledging something we consider very favorably, the precise cause and timing of which we cannot fully explain. It is as though a holy—in contrast to an evil—spirit were at work. The point is that those things do occur. People do make decisions for good when, the day before, they were choosing evil. To the believer, that is God's doing (if we *must* think in terms of causal relationships) and (in any case) it is marvelous in our sight.

The work of the Holy Spirit occurs when the ultimate has impressed itself on an individual unpredictably, powerfully, and in accordance with its own standards of perfection, and when it has evoked some kind of affirmative response, such that the person can be said to be in a relationship of love, both with the ultimate source and with the world around. The person talks of God. Such a person may even behave in such a way that observers consider it reasonable for that person to be talking about God. If not, we say that sin also is present, which helps to make proof of the divine reality ambiguous, again.

We are drawn back to the matter of intuition and commitment, back to the need for what Søren Kierkegaard called a "leap of faith." But to the person who believes is given the power not to despair but to become better. And that might be enough reason for believing.

Theological Ethics and AIDS: Law and Gospel[1]

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Other than a nuclear tragedy or global famine, nothing so disturbs people today as the AIDS pandemic. As we ponder such a complicated social and moral question, we realize that our behavior will be unpredictable and erratic until we come to terms with our fundamental beliefs and values about AIDS. For Christians, other perspectives come to bear beyond simple biology or psychological fear.

Fundamental to a Christian understanding of reality is the concept of creation, fall, and consummation. Within this view of cosmic redemption the world is seen to lie in a disturbed twilight between creation and fall. The world is alienated from what it was in origination, and it has not yet achieved its destination.

The world of nature is awry, let loose by human disobedience, malevolence, and maleficence. The primal human family has been put out into a world that is indifferent if not inimical to its needs. We find ourselves in the land of Nod—a nowhere—a kind of negative utopia. Although this good earth allows release of the deepest human desires for freedom and creativity, it always frustrates them and brings them to naught.

Lewis Thomas of the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City contends that the AIDS pandemic recalls to our attention this primitive cosmos where frightening force confronts us. This sober and tragic view of reality has become suppressed in the buoyant contemporary vision of vitality, order, and progress: "In the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic we have been confronted again by the spectra of mortality on a large scale."[2]

The natural world, the world of law and predictability, is both the environment which stimulates creative initiative and calls forth from within us the energy to become creative and productive human beings. Yet this

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[1]This essay is prepared for Lutheran Health Network. Copyright retained by author.

[2]"In the Face of AIDS Scholars Look at How Societies Have Responded to Plagues," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 27, 1988), A8.

same stimulus to freedom and experimentation is also the ground on which we fall as we turn creative art into destructive art, experimentation into exploitation, freedom into license.

AIDS, the word we apply to a range of phenomena before us, is—as many great scientists like Stephen Jay Gould have reminded us—a natural phenomenon, a phenomenon of nature, and an evaluative cultural construct. At one level AIDS is an inhabitation of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus in the cellular and genetic substance of human beings. This virus renders the body's defensive systems incompetent, allowing the appearance of several conditions we call diseases, some leading to death; these include Kaposis sarcoma and other malignancies, pneumocystis carini pneumonia and other infections, emaciation, and other neurological and psychiatric devastations. AIDS is a disease that intrudes itself into human life primarily through the male, yet ironically reaps its loathsome harvest more swiftly in the female body.

Where does it come from? AIDS emerges from the omnipresent microbial ecology of the world—mutant in the animal underworld, then eventually erupting into human flesh. It takes pathological form by virtue of the licentious sexual habits and substance abuse of the late twentieth century. It is a disorder that waited for an historic moment of carelessly comingled body fluids to release its pathogenic fury. In Africa the epidemic is spread in good part via the vector of prostitution and promiscuity. In America the sociology has focused on male homosexuality and bisexuality, female and male prostitution, and the interchange of contaminated needles in drug usage. In addition to this, there is a small amount of indirect infection via contamination of the blood supply and the congenital



infection of babies. The tragic and innocent side of this plague is seen in the fact that one in every 61 babies born in New York state in December of 1987 was antibody-positive for AIDS.

We should consider AIDS as one in a sequence of global epidemic and pandemic infections or plagues which rise periodically throughout history. Such plagues penetrate into the human species, reach a peak as herd immunity rises, and run their malignant course until finally, their virulence checked by preventive inoculation and perhaps antimicrobial therapy, they move into sub-clinical and benign dormancy. Before this plague has run its course we will confront sobering and shocking reality.

When the Western moral tradition speaks of reality with its regularities and reverberations, it actually deals with two realities: physical and moral law. Physical law is the law which comprehends the workings of the physical realities and forces of the universe. Newton and Einstein formulated laws of physics. We have arrived at other theories that explain the workings of biological process and evolution. Today these theories are being woven into more comprehensive philosophies of science and

unified field theories, which will not only interpret more and more fundamental constituents of matter—atoms, subatomic elements, quarks, etc.—but will also draw the various branches of science into a coherent body of knowledge. The realm of physical law has some bearing on the issue of AIDS, since biological process and the natural history of epidemics are subject to physical laws.

But more relevant to our inquiry is not what the Greeks called *physics*, the laws of nature, but what the Hebrews called *Torah* and the Stoics and Hellenic Christians called *nomos*. Moral law in Thomistic philosophy is divided into three realms: divine law, which is known only in revelation since it is inaccessible to the unaided human mind and contrary to the human will. Divine law is dimly reflected in the second realm of moral law, natural law. Finally, there is the common political law of the community, "...a mandatory form freely established and promulgated by human superiors for the common good."[3]

The highest divine law that has been received by humans is Torah and the law of Christ. The "law of Moses" or "law of the covenant" is the word and light of life disclosed through the historical movement connected with the Exodus, Sinai, and the conquest of the promised land. The Ten Commandments represent the voice of God (*vox dei*), imperatives couched as negative commandments, standing in every case over against human propensities. If there is some human contribution in these great revelatory words, as there certainly must be, it must be found in the empiric ground which knows through experience that "we are not like this... we are prone to lie, covet and kill, therefore... thou shalt not..."[4]

"Torah"—the law of light and life—is not burdensome. It is that guidance which illumines and liberates our existence. In this regard we can recall Calvin's third use of the law, which offers pedagogy for the chosen people. In this law is a guide for the redeemed on how they should live under God. One can distinguish in the Hebrew Scriptures prophylactic instruction, which in this case would safeguard persons from the scourge of AIDS, from another use of law as a call to repentance and a commendation of a different style of life. We can also find instruction in mercy as we look upon the afflicted.

In terms of priority and importance, the whole body of Hebrew law emphasizes the following:

1. Life belongs to God, and all assault and insult on life is blasphemy (Gen 9:5).
2. Concern for the weak and oppressed is a major theme of Hebrew law. This commitment comes from Israels' own experience of rescue from slavery (Ex 21:22-27).
3. Faithfulness to agreements and relationships.
4. Finally, related to these three is the demand for purity and holiness.

Think of the bearing of these beliefs on AIDS and homosexuality. Before we move back to civil law, the impact of the gospel, and the relevance of law and gospel to homosexuality and AIDS, let us take note of one other crucial legal idea that is strangely ignored by much of the tradition: the law of Christ.

In Galatians, Paul urges: "Bear one another's burden and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Not only here but in Romans 15:1

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[3]See Vergilius Ferm, ed., *An Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), 433f.

[4]For this understanding of the Ten Commandments see Joy Davidman, *Smoke on the Mountain* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954).

he elaborates: "The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." Here we confront a thread of the fabric of law that forms a two-way bridge between law and gospel. The moral imperative of the law—sympathy and identification—is now embodied in the Christ event and becomes the genius of the gospel. The essence of the "law of Christ" is to be yoked in care to those who are oppressed and victimized at the hands of political, vengeful, and destructive society.

Certainly there is some truth in the antinomian understanding of the Gospels and Epistles. In Christ the world is freed from the incessant and unyielding demand of legal rectitude. But in the best heritage of Christian thought a truth is affirmed which was never abandoned by Judaism. This truth affirms that salvation does not come from works but rather from God's gracious heart toward his offspring, the human family. Salvation is receiving, not doing. Salvation is secured through that searching-out love that went all the way.

If my thesis is correct that "the law of Christ," the art of burden-bearing especially for the weak, is a mutation primarily of law and secondarily of gospel, and therefore a lasting affirmation of law, then we can begin to formulate a distinctive posture toward persons with AIDS, including those who happen to be bisexual and homosexual.

We move on to civil or community law. Perhaps the most difficult ethical questions of the AIDS pandemic will have to do with the civil law. Let us turn to Helmut Thielicke for guidance on these matters.

A first emphasis of ethics is that law must be mediated through gospel "in accord with kerygmatic purpose."[5] It is not our right to use the Holy Scriptures as legalistic clubs for our condemnatory emotional and political purposes. The kerygma is gospel, good news, glad tidings, great joy. Law, the righteous demand of the Lord, is conveyed in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church. Spoken word mediates written word as both are enlivened by the living Word.

The gospel announces release from the laws of cultic purification (such as sexual intercourse with menstruating women) and meditates rather on the weightier matters of law: justice and mercy. The *sensual* sins, though serious—fornication, greed, gluttony, drunkenness, homosexuality—are not nearly as weighty as the *spiritual* sins of injustice and idolatry.

The requirement of justice becomes the occasion for and the foundation of civil law. The world fallen into injustice and idolatry is given over to autonomy which, lest it regress into anarchy or tyranny, must in some sense be restrained within a civil contract. For Thielicke homosexuality is more a manifestation of original sin than concrete sin:

> ...theologically one dare not put an endogenous homosexuality, which is a kind of symptomatic participation in the fate of the fallen world, on the same level with concrete acts of libidinous excess...[6]

Civil law in this besieged and plague-filled world must safeguard the lives, liberties, and properties of God's people. It must reflect God's protective, righteous, and merciful will for his people. This is the Calvinist side of Thielicke's conscience in the matter. As far as the Lutheran side of his conviction, the AIDS crisis is to be approached not legally but pastorally. Concern with homosexuality is in the domain of

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[5]Helmut Thielicke, *Ethics & Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 277.

[6]Thielicke, *Ethics & Sex*, 282.

the pastoral arts, as exercised by physicians, pastors, and lay perople. The bearing of the burden of infirmity is also the major responsibility of the public order as it pursues justice. With specific reference to AIDS, the ethical responsibility of city, state, and nation is not to condemn, isolate, identify, and monitor. It is rather to sponsor rigorous research, provide medical care when private mechanisms of delivery and insurance fail, and insure dignified and confidential care in *extremis* and in *terminus*.

The final word in a Thielicke volume is a shout of good news! Proclamation goes out to sinners—to the sick; those who are well have no need of a physician. The gospel holds that in the fullness of time one came into our midst, born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law. Now we are no longer slaves and oppressed but children of God and free people. We are no longer subject to the vicious and pathologic elements of the cosmos. Though they can beat on us badly, even retroviruses and retributions cannot bring us down.

One of the moving writers on AIDS is a young dying man in New York, George Whitmore:

> As far as I know, no one I interviewed during the course of researching my book knew that I had AIDS. And the telltale marks hadn't spread to my face.
>
> My body. I hadn't looked at it much.
>
> Before I left for New Hampshire, at the Passover seder with my lover Michael's family, we took turns reading the Haggadah in booklets illustrated with line drawings. When we reached the page with the plagues God brought down on the Egyptians, there was a locust, there was a dead fish with X's for eyes, there was the outline of a man with dots all over him, signifying boils. I stared at the cartoon of the man with the boils. I know Michael, sitting next to me, was thinking the same thing. My body was like that now. I'd had three lesions 12 months before. Now there were three dozen.
>
> One day in New Hampshire, in the shower, I looked at my body. It was as if I'd never seen it before.
>
> A transformation had taken place and it was written on my skin.[7]

The gospel has gone out into the world—the world that is lost—the world of needles and drugs, of sexual obsessions and perversions, of prostitutes and pimps and pederasts. Into this world Christ came; for this world he died. I find myself thinking now of stigmatized and crucified AIDS victims, blemished with Kaposis sarcoma, hollowed out with emaciation. I think of these when I hear the haunting words of the Epistle of Jude—words of warning and of benediction, words which bespeak the high righteousness and hallowedness with which Christ's salvation and sanctification now mark human life:

> ...wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.
>
> Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you spotless and blameless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.[8]

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[7]George Whitmore, "Bearing Witness," *New York Times Magazine* (January 31, 1988).

[8]Jude 13, 24, 25.

Reflections on the Work of the Holying Spirit

Mary M. Solberg
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I am a student of theology, and a theologian. I trust I will always be both. What follows—a brief essay about my own experience of the work of the Holying Spirit—is neither conclusive nor concluded. It indicates some constructive co-ordinates that mark my present location and perhaps, my present course.

I begin with my experience, blessed and limited as it has been. I have no quarrel in principle with the truth or efficacy of mystery, or with what cannot be reduced to science or logical discourse. But there must be—there is—in what I believe, a comprehensibility, a plausibility in terms of my own experience. For me this is a fully defensible position, not only epistemologically and politically, but theologically and spiritually. Experience rather than argument has compelled me to seek language to express what is shaping my life and my loyalties.

Almost six years ago, I chose to go to El Salvador to do a job I was asked to do. When I look back over my life before El Salvador, I can see signs to explain how I happened to go there. I see continuities between myself then and myself now. I am still the same person. And yet, what happened there transformed me. I believe now that it was "not by my own reason or understanding," but that the Holying Spirit "called, enlightened, sanctified, and preserved" me. What other spirit, I wonder, could have done it?

The Communion of Saints

Reflecting on my experience, I subscribe fully to the contention that "...the saints have a decisive role in one another's salvation."[1] However it is defined theologically, salvation that is not communicated and appropriated incarnate—that is, among us as persons located in time and space—is of little consequence and even less use. In El Salvador, where the daily reality is death,

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[1]Robert Bertram, "A Constructive Lutheran Theology of the Saints" (unpublished paper prepared for the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialog, 1986), 2.

physical as well as spiritual, immediate as well as extended, salvation is life and liberation. I believe it is, elsewhere, too.

How are life and liberation named and claimed among threatened and singularly "unsaintly" people? My own theological response emerges from observation of and participation in the actionable: the proclamation of God's word of life and liberation in performative acts, verbal and non-, and the administration of the sacraments, God's promises to kill and resurrect to new life (Baptism) and to be present with us in our communal eating and drinking (Holy Communion). The signs we cling to are means, and we are instruments, of God's sure, unconditional grace, received with perhaps more eagerness (and more benefit?) in a place where life is always conditional and where the surest human promises are of hunger and suffering.

I have learned to appreciate the actionable character of the sacraments (which Werner Elert distinguishes from the [mere!] hearing of the Word), and their "outsideness," which reminds us of God's initiative.[2] With Willi Marxsen, I have come to share the conviction that the Lord's Supper—which I prefer to call "Holy Communion"—is an expression of the inclusive, liberating, and therefore life-giving table fellowship Jesus practiced/s with those he loved/s.[3]

Sharing bread and wine with persons with whom I'd have said I had nothing in common—barefoot, illiterate, brown-skinned, poor, Spanish-speaking, warred-upon folk—both "gathered" and "enlightened" me, not only there, but also for other more familiar settings. It opened the door for me to the communion—or what Luther in the *Large Catechism* preferred to call a "*communidad* (community)"—of saints that is for me more surely the church than is any corporation with that name.

Forgiveness of Sins

"Forgiveness of sins" is a metaphor for mending the broken relationships between God and me, and between me and others God loves. On reflection, my experience in El Salvador helped me understand both the daily need for forgiveness—the need to live *in* forgiveness—and the significance of baptism as the unerasable mark of "forgiveness." I went there with at least a touch of the social worker's desire to do good. The longer I stayed, the clearer it became that no matter how much I loved, how hard I tried, how clever or politically astute I was, I simply could not fix what was wrong. I heard the words of Psalm 51 as if newly: "...a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

For me, contrition involved repentance: looking at the brokenness around me and acknowledging my part in it, as both perpetrator and victim, and admitting to myself and to God that I could not make up for or mend that kind of brokenness. Being forgiven meant accepting God's promise, to me and to my Salvadoran friends, of wholeness, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. It meant doing all of these things daily, counting on God's lively baptismal promise which, as Luther says, "...not only announces...new life but also produces, begins, and promotes it." It meant my accepting responsibility to be an instrument by means of which that can and does happen, thanks to the work of the Holying Spirit.

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[2]Werner Elert, *The Lord's Supper Today* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1973).

[3]Willi Marxsen, "The Lord's Supper as as Christological Problem," from *The Beginnings of Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 88-122.



At the same time, I experienced the holy, healing word of forgiveness spoken among the saints not only on specific occasions when a thoughtless act or a hurtful sentence needed to be forgiven. More important, I experienced it through the acceptance and trust many of my Salvadoran sisters and brothers offered me, despite my privileged, powerful position and my association with a good portion of the violence they are being subjected to. Like the ex-slave trader in the movie "The Mission," I felt that *campesinos* and colleagues around me cut me loose daily from the dead weight of guilt I dragged across the landscape.

Resurrection and Life

Oscar Romero, the martyred archbishop of San Salvador, spoke of his own (imminent) death and prayed to be resurrected again in the struggle of the Salvadoran people. As a matter of fact, Romero "lives" in the minds and hearts of millions of Salvadorans and their friends (*and* enemies), most of whom, like me, never knew him.

But what of the tens of thousands—members, with us, of the one Body of Christ—who have died or disappeared, anonymous to all but a handful of relatives? What of those who have been left to rot in the dumping grounds, without recognition from or the knowledge of even their families? For them, is there hope for a new heaven, a new earth? Is there justice?

The resurrection of the body points back, historically and spiritually, to the Easter event, and forward to an "event" we cannot picture except metaphorically. It is also, however, a declaration of the meaningfulness of present life, individually and corporately: confident, hopeful, and fearful of a final, divine judgment—justice—and the transformation of all things. The faithful witness to the resurrection of Jesus, associated so intimately with Jesus' authoritative message, grounds Christians' hope for their own resurrection.

Wolfhart Pannenberg asserts that "...the future resurrection of the dead will reveal what already forms the secret of our life history for the eternal God who is present in our life."[4] Although process theologian Marjorie Suchocki would not phrase it the same way, her eschatology shares Pannenberg's conviction of the presence of God's secret, revealed in resurrection. Resurrection is transformation, not linear immortality. As God feels all our feelings, takes in all we are, resurrection begins in life; God co-experiences each person's moments, takes them into God's own life, and there transforms them.

Following the totality of a life, our resurrection into God—a spiritual transformation—brings us into God's life, in which we "know as we are known." (I Cor 13:12) This knowledge extends beyond ourselves; each of us also experiences ourselves as

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[4]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 172.

others have experienced us. The dim sense of the difference between what we might have been and what we were is sharpened in us, as it has always been clear to God. Judgment becomes an explicit part for us of our own redemptive, transformative process.

We are opened through resurrection into the totality of relationships; the limitations of the finite self to identify with the whole are broken down. Resurrected, transformed, judged, we and all reality move into justice, carried by God's aim toward harmony. "The reality of the world is transformed in judgment into conformity with the nature of God."[5]

These ingredients—transformation, judgment, and redemption within God's purpose—suggest what I find to be a plausible account of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. I cannot image a God whose purpose is served by eternal damnation. Nor can I image a God whose justice encompasses only one planet in the cosmos, as if an account of "life everlasting" could be meant in this universe only for what we know as the human race. That I cannot image a God in this way may indicate my own peculiar paralysis of imagination; I am willing to be illumined.

Spirituality

What I believe, needs somehow to tally with many experiences, painful as well as joyful, frustrating as well as satisfying, and with the lives of those with whom I have experienced my life in all its parts, for I have never lived alone. The spirituality out of which I live reflects this conviction, and for that reason it is a restless spirituality, sometimes pushy, often less receptive than I would like, but in general, profoundly appreciative of what the Holying Spirit blows my way.

What is revealed to me or through me as life and liberation—as Jesus' living gift—is revealed by what the Holying Spirit *does*, which is a more important object of reflection than what it *might be*. As for the difficulty I have saying what the Holy Spirit might actually be, it is a difficulty I share with Robert Jenson, whose (provisional?) definition I quote in closing:

> The Spirit is Jesus' unlimited, resurrection-liberated freedom.... The Spirit is Jesus' freedom to effect historical reality.[6]

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[5]Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 189.

[6]Robert Jenson, "The Holy Spirit," in *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 162.

Theology Starts Somewhere!

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My granddaughter has embarked upon one of the first theological ventures of her life. Karin is now two years old. It might be argued that she has been involved in this enterprise since birth. From the very first hour of her life, perhaps even before, as Horace Bushnell observed a century ago, there has been nurture, spiritual nurture, in her life. The word that we use today is "bonding." That is at its heart a religious process. When we move into the realm of the reflective and intentional, we are dealing with theology.

The process of nurture or bonding began to become articulate at her mother's breast and through the night walks with her father. Later, grandparents cuddled and cooed, then friends, and uncles and aunts. Her family and community of origin grew even as she began to fill what now seems to be an indispensable slot in our lives. What could life have been like before she entered it? Were she, at this early stage of her theologizing, able to conceive of the thought in such abstractions, she would also describe her life in terms of who belonged to her and to whom she belongs. It is a profound theological concept that can be summed up in a simple sentence. Karin is in the process of becoming a person.

We are all in that process. Or, to take the thought a step further, God is in our midst as that process. Creation is not so much something that God does as something that God is. I am not at all certain that God is, or what that means. As Tillich says, the idea of God's being is too vast for the human mind. But I have no doubt of God's doing; that surrounds me each day of my life. No one looks upon the face of God, we are told, and lives. We only see God's backside—where he has been. God's doing we daily affirm as part of our moving toward our personhood. And that is the spiritual essence of life.

An identity is an awesome entity. It emerges almost simultaneously with birth, but it never totally is. In our Christian tradition we are, and we are not. We live by grace, the daily manna that nurtures us in our growth toward our personhood. We live in the promise and the hope that what

we know now only fractionally and in part we shall in time know in full. We know that in faith because God, the creative reality of all life, walks with us. What a terrible crime we commit against ourselves and others when we deny that movement. We look back in fear and distrust, and we turn into pillars of salt.

But back to Karin. She is well on her way, as she is already two. In the past weeks she has discovered the WORD. Her mother says that she delights every day in the world this has opened up for her in the exploration of the possibilities this discovery contains. She has become a theologian as she has begun to appropriate the tool whereby this happens. To theologize is to reflect on meaning. It is a craft that belongs to all of us. But no craft can be pursued without the proper tools. In this case, words are the tools. With the word all things begin.

Of course, Karin has been aware of the word for a long time. She learned long ago to know the right reactions and responses when certain sounds were heard. There were always such sounds in her life, words of endearment, words of promise. Some carried pleasant gifts; some were of sterner stuff. Sounds and words communicate both promise and discipline, love and rejection. But I have seen seals and dolphins respond to such as well; so did our pet dog and a cat we once owned. Sometimes we even speak of animals as if they have identities. I am not so certain of that. But at any rate, Karin has moved beyond that threshold. She is in the process of making the word her own. She is taking a giant step in this business of becoming. She may even be responding to the first command that all of us are given by that process we call God.

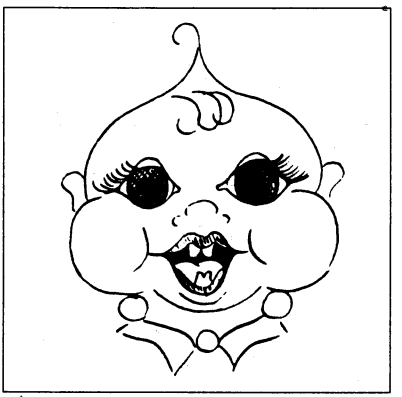
One of the first tasks God gave to Adam and Eve in the garden was to name every beast of the field and bird of the air, even as they were created. What a tremendous responsibility! Names give reality; co-creators with God! It is a task that Karin has entered upon with total seriousness, as did her first ancestors, but also with total delight. When we read together one of her books, another recent discovery, we are not yet into story. That will come. We are working with the naming: the animals, the birds, and the trucks. And the naming also involves remembering the accompanying noises: moos, grunts, and squeals. I looked for but could not find references to such in the Bible. Sometimes theologizing even moves beyond Scripture.

Sometimes theologizing even moves beyond Scripture.

This spring included some family time together on a beach in Florida. A major part of that experience was the enjoyment of that creation from which God rested and which God called "good." The naming of the "ocean" was the most enthusiastic part of the experience. Back in Minnesota that theological discovery was a bit difficult to let go of. There are many smaller bodies of water in these parts—one, as a matter of fact, right outside our living room window. Several times when Karin came for a visit, she would enthusiastically call out, "ocean." I gathered that when we have had a significant spiritual experience in our personal journeys, it is hard to let go of that memory and that naming. So we began to discipline her to that required exactness which the

theological craft requires. She has learned to add the word "lake" to her vocabulary.

I have noticed of late the growing sophistication of putting two or more words together. The "water" has become "wet;" the "hill" we are walking up is also "steep." So life moves on toward its intricacies and complications. Value judgments will at times appear in her speech. She likes this



and rejects that. Food which was once just food has become good or bad (less pleasant adjectives are also used). These valuations are not always predictable, and sometimes they are spoken with great passion. Karin is not a machine, nor is she lukewarm; for that we are grateful.

A necessary component of this lifelong calling to theologize is that we reflect upon our growth, upon God's creative process within our own lives. Karin's approvals and rejections are not always in accord with our immediate likes and dislikes. Our first impulse is quite naturally to wish to take over. We must, of course, protect her. But often that is only a matter of wishing to enforce our own wills. After all, we can see consequences still hidden to her, and besides, we are considerably bigger than she is. But, on second thought, we usually do recognize that she has her own journey to travel, her own identity to pursue. As we try to set certain limits with some responsibility, we are sometimes also given the grace to recognize the necessity of her rebelliousness. She too must set limits, even for us. We also have some growing to do; we are also in process. God is not through with us yet.

Karin is only on the threshold of the theological task. She is in the stage of discovery and naming. In the Genesis story that precedes the fall. Words still carry a pristine purity in her life. Once clarified, like the business of "ocean" and "lake," they mean what they are supposed to mean. We begin to play games with them, even a pun now and then, but words do not deceive or lie. Nor do those to whom Karin belongs, who belong to her. If we do, that is a discovery yet to be made (and dealt with).

But the Great Deceiver will, someday, also come into her life. The lord of lies will seek to corrupt her Eden. The role of the Word will then take another dimension in Karin's life. The words of play and the naming will arrange themselves into words of the Story. In the world of mathematics, young minds wrestle with addition and subtraction long before they are introduced to the mysteries of fractions and decimals. Our spiritual biographies and our theological awareness are similar. The concept of numbers precedes the complicated things we do with them. Later on, life becomes fractionalized, and strange formulas become chaotic labyrinths that ensnare and entrap the mind which is not ready for them. Words, so delightful and innocent in their beginnings, move on to disorient and entangle the unprepared in their snarls. How that happens and the stages of that development are, of course, the Story. That is the next stage with which Karin's theological growth and

development must deal. The wonder of the last few weeks of age two is matched only by that which awaits her in the rest of her days.

Parents, grandparents, and all others who are part of the creative community that surrounds and nurtures Karin resist and are sorrowed by the thoughts of such a future. It is cruel to anticipate that Karin will meet and have to deal with evil—evil in the world, evil in those whom she has trusted, evil in herself. With Simon Peter our impulse is to draw the sword, strike a blow, and deny that we will be involved in such. Again we protect and seek to protect.

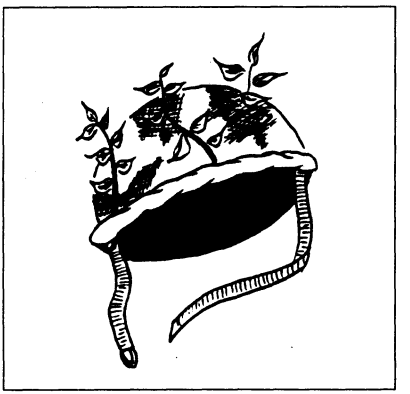
But that is a vain and pointless impulse. We know it is a lie, because we know our own journey. We anticipate that encounter because we recognize it in our own journeying. Even more surely than the higher math, this awaits her. Our personal theologies at their most authentic moments wrestle with the Story. No blessing is to be found in any escape from that journey. But a gift awaits those who travel in faith. We own a promise that the grace which comes to us in the Word we share will give growth toward new identity. Karin is two now, and she has just begun. Sometimes the future seems ominous, and we wonder how any of us can possibly survive. But God is involved, and our only hope is to trust the process. All we can do is to love her on the way. That is the only way she can possibly be equipped for that journey.

Camouflaged

Late one afternoon this November,
I walked outside Tenancingo
toward the children's school.
The road was quiet.
Banana and coffee trees
covered the cliff on my left.
Then, I saw one, another and another
standing like trees,
leaved limbs in their boots, belts
and collars.
One, right beside me—
I could have touched him.
His left foot planted in the ditch
and his right on the incline.
He held the black barrelled gun close,
hid it with his body.
I looked at his boyish face
darkened with smudge
and wondered who gave him
orders.

"Things are better," they say.

Death squads are careful.
Torturers leave no mark.
They come at night
dressed in civies
driving a Cherokee with dark
windows.
They stop the minister,
yank him from his car
leave his child
and three parishioners
in the dark
Black plastic over his head,
they beat him.
One, two, three, four, five days—
interrogation,
no sleep.



His family cannot find him.
What's his crime?
He directs relief
to the hungry.

"Those poor help the guerillas,"
they say.

Only Communists do that.
Are there Communists
in the plastic huts
we saw in San Salvador?

The earth quakes.
Walls break.
Hungry mothers and children show
through the camouflage.

Gretchen Lara Shartle
San Anselmo, California

Book Reviews

BITS, BYTES & BIBLICAL STUDIES. A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN BIBLICAL AND CLASSICAL STUDIES. By John J. Hughes. Academie Books. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. xxxvii and 643 pages. Paper. $29.95.

Many students of the Bible will seize this book eagerly, read it avidly, and lay it down with a great sense of appreciation and a bit of aggravation. And both feelings are fully justified.

First, a *description.* Hughes is the "bible" (at least for the moment) on the use of the microcomputer in biblical studies. An opening chapter gives a compressed course in computer architecture and its arcane vocabulary. Readers who have read books about hardware, firmware, programming, software, etc., will find this a compressed review. Absolute neophytes will find the chapter compressed, difficult, yet rewarding and informative. They will turn often to the "Glossary" section.

After that H. describes the use of the computer and associated software in six chapters. He discusses word processing of multilingual texts in multiple alphabets (hardware needs; word processing programs; font and printer utilities; spelling, thesaurus, and style programs; macro utilities; bibliographic and sort programs; text retrieval programs; desktop publishing and typesetting programs), English language concordance programs (indexed, non-indexed, and text-only programs), computer assisted language instruction (Sumerian, Egyptian, Hebrew, ancient Greek, and Latin), communication services and on-line information services (data bases, encyclopedias, news services, and scholarly networks), archaeological programs (the weakest chapter in the book), and machine-readable ancient texts and text archives (Massoretic Hebrew, other Semitic, Septuagint, Greek New Testament, other text archives: classical, patristic, papyri, inscriptions, etc.). The coverage is astounding!

Appreciation. This is an encyclopedia of resources. H. covers the field. In each chapter or subsection H. first describes the process involved and provides criteria to evaluate programs. He reviews 13 language learning programs for Hebrew, 20 for Latin, 3 for Greek, 1 for Sumerian, and 1 for Egyptian. He tells you how to obtain machine-readable texts of the Bible in its original languages, as well as ancient Greek and Latin literary texts, inscriptions, and papyri. He critically evaluates more than 30 multi-lingual word processing programs that enable scholarly writing using multiple alphabets with sophisticated documentation in tables, graphs, and footnotes. He describes programs that enable one to compile (and download from data bases) bibliographic resources that can be sorted for multiple purposes. He introduces the reader to Christian computer bulletin boards and all of the major on-line information services. He instructs one in how to use the computer as an aid in publication. Each chapter includes massive bibliographic resources that will go beyond most seminary libraries. In short, H. is a comprehensive, critical guide through the minefield of micro-computer use in biblical and classical studies.

Aggravation. H. is weak in a few areas. (1) He does not evaluate programs that might be used for graphics in scholarly publication. This gap is serious, especially in the chapter on archaeology. Computer-assisted design programs are being used to provide drawings of pottery and baulks in archaeological study and publication. They would be useful for maps in biblical studies. (2) The chapter on archaeology is a beginning. He evaluates no programs; he does not make clear whether none is available or whether he simply has not had time or opportunity to study them. (3) He evaluates CAI programs to teach languages but does not describe

the type of computer network or the number of micro-computers it takes to effectively use such programs institutionally.

Significant conclusions. (1) Biblical scholars who have not become computer oriented will discover that they are not using a major research tool. (2) Seminaries will need to make such resources available for both faculty and student research. (3) Pastors who maintain an interest in biblical study should read this book; its value is not restricted to the academy. The word processing and concordance programs are also useful for parish pastors. (4) It is clear that MS DOS, the system used in IBM compatible computers, has been selected by most programmers who work in academic contexts. Scholars who purchase micros in the future should first consider MS DOS based computers. The Apple Macintosh runs, at the moment, in second place. The Apple II series is at the moment out of the running (I say this with regret, as an Apple II owner). But systems that enable Apples to run MS DOS and IBM compatibles to run Apple II and Macintosh programs are now available.

In the volatile world of computer applications, any book is out of date when published! H. also publishes *Bits & Bytes Review* to evaluate new hardware and programs as they appear. That journal should be in every seminary library. But for the immediate future, at least, H.'s volume is the most reliable guide to computer resources in biblical scholarship. Theological librarians and deans should be held to read it, draw the inferences, and make the research capabilities described in Hughes available on their campuses. He is a reliable guide.

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THE MORAL WORLD OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS. By Wayne A. Meeks. Library of Early Christianity 6. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986. 182 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

• Meeks seeks to describe early Christianity's "Communities of Moral Discourse," that is, to describe how the character of early Christianity was shaped by the social setting(s) in which the church was located. This entails describing the various settings, groups, or communities that might have influenced the church. In chapters 2, 3, and 5 he refers to selected texts or writers who illustrate the positions described.

The first chapter describes the *polis* as the social setting of the early church. He begins with a description of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. Then he turns to city life in the early Roman Empire, which was more cosmopolitan and open to influences from cultures scattered widely in the ancient world. The world became Greek in its language and culture. Society was stratified; we know the aristocratic level best, since aristocrats wrote most of the literature that survives. There were almost no revolutionary movements; morality consisted of doing what was fitting to one's position in the social structure. This chapter is well worth reading, though there are some serious omissions.

Pausanias wrote a description of Greece in the second century. He describes the character of the polis in evaluating a small city in Phokis, Panopeus, "if you can call it a city when it has no state buildings, no training-ground, no theatre, and no market-square, when it has no running water at a water-head and they live on the edge of a torrent in hovels like mountain huts" (Pausanias 10.4.1, in *Guide to Greece*, tr. Peter Levi [N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1971]1:410). Pausanias reminds us of what Meeks omits or underplays in his discussion: the Ephebeia as formative institution, the gymnasium, the theatre, and the agora. He says little about the nature of work or leisure, entertainment, or education in the city. What role did the circus (hippodrome) and arena (amphitheater) play in moral formation, if any? Citizenship and public benefaction were also a significant factor, even after Rose's conquest of

the east. (Read Dio Chrysostom about his relationship to his home city, Prusa.) In short, the description of life in the polis omits many factors.

That omission also affects the adequacy of the second chapter, "The Great Traditions: Greece and Rome." Here Meeks discusses ethical teachings in the philosophic tradition—and only that. The ethical teachings of Plutarch (Middle Platonist), Stoic (Musonius Rufus), Cynics, and Epicureans are described in broad strokes. The presentation is useful, but there is fundamental discontinuity in the discussion. Meeks nowhere relates his description of social stratification to the process of philosophic teaching to show how the *plebs*, the large mass of the population, come to know this philosophic tradition. The ordinary people would more likely be influenced by drama, epic, the satirists who wrote popular poetry, the mimes, and the ideas of ethnic identity and political hope. Yet Meeks never mentions drama (no Plautus, Terence; Menander is mentioned once), the *Eclogues* or the *Aeneid* of Vergil, or the poets Horace, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Martial, and Juvenal. Education paid major attention to such writers. Meeks might well object that these are Latin writers, and the New Testament is written in Greek. Then where is Polybius, Greek pastoral poetry, Apollonius Rhodius, the Greek novel, etc.? Greek history also had moral purposes. The reader of this volume would infer that philosophy (a truly aristocratic intellectual activity) was the main force affecting Christianity. A reading of M. L. Clarke's *The Roman Mind* (London: Cohen & West, 1956) would provide a more balanced picture of influences on moral attitudes.

"The Great Traditions: Israel" (Chapter 3) surveys later wisdom literature (Jesus ben Sirach), Qumran, Philo, and the Rabbis preserved in the Mishnah as formative influences on Jewish ethical thinking. Purity, Torah, Scripture, and a moral interpretation of history are characteristic of this Judaism. Meeks claims that the Hebrew Scriptures have a status far beyond that attributed to Homer, Plato, or any other writer of classical antiquity. (Strabo comes close to claiming equal status for Homer in book 1 of his geography.) Meeks makes one aware that this chapter is a thirsty fragment when it comes to describing the moral resources in early Judaism.

The fourth chapter, "The Christian Communities," presents two forms of Christianity: (1) the messianic Jewish sect of village Galilee, dominated by the wandering prophets, with an apocalyptic ethic that rarely addresses the great or small moral issues of society directly, and (2) the household association in the polis, that has points of contact with the synagogue, the household, cultic associations, and the school. As time goes on, it develops a structure that parallels that of imperial Rome. Much of this is found in greater detail in Meeks' *The First Urban Christians* (Yale, 1983).

The final chapter, "The Grammar of Early Christian Morals," is in a sense the unique contribution of the volume. Here Meeks examines the style of moral discourse in 1 Thessalonians (moral admonition), 1 Corinthians (issues that arise out of community life in a cosmopolitan environment), Matthew (community formation), and the Apocalypse (disjunction with the reality experienced in the environment). Any reader of this chapter will be enriched.

I am ambivalent about this volume. Meeks attempts to describe a complex, culturally varied social world and the forces of moral formation in a relatively small book. He succeeds only partially. Not all significant influences on moral formation are given voice. Yet what is here is stimulating and worth reading. The notes point to useful secondary literature, while a short bibliography suggests additional reading in NT ethics. This volume will be useful to many students, a helpful aid for many teachers of New Testament, and read by many who are not professional biblical scholars. It will serve well if it is not read as a comprehensive summary of the moral environment of the New Testament. Read the book, but remember it is a fragment.

Edgar Krentz

WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT MARK? By Frank J. Matera. New York: Paulist, 1987. 113 pages. Paper. $4.95.

OUR JOURNEY WITH JESUS: DISCIPLESHIP ACCORDING TO MARK. By Dennis M. Sweetland. Vol. 22 in Good News Studies, edited by Robert J. Karris. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987. 188 pages. Paper. $7.95.

For the past twenty years publishers have flooded the market with books about Mark's Gospel. Provocative paradigms and challenging theses have forced readers to reassess the historical origins, the literary quality, and the continuing message of this book. Most recent offerings, including these two volumes, are summary assessments of the last decades' progress.

Matera gives an adequate albeit conservative introduction to the issues: Mark was probably written at Rome, under Petrine influence during the 60s C.E., not in Syria or Galilee after the fall of Jerusalem. Its christology is of the "royal messianic" variety that pictures Jesus as the "Son of God," not a "messianic secret" strategy or an anti-"divine man" ideology.

In spite of the negative picture of the disciples—they misunderstand Jesus and ultimately disappoint him—Mark portrays them pastorally as an example to later followers; this is not a polemic against their heirs. Mark was a conservative redactor of the Jesus traditions, not a creative rewriter. Recent literary critical studies are valuable because they help readers view the Gospel as a unified story and appreciate its sophisticated rhetorical devices, but his approach must not be divorced from traditional historical critical studies.

A more balanced assessment of the role of the disciples and their impact upon modern readers is given by Sweetland. He clearly recognizes that the disciples are seen in a negative light throughout most of the Gospel. They are thus an object lesson on how *not* to understand one's relationship with Jesus. Jesus himself is the model for authentic living as a child of God.

To be a disciple, then and now, means being called to be with Jesus and to serve others. It means being willing to suffer, even to die, in this service. It means living out one's discipleship within an egalitarian, mutually supportive community. It means being centered on baptism and eucharist, affirming the marriage bond, valuing children, sharing possessions, and practicing prayer. In sum, "the call to follow Jesus is a call to conversion of life, obedience, trust, and hope."

Both books have shortcomings. Matera too easily dismisses some of the best recent innovations; he all but ignores the function of the title "Son of Man." Sweetland seems undecided about whether readers should identify with Jesus and imitate him or identify with the fallible disciples and improve on their performance. Nevertheless both monographs will well serve any student of Mark.

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PROFIT WITH DELIGHT: THE LITERARY GENRE OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. By Richard I. Pervo. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. xiii and 212 pages. Cloth. $16.95.

Except for some dry patches in Leviticus and a few other deserts, most of the Bible has recovered in the English-speaking from its entombment in soporific syntax. But it can still benefit from the kind of loving attention someone like Richard Pervo can give it.

Many ancient audiences of literary works—there was more hearing than reading—expected even the most serious works to be entertaining. Plato had difficulty writing a boring line, yet, as his influence through millennia demonstrates, he did not short-change virtue or compromise the cerebrum. Herodotos showed the world how to write history, and no one snored when his work was read. Luke also entered the competition.

Under the guidance of Pervo, readers of Luke's books will realize before they are very far into them that it is legitimate and not unspiritual

to be delighted with a biblical author's flair for a fascinating piece of writing. Of course, Pervo skims the cream by choosing the Acts of the Apostles for his study of a biblical writer's literary techniques. After all, Luke's two-volume work ranks with Genesis and the Samuel literature for sheer literary appeal, and in Acts Luke explores potentiality for expression that he had to keep under wraps in the production of his Gospel.

So interesting is Acts that Pervo thinks Luke has enriched the telling in not a few places with a novelist's dash of creative writing. It is, of course, not necessary to agree with Pervo at all points on this score. On the other hand, Pervo's thorough acquaintance with ancient genres and modes of literary expression helps one appreciate why Luke tells his story as he does. And even though it is true that the evangelist-historian is respectful of tradition, it must be granted that he did not pass up a good story that might advance his plot and help trumpet the virtues of his superstars. Hence arrests and escapes dot the pages of Acts. Along with other recurring features, including orations, they serve plot functions, as in ancient novels.

Any person with a liberal arts education will find this book instructive. Students who wish to pursue study of the New Testament in its cultural environment will find that even the endnotes and the indexes offer profit with delight.

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GLOBAL ECONOMY: A CONFESSIONAL ISSUE FOR THE CHURCHES? By Ulrich Duchrow. Translated by David Lewis. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987. 231 pages. Paper. $9.50.

This book presents Northern European and American churches with a bold and difficult proposition: the vast injustices of the present global economic system constitute a confessional challenge that strikes at the heart of what it means for the church to be the Body of Christ in the world. It is a clear call for the church, in its various expressions, to see this as a confessional issue in the tradition of the Barmen Declaration and the Lutheran World Federation's 1977 stance against *apartheid* in South Africa.

Despite its title, this is primarily a discussion in theology, not in economics, and yet the author's point is that economic issues need to be seen as central theological issues. As he has in past writings, including his pivotal work on Luther's "two governances" (*Christenheit und Weltverantwortung*), he boldly attacks the way neo-Lutheranism has separated the spiritual from the socio-economic-political dimension of life. This has led to an illegitimate accommodation to existing power relations, so that the imperatives of the gospel are avoided. We "trim our sails to the winds of power."

Luther's ecclesiology necessitated solidarity with the poor and suffering, and thus strong opposition to the economic institutions of his day. Both Luther and Bonhoeffer emphasized how we are answerable to God in a whole set of diverse interrelated dimensions of life in the world. "Participation in the Body of Christ excludes systematic oppression and exploitation."

The focus of this book is closely related to the author's work with the WCC conciliar process, calling for widespread commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. For grass-roots models, he draws upon his work on these issues in the Evangelical Church in Baden (Heidelberg), West Germany. Although he cautions against too harsh a treatment of those who do not agree, his position may strike some as too strident. As a feminist theologian, I also suspect that the terms in which such confessing is typically cast can sometimes function oppressively. His proposal would be strengthened with a more extensive sympathetic discussion of the factors (ideological, etc.) that stand in the way of moving people pastorally into the radical discipleship that he here calls for. Nevertheless, it is an important book that must be taken seriously.

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DANGEROUS MEMORIES. By Bernard J. Lee and Michael A. Cowan. Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988. 201 pages. Paper. $7.95.

The authors indicate their struggle to balance relational commitments with the American notion of freedom in the subtitle, "House Churches and Our American Story." They support their approach to the problem with group dynamics and interpersonal relations theory; one wonders where the New Testament data fits into their backdrop for ministering. Nonetheless, the data they use is used well. This reviewer responds warmly to their attempt, since he was involved for half a dozen years in a house church which built on Christ through the two fundaments of New Testament and group dynamics, interlacing one source with another with powerful results.

The book approaches church phenomenologically, circling the underground church movement at home and abroad, citing Leonardo Boff from *Ecclesiogenesis* that the small group movement is re-inventing church. By developing a model of culture as an interlocking web of three "sub-webs"—world view, symbols, and ethos—they are then able to show that the intentional Christian community is a mediating structure within culture which exhibits mutuality, concern, and a spirit of love and justice, whose politics is mystical (i.e. rooted in the consciousness of God as creator, a la Johannes Metz), whose leadership is servant, and whose marks are *koinonia, diakonia, martyria,* and *leitourgia.* Narrative and ethics belong together and are focused in worship and witness.

There may have been a time in this country when church and community were co-extensive in our society. This has not been true for the last three generations. The meaning of community has itself shifted as we come to terms with the permanency of pluralism. The church is being reborn in this age. This book offers a way of envisioning church that can ease the travail.

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SIX THEORIES OF JUSTICE: PERSPECTIVES FROM PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ETHICS. By Karen Lebacqz. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 159 pages. Paper. $9.95.

In this first volume of a projected two-volume work, Lebacqz begins with the question: *what is justice?* This is the question she poses to six sages—three philosophers and three theologians. The philosophers speak first. From John Stuart Mill we hear a utilitarian definition of justice; from John Rawls, a contract response; from Robert Nozick, an entitlement alternative. Then the theologians speak. From the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, we hear the definition of justice lodged in the second draft of the pastoral letter on the economy; from Reinhold Niebuhr, a Protestant alternative; from Jose Porforio Miranda, the liberation challenge. Asking for a definition of justice is like asking six blind people to describe the elephant. The resultant beasts are wonderful and diverse enough to fill up an entire zoo.

The book is a masterpiece of analysis. Its size is deceptive. In a mere 123 pages of text Lebacqz takes apart six theories dominating philosophical and theological discussion of justice. Each chapter discusses in detail aspects of the author's/authors' theory of justice, summarizes salient points, critiques each presentation in terms of its internal coherence, and offers a closing assessment. Lebacqz moves with characteristic precision, insight, and lucidity through the discussion, summary, critique, and assessment. One could have, for example, no better guide through the labyrinth of Rawls' *A Theory of Justice.*

The text itself speaks to a general audience, and could even be used in an upper-level college or seminary classroom. The 31 pages of footnotes, however, are directed to the scholar. Here the depth of Lebacqz' research shines through, as she sorts through disciples, critics, and skeptics alike with balance and equanimity. Again, the book is a masterpiece of analysis.

Oddly, this chief strength is also the book's chief weakness. Lebacqz' own position, the subject of her second volume, is here only dimly

foreshadowed. One wonders where she is going, where her corrective to these six theories will be. Less in conversation with each of these blind men, she is more the keen and distant observer of their various analytical moves. That observation is brilliant—but one wonders: what is the vision of the observer?

A final question hangs like a shadow over the whole. Lebacqz begins with the question: what is justice? Accordingly, she answers by analyzing six theories of justice. But what if she were to choose another initiatory question, *what is injustice?* If injustice were the beginning point, then we might need more than justice—or even various theories of justice—to help us. It was this insight that forced Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* finally to abandon his neat, arithmetic discussion of justice and turn to friendship as the necessary complement of justice and as another part of the answer to injustice. Justice alone, he found, could not rectify injustice. The same conviction led a first-century prophet and revolutionary to speak of God's love.

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THE PAULINE LETTERS. By Leander E. Keck and Victor Paul Furnish. Nashville: Abingdon, 1984. 160 pages. Paper. $9.50.

Interpretation always stands in a tradition of interpretation, and the interpretation of Paul begins with some of the letters that bear Paul's name, namely Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus). That Paul himself is an interpreter is attested by his interpretation of traditions, such as those relating to resurrection (1 Cor 15), to the significance of Christ's death as the medium for God's justifying action (Rom 3), to the validity of Mosaic law (Gal 4:4-6), to implications of the Christ-event (Phil 2), and to numerous other traditions, including those that have to do with ethics, the Holy Spirit, and Scripture.

Non-specialists will find that much of the smog surrounding discussion of the letters that bear Paul's name is here dispersed. Most of the main lines of inquiry are stated in plain prose, principal divergences in scholars' viewpoints are displayed with fairness, and numerous passages that might trouble modern readers become exceptionally meaningful.

Frederick W. Danker

THE CREED IN THE GOSPELS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLICAL SOURCES OF THE CREED. By Alfons Kemmer. Translated by Urban Schnaus. New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1986. 144 pages. Paper. $7.95.

The writer of this instructive aid to understanding the "Apostles' Creed" is a native of Switzerland and holds a doctorate from St. Anselm's in Rome.

This is a truly catholic exposition of the Creed in more ways than one. Catholics of the Augsburg Confession—Lutherans, that is—and anyone else who endorses the ecumenical creeds will be able to say Amen upon reading the book. And those who know their way around in the arena where critical questions are asked about the biblical text will find that the author does not trade facts for tradition. He does his work with integrity and fidelity to the apostolic trust, and in such a way that one is not threatened by moving into brighter light.

Besides reintroducing Christians to the fundamental articles of faith, Kemmer covers a good deal of biblical ground. The use of this book for adult instruction, whether in a membership course or a Bible class, will help achieve the goal expressed in Eph 4:12-13. We are told that Christ gave a variety of people, including teachers, as special gifts. The donation, writes the apostle, is made to "equip the saints for service, to build up the body of Christ." This is something that is to go on until we all arrive at oneness in commitment to and appreciation of the Son of God. Nothing short of mature humanity is the goal. God's aim is that we match the full growth of Christ himself.

Frederick W. Danker

PROPHETS IN COMBAT. By Pedro Casaldáliga. Translated and edited by Phillip Berryman. Oak Park: Meyer-Stone, 1987. xiv and 114 pages. Paper. $8.95.

In 1985 Miguel D'Escoto, the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua and a Maryknoll priest, began a fast for peace and self-determination in Nicaragua and all Central America. This act gave rise to a national campaign of spiritual renewal that went beyond the borders of Nicaragua. Pedro Casaldáliga, bishop of São Félix do Araguaia, Brasil, went to Nicaragua to join this movement. Twenty-three bishops, two Protestant pastors, and more than two hundred organizations and individuals supported Casaldáliga's gesture of solidarity with Father D'Escoto.

Prophets in Combat is a field journal covering a period of approximately two months spent by Casaldáliga in a variety of towns, villages, and cities of Nicaragua in a "ministry of consolation" and a "ministry of the border." He went to Nicaragua to stimulate hope and to confirm his brothers and sisters in the faith. He also stood physically on the border, putting his life at risk, praying there and inviting everyone (the faithful both in and outside the church) to take on the risk of standing beyond their borders. For the author this ministry was a witness to the "gospel insurrection." This is a ministry that continues the line characteristic of those bishops who during Latin America's colonial period struggled in defense of Native Americans and slaves. This is ministry that in the present is also exercised by those groups in the church, both Catholic and Protestant, that struggle to be faithful to the historic demands of the people, precisely in the name of the gospel.

The book describes in vivid images the experiences of combat and prophecy. It narrates what Casaldáliga sees in the daily life of the Nicaraguan people who are working, defending their borders from the *contras* and foreign invaders, praying, and mourning their slaughtered brothers and sisters. It is a beautiful poetic account of liberation spirituality written in a pastoral style, combining drama and poetry, struggle and hope. While the author's perspective is sympathetic to the revolution, it is not blind to the limits of what the revolution has accomplished. Those interested in Latin American liberation theology will find in this book one more witness to that faith which strives to stand in gospel solidarity with the poor and their struggles in "combat and prophecy."

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UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY. By Oscar Cullmann. Translated by M. Eugene Boring. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988. 112 pages. Paper. $6.95.

RECEPTION: AN ECUMENICAL OPPORTUNITY. By William G. Rusch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988. 78 pages. Paper. $6.95.

Two books on ecumenics from Fortress, one grandiose and the other modest. Veteran German New Testament scholar Cullmann is proposing structures for a full-fledged unity of all Christian churches. Rusch, who heads the Office for Ecumenical Affairs of the ELCA, advocates use of the process of "reception" to affirm the impact of the ecumenical dialogues on existing churchbodies.

From the title *Unity through Diversity* one can guess quickly what kind of ecumenism Cullmann advocates, namely, "a union of all Christian churches within which each would preserve its valuable element." The goal is a united body of Christ inclusive of a plurality of confessional statements and church structures. Cullmann wants the different charisms of Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox Christians to remain as they are. What he wants to eliminate is fighting. He wants diversity, not hostility.

One might ask: how can we have a unity of confessional statements when these confessions were originally written to divide orthodoxy from heterodoxy? Their purpose was to set one group against another. Cullmann's proposed solution is to employ the concept of a "hierarchy of

truths" as found in the decree on ecumenism at Vatican II. Here we would begin with certain *foundational* truths located at the apex of the hierarchy and then work our way down toward derived doctrines. The derived doctrines of the separate confessions would illuminate the foundational truths, but they would not be binding upon all Christian groups. This follows the creative suggestion of Karl Rahner and Heinrich Fries in their important book, *Unity of the Churches* (Fortress, 1985).

How are these foundational truths to be determined? By *sola scriptura*? No, says Cullmann; the Bible is too vague. Rather, he suggests we start with the credal statements, i.e., the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. All Christians can agree on what the creeds say. We can unite around this foundation. What Roman Catholics must then accept as derived yet non-divisive doctrine would be such things as the Marian dogmas. Lutherans would have to do the same with justification, I suppose.

This federation of confessional groups will need some sort of structure, "a more or less loose structure." The World Council of Churches provides a good model, but the problem is that the Roman Catholics cannot join the WCC. Why? Because they believe in papal primacy. This forbids membership in an inclusive council. Rome simply will not budge on this point. What Cullmann advocates is concessions from Protestants and the Orthodox which would permit "limited acceptance" of the papacy. Cullmann wants a concession from Rome, too, namely, the reorientation of the Petrine office (*Petrusamt*) into the Petrine service (*Petrusdienst*). This proposal would unite all Christians under a reformed papacy. If this does not work, then Cullmann will accept some sort of conciliar superstructure.

Turning now to William Rusch's book, we find that the ultimate goal is the same as Cullmann's, namely, "to bring separated churches into full unity." *En route* to this goal, Rush promotes the conscious use of an ancient church practice, reception. What he calls "classical reception," for which he finds examples in the Bible and church history, refers to the acceptance and consent given by the faithful to particular conciliar or ecclesiastical decisions. It is the imputation of authority to the church's theological leadership.

The point of the Rusch book, however, is to make a transition from classical to what he calls "ecumenical reception." This begins with the observation that we have separated churchbodies in need of unity. In this setting we "receive" documents produced by theologians in ecumenical dialogue. Whenever a churchbody officially receives such a document, it is implicitly acknowledging the transdenominational unity which is the church and, further, accepting internal changes which will carry us toward an eventual realization of that unity. In short, reception has a transformative potential.

What is logically required, and what both of these authors cannot help but assume, is a conversion, a *metanoia*, a change from a posture of divisiveness to one of unitiveness. However, our various traditions, represented by our confessional statements, have a deep investment in defining one group over against another. This observation makes the Cullmann proposal incredibly naive and the Rusch proposal much less so. If we are ever to attain ecclesial unity, we will have to accept the fact that we will have to give up our past in order to embrace a new and different future. We simply cannot build a unity atop our present diversity, especially when that diversity is in large part defined in terms of irreconcilable confessional positions.

Rusch suggests a way of dealing with this. He proposes that we engage in *nonreception* and *dereception*, which are tantamount to rejecting those elements within our respective traditions which are divisive. What Protestants could not receive and what Roman Catholics might have to dereceive is papal primacy. Conversely, what Lutherans would have to dereceive would be part of the *Symbolic Books*, namely, the "Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope" of 1537. To call both of these complementary "charisms" strains credulity. Irreconcilables such as these simply cannot be taken up into a sensible unity without a conscious repentance on the part of the present generation. Unity requires, at least in part, a rejection of our past and an enthusiastic embracing of a unity on newly defined terms.

What is called for is something akin to confessing our past divisiveness as sinful and turning to unity. This is a spiritual matter. It will require a transformation of the heart before we are ready to devise uniting structures. Unless we are ready to bite this bullet, we will get nowhere.

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION. Essays in Memory of D. Glenn Rose. Edited by Leo G. Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs, and Gary L. Johnson. Atlanta: John Knox, 1987. xiii and 365 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

Those who would like to get abreast of current Palestinian archaeology and to hear the story of its beginnings and developments at the same time, will not be disappointed in this superb collection of essays by authoritative writers. It is also rewarding—even uplifting—to learn about the life, dedication, and flexibility of Dr. Glenn Rose, who died at the age of 53 in 1982. Having personally known him, I rejoice in the wonderful portrait that emerges from these pages, as various writers speak of their friendship and professional interchange with Glenn.

Let it be said that none of these essays is simply "popular." They deal with vital issues and important excavations, and the essays are well documented. On the other hand, there is enough narrative text and anecdote to make the majority of the essays understandable and enjoyable by non-specialists. Thus George Mendenhall writes on "Biblical Interpretation and the Albright School"; Philip J. King deals with "The Influence of George Ernest Wright on the Archaeology of Palestine"; and there are several articles, one of them by Dr. Rose, that show how the science of archaeology has developed into a highly technical, multifaceted operation. Several great biblical sites are given coverage in essays written by their principal excavators, e.g., Dan, by Abraham Biran; Ai, by Joseph Callaway; and Hesi (where Rose worked), by Valerie Fargo. There are also articles on the famous underground water systems in Iron-Age I Palestine; on ancient Israelite government; and three excellent essays touching on Israelite history: Jeroboam and Rehoboam at Shechem; Jeroboam's Defense-Cities and the Levitical Cities; and the last years of the Kingdom of Judah. The bibliographies are complete and copiously spread through the volume. This is a wonderful tribute to an archaeologist and Christian gentleman who enjoyed a wide circle of friends.

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GOD, GOODS AND THE COMMON GOOD. Edited by Charles P. Lutz. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987. 172 pages. Paper. $9.95.

This collection of eleven essays on economic justice "in dialogue with the Roman Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter [*Economic Justice for All*]" is an important resource for congregations, especially Lutheran ones—but also for others interested in ecumenical reflection on economic issues.

The collection should be thought of primarily as a supplement. Whether discussion is in a parish, college, or other community setting, the most important resource is the bishops' letter itself, which should be read first (perhaps along with some of the Protestant statements mentioned by Lutz in the concluding essay).

The most useful articles are the most critical, those that challenge both the current system and the bishops' analysis of it. These include Sibusiso Bengu's "But Is Capitalism Reformable?," Anne Kanten's "First Claim on the Crop," George Tinker's "Does 'All People' include Native Peoples?," Mary Henry's "Too Much Discussion, Too Little Action," and June Nilssen's "Being Rich or Poor Is Not the Issue." Each of these essays in one way or another represents the possibility of hearing voices that are typically not heard.

In general, the volume is careful to present a "balanced" approach. That is good, as long as it does not simply translate into a kind of stalemate or arbitrary and partisan choosing of sides. The value of a volume like this is that it can encourage Christians, especially North American Christians, to take a critical perspective on economic systems that shape us and that we shape. A critical perspective is an essential tool if we are to shape systems consciously and responsibly rather than simply perpetuating them mindlessly. Both the bishops' pastoral and this volume, which could introduce the pastoral to a broader audience, contribute to the development of such a perspective.

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ERRAND TO THE WORLD. AMERICAN PROTESTANT THOUGHT AND FOREIGN MISSIONS. By William R. Hutchison. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. 227 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

American literature abounds in negative imagery of clerics and religion. Particularly vehement, however, have been the representations of American missionaries abroad. From Herman Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo*, which lambasted the missionary efforts in Hawaii and the South Seas, through Mark Twain's fulminations during the time of the Boxer Rebellion in China ("To My Missionary Critics," etc.), and up until the recent past, with James Michener's re-hash of the Hawaii story, missionaries have been rather severely bashed.

Artists not only reflect what a culture feels or believes, they also not infrequently are harbingers of what attitudes will be. Interestingly enough, artists have of late begun to take a second look at the *positive* contributions of missionaries. Notice is taken of John Hersey's recent book, *The Call*, and Fernando Ghia's provocative movie, "The Mission."

Joining the artists in a reappraisal of the contributions of the missionary movement is William Hutchison. He provides a comprehensive and fair survey of American Protestant thought concerning the foreign mission enterprise, including a summary of the sources of Roman Catholic missions in the Americas. The book covers the earliest work among Native Americans and continues up to the present time with the "ecumenical-evangelical standoff." Both the "good" and the "bad" aspects of missionary activity are well considered and impartially treated.

Credit must also be given to Hutchison for seeking to include all who were engaged in the missionary movement, as well as its critics, especially for his efforts to mention the contributions of those too often neglected in past mission histories: women, American Blacks, and the fundamentalists. Though his intentions here are admirable, Hutchison could have given this part of the story even greater attention.

One might also wish Hutchison had told more of the stories of those not previously so well documented. He might have written less about the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, whose story has been well and often told elsewhere, and more about the other Boards and Societies active in the great century of missionary endeavor.

Perhaps the first part of the work, dealing with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is better done than that on the present century. Some might register dissent in Hutchison's evaluations of Hendrik Kraemer's contribution, or of the presentation of the so-called "Christian presence" stance, just to mention two examples.

Despite these observations, the reviewer highly commends this work to the attention not only of missiologists, but also to students of American culture and religion.

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CHRISTIAN FAITH AND PUBLIC POLICY: NO GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE. By Arthur Simon. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. viii and 120 pages. Paper. $6.95.

This is appropriate reading for Lutherans whose "two kingdoms" tradition has often translated into an air-tight distinction between faith and politics. Simon draws on his experience as executive director of Bread for the World to argue that separation of religion from life (which he carefully distinguishes from the Constitutional principle of separation of church and state) is a heresy. The first chapter of the book, which is autobiographical, provides a context for biblical and political sections that follow. Most of the policy proposals are, understandably, concerned with hunger; but Simon sees the hunger issue as a paradigm for work on other policy issues.

Simon's approach, like the approach of Bread for the World, is squarely "in the mainstream." This is consistent with his focus in building a "national commitment," and it has enabled the organization to achieve impressive success in obtaining bi-partisan support for particular policies. One danger I see is that Simon, in pleading for a "non-ideological" approach, underestimates the significance of ideology as a tool for social transformation. This can lead to a concern with "balance" that makes it increasingly difficult to take sides where sides need to be taken. It can also lead to inadvertent adoption of a distinctively North American ideology (the ideology of the death of ideology) which tends to restrict transformation and conversion to an individual level and to render *connections* among seemingly disparate issues difficult.

The book is not radical, but that is not surprising. It is written *from* the mainstream *for* the mainstream and should be of value to individuals and congregations seeking to make the church an effective participant within the U.S. political system.

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WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT THEOLOGICAL METHOD? By J. J. Mueller, S.J. New York: Paulist, 1984. 82 pages. Paper. $4.95.

This modest little book provides those interested in theology with a nifty outline of four methodological options: transcendental method, existential method, empirical method, and socio-phenomenological method. Mueller, a professor at Gonzaga University in Spokane, illustrates each option with a summary of the work of two theologians. The result is a survey of the thought of Rahner, Lonergan, Macquarrie, Tillich, Tracy, Meland, Schillebeeckx, and Sobrino.

To each theologian he poses a common set of questions to make comparison easy. He asks about the starting point for doing theology, the step by step procedure, and the consequences it makes for our lives today. This approach has the virtue of clarifying and cataloguing some otherwise complicated—if not downright obtuse—material.

Mueller advances two generalities. First, there is a plurality of methods today, and we should assume that truth exceeds the grasp of any one method alone. In other words, we can benefit from all of them considered together. Second, despite the plurality of methods, they hold certain things in common, such as the assumption that this world is not the entire explanation of reality.

I like this book. I recommend it as a teaching tool.

Yet I demure at one point. Unfortunately, Mueller seems to contribute to an already widespread mistake regarding the words "method" and "methodology." He says, "A method is a tool." This is correct. Then he says, "Method then reflects upon reflecting." This is not correct. Nor is the remark, "every theologian must be clear about his or her starting point, presuppositions, and consequences for theology. This is what method tries to do." The proper term here is "methodology." It is methodology which reflects upon method. Like other technical terms ending in "...logy," we use the word "methodology" to refer to the reflective activity which

analyzes or justifies the assumptions and procedures of a given academic discipline. Mueller wants to make the word "method" cover both meanings. This introduces unnecessary ambiguity. This may appear a trivial distinction, but in a book which purports to be explaining to the public what is going on, some precision should be expected.

Ted Peters

THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN: LUTHER'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY. By Eberhard Jüngel. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988. 109 pages. Paper. $9.95.

In spite of the turgid density of Jüngel's writing, Roy A. Harrisville has brought this incisive and deeply insightful little book into English, and we thank him for it. As Harrisville notes in his translator's preface, Luther's *Freedom of the Christian* demands serious treatment, and Jüngel has responded admirably to that call.

Jüngel wants us to see that Luther took previously extant notions in "inner" and "outer man" and rerouted their meaning. For too many people, Luther's dialectic degenerated into a teaching that the "inner man" was free and the "outer man" was under compulsion of necessity or *duty*. To view the theory that way leads to both religious and moral schizophrenia. Better to understand that the whole person is called into being by the Word of God; for Luther, in Jüngel's view, the inner person is the person who responds to the address of the Word, experienced as call, which constantly releases the self from itself; the outer person is the inflexible person who always needs to be humbled by the Word of grace, always needs to be broken open in order that she or he might serve others. The paradox of "perfectly free/perfectly servant" is thus maintained, and into the bargain Luther raises up an anthropology which insists that we *are* only and insofar as we are *addressed*. And the further paradox is that we become ourselves only as the Word of address pulls us forth out of ourselves into new being. Hence, the distinction between "inner" and "outer" is not a matter of essence (as though there were a sort of inner core of selfhood which is somehow connected essentially with God, perhaps a soul/body dichotomy) but a matter of Christology, and we might as well use the terms "new" and "old" to describe the phenomenon. We might also say that we are free to change, free to recognize that we are creatures of change because we are always called into new being which is a becoming. We can go one step further: we can also say that this new being to which we are called is communal and not individual, for we are called into the Body of Christ and into the body of the world. Inner and outer are not polarities, but in Christ they are experienced as a unity in society, the recognition or knowledge of which experience forms the ground of ethics.

Jay C. Rochelle

SABBATHS. By Wendell Berry. Berkeley: North Point Press, 1987. 112 pages. Cloth. $12.95. Paper. $6.95.

HOME ECONOMICS. By Wendell Berry. Berkeley: North Point Press, 1987. 208 pages. Cloth. $20.00. Paper. $9.95.

If you are not yet reading Wendell Berry, it's a mistake. The man always writes material that is directly relevant to the search for a Christian style in our age. Whether you read the essays (*Home Economics*) or the poetry (*Sabbaths*) or any of the dozen-plus collections of poetry and essays in print (most of it published by the North Point Press) you are in the presence of one of the very best writers and thinkers in the United States today.

Sabbaths shows Berry in his element: rhymed verse, a form he has chosen because of the discipline involved (and about which he has written in the essay, "Poetry and Marriage," in the collection *Standing By Words*). One thinks of the bucolic poetry of the antique *Georgics*, or even of A. E. Houseman at his best (but only at his best) when one comes to this collection, since it is poetry born of tilling and husbanding the soil. But it is also poetry born of husbanding in

general, whether of Tanya his wife or of the many concentric ecospheres which make up Berry's life. Here is matter that matters precisely because it is seen under the rubric of Spirit.

Home Economics contains fourteen essays ranging from the trouble with universities (by specializing they cease to create a place to test the worth to humanity of the subject matter) to a defense of the family farm (but only if the values that underlay the economy and lifestyle can be affirmed) to whether or not community has a value (it does, but it's one thing to exploiters and another to the folks who make it up); Berry as trenchant commentator on the American scene from his perch in Kentucky, trying once again to find a way to life on the earth in harmony with other beings and meeting the expectations of the land. But take heart: Berry's books are not only for those who enjoy poetry or live on the land. This is poetry for those who can't read it and farming for the urban dweller. By focusing on the particularity of his life, Berry engages us on a universal level. It reminds you of the truth of incarnation.

Jay C. Rochelle

ATLAS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.
Edited by Henry Chadwick and G. R. Evans.
New York: Facts on File, 1987. 240 pages.
Cloth. $40.00.

This volume is probably the most beautiful, informative, and comprehensive "coffee table" book ever published on the Christian Church across the centuries and around the world. It is not merely an atlas of maps, although its forty historical maps are splendid. The full-color photographs and reproductions of paintings, mosaics, sculptures, and manuscripts guide even the casual reader through centuries of church history and across continents of Christian communities today.

The editors provide expert guidance not only in their specialty of pre-Reformation church history, but also through the modern diversity of global Christianity. Their Anglican interests in liturgy, music, and architecture are prominent—as is their disinterest in Reformation theology and in Lutheranism. But the lavish attention paid to Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Philippines, and to the special situations of Orthodox churches will open up new worlds to any reader. There are separate features, with spectacular color photographs and informative diagrams, on the church exterior, the interior, music, the calendar, the religious life, the church and war, the Bishops of Rome, the church in the town, and the image of Christ. Entire sections are devoted to the modern issues of other world religions, Communism, secular modernity, and the ecumenical movement.

Given the quality and quantity of the color reproductions, as well as the breadth and depth of the information given, the price is reasonable. Unique and captivating, this volume would make a generous gift. Or, treat yourself.

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

Briefly Noted

WORKING FOR JUSTICE: A DIRECTORY OF LUTHERAN MINISTRIES. 1989 Edition (Justice Network in the Lutheran Church [JNLC], $3.75). The 1989 edition of this directory lists and describes more than 50 Lutheran-affiliated groups, organizations, networks, agencies, projects, and programs. The directory is published by the Justice Network in the Lutheran Church (JNLC), a network of organizations which have gathered together to ensure that justice is central to the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The 1989 edition is a revised, updated, and expanded version of the 1988 directory, JNLC's first effort to compile a listing of Lutheran-affiliated ministries which focus on peace and justice issues. The directory includes a wide variety of Lutheran-affiliated ministries, from the regional to the international level; from fully-developed ministries with years of history to groups newly forming; from official programs of the ELCA to independent, edge-of-the-church grassroots ministries. The directory is an important resource for church agencies, individual congregations, and church members in the Lutheran Church. For more information or to order the 1989 Directory ($3.75 each, $3.50 for 25 or more), write: JNLC, 1100 E. 55th St., Chicago, IL 60615. RWK

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS. By Donald Goergen (Michael Glazier, $12.95). Goergen, Dominican systematician, is writing a five-volume study of Jesus and Christology. After a volume on *The Mission and Ministry of Jesus* he has turned his attention to *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus*. He briefly surveys modern biblical research (major guides are Morna Hooker, Raymond Brown, and Reginald Fuller) on the relevant biblical texts, but he is primarily concerned with their theological meaning. Jesus' crucifixion demonstrates that he stands in the succession of Isaiah's Servant of the Lord, while his resurrection shows that the Servant has become the Kyrios. In the last third of the book he discusses different types of knowledge in relation to Jesus. Objective knowledge (including historical research) is public, verifiable knowledge, while personal knowledge (faith) is experiential, intuitive, or pre-reflective. Neither has a sole claim to validity; both are necessary to grasp the significance of the resurrected Crucified. Goergen's major contribution is in this third section, well worth the pastor's reading prior to preaching in Holy Week and Easter. Edgar Krentz

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AGING: GOD AND THE ELDERLY. By J. Gordon Harris (Fortress, $9.95). Aging has been an honorable process according to the body of evidence from ancient biblical and other sacred texts. Respect for the elderly is very much tied to religious service. God is honored when society cares for its elderly. True worship of God cannot be divorced from a proper respect for the aging. This book has three relevant messages for today. First, we all have the opportunity to advocate proper care and respect for the elderly. Such encouragement can be helpful for families who are responsible for aged parents and who need some guidance and support in doing the right thing for and with them. Second, Christians can be advocates for the elderly in our society. Third, a biblical understanding of aging can be helpful in providing a wholesome and realistic understanding of aging. Harris concludes that God will neither forget nor ignore the elderly, and we who are younger should follow that divine example. Gregory R. Alvis

THE MIRACLE STORIES OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS. By Herman Hendrickx (Harper & Row, $16.95). Hendrickx completes a six-volume series, Studies in the Synoptic Gospels, with this volume. After comparing modern concepts of miracle as breaking of natural law and miracles in the biblical world view, Hendrickx writes a small "theology" of miracles and evaluates differing modern approaches to them. He then interprets eight synoptic miracles, six from the triple tradition and two found only in Luke. The last chapter proposes an attitude and techniques for preaching the eight stories as interpreted critically. The text is documented with over 240 notes and with a rather massive bibliography in most European languages. Hendrickx writes to make current biblical scholarship accessible to parish pastors and preachers. He is eminently successful. This volume will challenge the preacher to interpret carefully, to rethink a modern attitude toward the miraculous, and eventually to find God's powerful acts present in more ways than a simplistic view of miracle as breaking of natural law allows. Earlier volumes in this series discussed the infancy narratives, the passion, the resurrection stories in the synoptics, the Sermon on the Mount, and the parables. If the first four, which I have not seen, are as helpful as the parable and miracle volumes, the entire series should be read by preachers—for their own enrichment and the improvement of preaching. Edgar Krentz

ONCE YOU WERE NO PEOPLE: THE CHURCH AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY. By T. Richard Snyder (Meyer-Stone, $9.95). The theme of human alienation in the modern world and of how conversion to the gospel can lead from that alienation to reconciliation forms the core of this book. This is certainly a worthwhile theme to explore, but Snyder uses Scripture as illustration rather than grounding for faith convictions and assumes a ready correlation between social conditions of the biblical world and those of our own time; this is a superficial—and dangerous—undertaking. Although he presents a highly readable treatment of the practical and ethical aspects of Christian faith, his method is highly questionable. The book appears to be simply a study in fitting Scripture into whatever issues and values are currently "on the scene," resulting in a culturally-determined theology rather than a theological interpretation of culture. Faye E. Schott

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN HISTORY. By Fr. Benedict Viviano (Michael Glazier, $8.95). The Kingdom of God, a central topic in the teaching of Jesus, has fascinated Christians throughout history. It has been interpreted in various ways: politically, apocalyptically, spiritually, ecclesiologically, etc. Fr. Viviano, a Dominican teaching at the Écôle Biblique in Jerusalem, here traces that history of that interpretation in broad strokes. A select bibliography suggests what the interested reader might read next, while footnotes clarify concepts, provide details of interest, and stimulate reflection. Edgar Krentz

THE OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA: PATRIARCHS AND PROPHETS IN EARLY JUDAISM. By D. S. Russell (Fortress, $6.95). Russell knows the literature of early Judaism well. His books have mined it for insights useful to theologian and pastor. This latest book summarizes how this literature interprets the great figures, the ancient heroes, of the Old Testament: Adam, Enoth and Noah, Daniel, Job, the three Patriarchs, the twelve sons of Jacob (with a stress on Joseph), the two lawgivers Moses and Ezra, and the prophets (especially the eschatological figures Elijah and Moses). Russell is, to say the least, immensely learned in this literature; but his learning is lightly worn in a book written for a general audience. Is should be immensely illuminating for them. It is no putdown to urge that his work be used in adult forums and Bible classes. A sensitive teacher using this text would increase respect for the Judaism of the Common Era and give new understanding to many passages of the New Testament. Edgar Krentz

JESUS THE CHRIST. A BIBLIOGRAPHY. By Leland Jennings White (Michael Glazier, $8.95). Keeping up with scholarship on Jesus, Christology, and soteriology is a formidable task. This volume should be a useful resource to avoid frustration. White arranges his material in 63 categories under five major heads: Foundations, Jesus in Historical Perspective, New Testament Christology and Soteriology, Christ in Historical Dogmatic Theology, and Contemporary Approaches and Issues. One is surprised to find no section on the resurrection under the Historical Perspective section. Von Campenhausen's historical argument thus is not given place. Only English works, whether original or translated, are listed. The compiler invites readers to supplement his listings. Given the flood of literature on Jesus and the Gospels, that would be easy to do; but don't let that obscure the value of this work for students and theologians. White deserves users' thanks. Edgar Krentz

"ONE FLESH": EPH. 5:22-24, 5:3 MARRIAGE AND THE NEW CREATION. By Stephen Miletic (Editrice Pontificio Institutio Biblico, 30,000 Italian Lira). The position of women in the early church is a major area of interest. Miletic argues that Ephesians 5:22-24 uses language elsewhere used of Adam, Christ, and the New Creation, that 5:23c ("he, savior of the body") is the logical and theological core of the passage, and that Ephesians uses the language of Gen 2:24 to stress the unity of creation as the goal of its parenesis. There is interdependent subordination between men and women, with the well-being of the wife the focus. Thus Ephesians dislodges "androcentric marriage from its powerbase of domination" and relocates it in "the sphere of discipleship which participates in and makes a contribution to the New Creation." In doing this Ephesians rejects any dehumanizing elements present in androcentric or patriarchal culture. This well-written, heavily documented dissertation makes excellent use of tradition criticism to propose a more egalitarian reading of a significant text on marriage. It should make many rethink their interpretation of that text. Edgar Krentz

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT 1861-1986. Second Edition. By Tom Wright (Oxford, $27.50/$10.95). Stephen Neill's report on New Testament scholarship for the last century was highly acclaimed when published in 1964—and rightly so. The second edition by Wright makes Neill useful today by updating references (including references to translations) and by a new chapter on NT studies in the last twenty-five years. Neill's chapters remain a clear, concise, and remarkably informed report, a sure guide to scholarship from 1820-1960. Wright's report on the years 1961-1986, though good, does not measure up to Neill's high standard, whether in style of writing or adequacy of coverage. Almost without exception, Wright reports only on English language scholarship. Continental scholarship is almost overlooked, e.g., there is no mention of the *Evangelish-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, no reference to the work of Peter Stuhlmacher and Ferdinand Hahn in hermeneutics, little reference to recent literary criticism, feminist criticism, or canonical criticism. It's a very good book that could have been better. It remains the best history of NT studies in the last century and a half. Edgar Krentz

ACOLYTE HANDBOOK. By Ralph R. Van Loon (Fortress, $2.95). Van Loon covers it all in 64 pages: the place of acolytes in liturgy; what the liturgy is; where the liturgy happens and what the appointments and furnishings of church are; what vestments are; what acolytes do and who does what, from server to boatbearer. There is a brief chapter on etiquette at worship (most parishioners should read this, not only acolytes). The church year is discussed briefly, and the book ends with prayers for acolytes. Use it as a training manual for your acolytes, and then proceed to Van Loon's *Assisting Minister's Handbook* (also Fortress) for the rest of the folk in the chancel. JCR

CONFESSIONS OF AN INQUIRING SPIRIT. By Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Fortress, $7.95). Coleridge was one of the first thinkers in nineteenth-century England to question the inerrancy of the Bible while affirming its authority. (Connop Thirlwall was the other.) He expressed his views in seven letters published by his nephew Henry Nelson Coleridge in 1840, after his death. They were reprinted in 1949, 1953, 1863, and 1956. They did not change the course of English theology, though they anticipated the argumentation of Benjamin Jowett's famous contribution to *Essays and Reviews* which did. Fortress has reissued them in the series *Fortress Texts in Modern Theology*, with an introduction by David Jasper. It also includes the "Note" by Coleridge's daughter Sara that defends her father against accusations raised by early reviewers. While the language is dated, the essays are a significant landmark in Christian thought; their republication is welcome. Edgar Krentz

PEOPLE OF THE TRUTH. By Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp (Harper & Row, $14.95). Robert Webber continues to show up on time, and now he is bringing friends along with him. Earlier books have shown the depth in this evangelical Episcopalian, and now comes another book which could be vital in parish renewal. The book examines the realm of the powers and principalities among which we live, urges us to eschew ideological connections, to identify with the poor and marginal, and to recover the vision and identity of the Christian community. The authors then invite us to see worship as the living out of the narrative of salvation, which enables us to confront those powers and to shape the community of the resurrection in a spirit of compassion and openness, and gives shape to responses to drugs, AIDS, poverty, and the threat of nuclear war. Even if you disagree with some of the directions the authors want to take you, their effort is worth the time to read and then to confront in a parish setting, so that communities of character (Hauerwas) can begin to shape their own Christian response to the dilemmas of the age. JCR

THE EARLY ANABAPTISTS. By Eberhard Arnold (Plough, $4.00). This is a brief treatment of the 16th century history of the movement which came to be known as anabaptism. A. begins with the precedents in the Waldensian movement, the Beguines and Beghards, and the Rhineland Mystics, and then moves into the origin of the 16th century "evangelicals," as they called themselves. We see here the struggle to define a servant Christology and a form of discipleship and church which follows from adherence to that Christ. A., founder of the Hutterian Society of Brothers (the Bruderhof), claims that the movement called by its detractors "anabaptist" is, in fact, heir to a primitive form of Christianity which was superseded in later years, but which has always existed as an underground movement into the 20th century. The movement is characterized by its emphasis on the realized messiahship of Jesus, who serves as model for life as well as Savior and Lord. JCR

ANABAPTIST BAPTISM: A REPRESENTATIVE STUDY. By Rollin Stely Armour (Herald, $16.95). In a time of parish and church renewal among Lutherans it cannot hurt to look at various Reformation era options for renewal. The author assays four representative Anabaptist thinkers: Balhasar Hubmaier, Hans Hut, Melchior Hofmann, and Pilgram Marpeck. By so doing he is enabled to cover the options in renewal from Hut to Marpeck's covenantal theology. As with other modern anabaptist writers, A. identifies with the notion made popular by Hillerbrand and G. H. Williams that the movement was, in fact, a third force in late medieval Christianity, clearly different from the magisterial Reformation on one hand and the Roman church on the other. The author successfully demonstrates that the issue behind anabaptist movements was the regeneration of the church as covenant community living in the light of the eschaton inaugurated by the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ. Believer's baptism became the hallmark of practice because the anabaptists held baptism to be both sign and ratification of regeneration; there is a range of belief along this spectrum, but they were trying

to avoid the *ex opere operato* view of Rome while holding to the principle of voluntarism. This practice creates an ecclesiology different in kind from either Lutheran/Calvinist reform or Roman hierarchy, and it underscores a discipleship based on Christ the servant. Lutherans might read this book profitably to seek models for initiation as we face more adult baptisms in a time of renewed mission. It is the best study of its kind on the market. JCR

THE INTIMATE CONNECTION: MALE SEXUALITY, MASCULINE SPIRITUALITY. By James B. Nelson (Westminster, $8.95). This book is a piece of a personal journey. Nelson, Professor of Christian Ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and well-known author of *Embodiment*, now writes as a white, middle-class, married male to white, middle-class, married men—although some of the concerns raised in this book will apply equally to men of color and men of other domestic and economic situations or sexual orientation. He writes, not because he has found answers to a problem, but because he has discovered the problem and is seeking solutions. He writes as a man trying to understand who he is, who he has been, and who he is becoming. This is not a book about so-called "real men;" it is a book about "whole men." In recent years, notes Nelson, men have begun to seriously question their traditionally held roles and values. The women's movement, popular books, and male images on television and in films have all contributed to men's uncertainty about themselves, and there is a major shift in men's perception of sexuality. Nelson asserts that men and women seek something the sexual revolution did not provide: an understanding of the true meaning of love. This, he claims, is the unfinished business of that revolution. In six short chapters, Nelson addresses the genitalization of sex to the neglect of intimacy and sensuousness; a sense of separation that works against true intimacy; the difficulties men have in establishing friendships, particularly with other men; and the need to know the transforming love of God—to experience God's friendship. David E. Deppe

LECTIONARY FOR THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. Edited by Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw (Pueblo and Fortress, $15.00 per year). This lectionary covers the three-year cycle for the Sundays of the church year; additional festivals for which lessons are given include Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Ascension, The Name of Jesus, Presentation, Annunciation, Visitation, Mary (August 15), St. Michael and All Angels, All Saints, and texts for a Unity celebration. The lectionary is here revised toward inclusive language on the basis of eighteen principles. RSV is the basis for the new renderings. In general, pronouns for God and Jesus have been omitted wherever possible; references have been rendered in plural wherever possible ("you" and "they" might be used). Trinitarian language has been left intact, and the content of stories, parables, etc., has been retained as in the original text. Passages of Scripture which are used liturgically have been translated in a form close to that of the common English texts. The lectionaries are published as 6" x 10" paperbacks with durable covers in red, and they contain good-sized type for public reading. This is a gentle revision, marred by no glaring infelicities of wording. JCR

CREATING COMMUNITIES OF THE KINGDOM. By David C. Shenk and Ervin R. Stutzman (Herald, $9.95). This is a manual for beginning a local community of Christ from scratch, using New Testament texts as guidelines for the various ministries, relationships, and responsibilities which will arise as a result of people hearing the gospel and being led into fellowship. The persons we would call "mission developers" are termed "church planters" by the authors, and a lot of time is spent on principles of discipleship and training local leaders. The book is written from a Mennonite perspective. JCR

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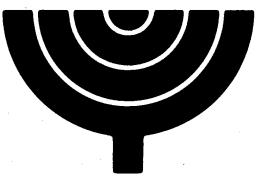


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Preaching Helps

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost—Christ the King Sunday, Series C

The End

I am not a parish pastor any more. For many years now I have been more consumer than producer of sermons. Except that I continue to produce written materials, and I get other people involved in the production of these materials, designed to aid folks who do actually stand in pulpits Sunday by Sunday, speaking good news.

Even from my present, less exalted platform I have a sense of the unendingness of the process. No matter how many sermons the preacher has delivered, no matter how often the preacher has entered the pulpit, switched on the light, turned the pages of the Bible, and adjusted the mike, next Sunday is still coming, and with it comes the necessity to repeat the whole process once more. The preacher never really gets to the end.

That's either the good news or the bad news.

We are at the end of Year C. We move in these pages and in these weeks from the account of the end of the rich man's life (Luke 16:19-31) Sunday by Sunday and sermon by sermon until we ponder Christ the King Sunday, with its sense of the end and goal of human life and of universal history. Along the way we will celebrate the Reformation and

Luther's discovery of the secret of Christ as "the End of the law." And Luke will more than once compel us to consider the power of Christ as "the End of illness and lostness and isolation."

And the One who is the End is also rich Beginning, for in that One we possess (or are possessed by) grace and peace, truth and light, rescue and wholeness, new family and fellowship, fresh calling and purpose.

To aid us in celebrating endings and beginnings we have Pastor Lucy Kolin of Central Lutheran Church in Oakland, California, who was also one of our contributors in the last issue. And Pastor Steve Gilbertson of Mission Lutheran Church (what a marvelous name) in Laguna Niguel, California. Together they offer "Pastoral Reflections" on the lessons of each Sunday. And Pastor Don Prange of Nora, Virginia, once again connects the lessons with the larger economic, social, and political systems which form the environment in which we live and work.

When I received copy from Don, he had just returned to the States from a trip to El Salvador. There worship was led by Lutheran Bishop Medardo Gomez, who has received numerous threats on his life. Back home again, he found that the United Mine Workers had gone out on strike in his part of Virginia, and eight hundred had been arrested for their part in demonstrations. As usual, Don reflects on such current events in the light of the lectionary.

With me, Don and Lucy and Steve wish you good Endings and good Beginnings in all your proclaiming.

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor

Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost September 24, 1989

Psalm 146
Amos 6:1-7
1 Timothy 6:6-16
Luke 16:19-31

A FIRST READING

Paul reminds Timothy that "we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out." It seems so obvious, such an easy lesson to learn. Maybe the problem is that it is easy to forget that all history, including our own personal history, will end at the feet of "the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim 6:15).

The rich man did not belive that, until it was too late. Could he really have believed that he would live forever? Or that death was the end? That we are sovereign or that death is? Or did he perhaps think that the Sovereign of all things and all persons, in whom he fervently and devoutly trusted, does not care what we do with our possessions, and does not care what we do with our neighbor?

It is hard to imagine that he believed that. And yet he neglected Lazarus "at his gate" (cf. "Who is my neighbor?" Luke 10:29). Lazarus was simply invisible to him, made no real impression on him, did not figure in his daily decisions.

Abraham points all of us in the right direction: "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29; cf. 10:26-28). And Jesus has come, not only quoting Moses and the prophets, but fulfilling them (16:16). He not only demands serving the neighbor at the gate but himself steps into our midst not as one "who sits at table" like the rich man but "as one who serves" (22:27). He was numbered among the transgressors (22:37), among the servers, among the poor (2:7, 24). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The sin of the rich man is not his lavish consumption, although it is hardly to be commended; his sin has more to do with how he treats others. This is evidenced by how he treats Lazarus, who lay at his gate. He takes no pity of Lazarus in this life. Lazarus longs for the food that falls from his table, but he won't give Lazarus his leftovers or even the scraps that fall to the ground. Dogs lick at Lazarus' sores, and he does nothing. During this life he succeeds in totally ignoring Lazarus' needs.

Even in the next life he continues to ignore Lazarus. He pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus, but doesn't even have the decency to address Lazarus. He views Lazarus as someone who is still beneath him, present only to serve him and his needs. Here also, the rich man reveals that he has known who Lazarus is all along, as he uses his name. To the rich man, people are like goods and food. They exist to be used and consumed. This is the sin that does him in: his lack of respect and regard for his brother, a fellow child of Abraham.

Fast forwarding to today, we not only have "Moses and the prophets," but we also have the Gospels *and* someone who has come back from the dead, Jesus. Do we act much differently than the rich man in this parable? Similar to the claim of the Jews (I am a child of Abraham), we Lutherans are fond of saying, "I am baptized!" We don't need to look far in the Gospels to realize that we are called to live lives in response to our baptism (see Matt 25:31-46). Today we are faced with a world where our brothers and sisters (those with AIDS, the homeless, and the oppressed, i.e. in South Africa) are lying at our gate. How will we respond to their needs?

But where's the good news? Today God's good news is first of all for those who are tormented here on earth. In eternity, they will be comforted at the bosom of the Father in heaven. But the rich man and his brothers are also God's children, and God enters into dialogue with them, calling them (and us) to wholeness in Jesus Christ. SG

PROPHETIC VOICE

The ministry of Jesus brings "good news to the poor," but that also includes an emphatic "woe to the rich"! See Luke 6:24; 12:15-21, 33-34; 16:9-15, 19-31; 18:18-27. But the "woe" should not be understood as "bad news" to the rich. Wealth, per se, is not being condemned in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The problem is that too often the poor (and the causes of their poverty) are invisible to the rich. That is behind the "agony" (Lk 16:24, 25) of the rich man in Hades: the "great gulf" between rich and poor remains, but the latter are no longer invisible. "Tormenting" (Lk 16:28), to be sure.

Jubilee means good news to the poor and also good news to the rich. From the preaching of John in the wilderness (Lk 3:3-18) to Jesus' preaching in Nazareth (4:18, 19) on down to Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (cf. Pentecost 14 and Lk 19:1-10), Luke speaks of the Spirit of Jubilee as an inclusive, universal experience for poor and rich. DP

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost October 1, 1989

Psalm 95:6-11
Habakkuk 1:1-3; 2:1-4
2 Timothy 1:3-14
Luke 17:1-10

A FIRST READING

Paul writes to Timothy that he always serves (*latreuo*) God, and he calls Timothy to a life of service, shaped by the faith he learned from his mother and grandmother. That service may involve assuming a "share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8). Strange gospel, strange power.

Our God does not intervene in history on the side of the strong and upright and brilliant but always comes dealing out "grace" (v. 9), an odd quantity which throws off all our normal calculations.

So Luke's Gospel moves us along from thinking about wretched Lazarus at the gate (ch. 16) to considering "little ones" (Lk 17:2). Does he mean children? new in the family of faith? weak in faith? He talks then of the "brother" (*adelphos*), any man or woman in our community. By all means rebuke that person's sin, but by all means also maintain the bond of fellowship. Even if sister or brother "sins against you seven times in the day." "Seven" is one of those biblical numbers (cf. Luke 20:29, Pentecost 25). Jesus is talking about a person who never does anything but sin against you, a person whose whole stance and action looks like sin. Even if things are that bad, and that brother or sister repents, let your response be seven-fold forgiveness.

It's no wonder the apostles cried out, "Increase our faith." They say in effect, "Bind us so closely to the divine reality that we can live that way!" "Turn us into the kind of people who can forgive like that!" "Fill us with godly energies!"

Unfortunately it is far easier, far more "natural," to take our cues in our daily lives not from God and the reality of God and the character of God, but to take our cues from people and treat them as they treat us. No wonder Paul in writing to Timothy speaks as he does about being formed and informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The alternative is to be shaped by the power of the world. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

If pride is the problem, humility is the answer.

This whole section is set up to drive home the point that forgiving one another is our duty, and that as we do it we are to approach forgiving others with the attitude, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty."

Jesus begins by telling his disciples, "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come," and

he goes on to tell them they are to rebuke sinners and forgive them, even as many as seven times in one day! The apostles reply, interestingly enough, "Increase our faith!" Why? With greater faith would they be able to forgive more people? Jesus then tells them of the power of even a mustard seed of faith.

From there he goes into a story about a servant who does everything for his master, simply because it is his job. The servant plows all day, comes into the house after long hours in the field, and fixes the master dinner, all because it is his duty to do these things for his master. This is how we are to approach forgiveness: it is our duty, our work! Many of us, when we get into disagreements, seem more intent on proving who is right (ME!) and who is wrong (YOU!) Forgiveness means realizing that a restored relationship is more important than any proof of guilt or innocence. Relationships are what matter. Friendships matter. Love matters.

Temptations will come, and people will sin. We are called in those moments to forgive. That is extraordinarily difficult. And to forgive "seven times," and that means "completely," is nearly impossible. But if we do it, boasting is excluded. It is simply "our work." SG

PROPHETIC VOICE

The gifts of the Spirit poured out on Jesus fanned "into a flame" (2 Tim 1:7) the spirit of liberation among the people. The cry of "How long, Yahweh?" (Hab 1:2) turns into visions of liberation. And in the context of liberation struggles, people learn to wait in hope, "for come it will without fail" (Hab 2:3).

Moving stories are coming out of Central America, South Africa, and Asia—and out of Appalachia and from the homeless and unemployed workers in North America. They tell of the spirit of hope and patience in the midst of struggle.

It's one thing for the oppressed to remind themselves, "If justice comes slowly, wait!" But when the privileged in our churches say things like, "Be patient! Change must come slowly!" those are scandalous words. And these words are not only a scandal to the oppressed, but they are a serious obstacle to the solidarity with the oppressed to which Jesus calls us. Confession, forgiveness, and conversion are "gifts of the Spirit" which lead to the empowering prayer: "Increase our faith" (17:5). A lot more than mulberry trees need to be uprooted (17:6). So "fan the flame!" DP

Twenty-First Sunday After Pentecost October 8, 1989

Psalm 111
Ruth 1:1-19a
2 Timothy 2:8-13
Luke 17:11-19

A FIRST READING

Paul has a way of not talking about the beauty of the sunrise and the melody of the birds. His mind is concentrated wonderfully on "Jesus Christ, risen from the dead," the one for whom he is gladly "wearing fetters like a criminal." Yet he is never morose. He sings, even in prison, because he knows that "the word of God (=the reality of God, the energy of God) is not fettered" (2 Tim 2:9).

"Not fettered" indeed. The gospel shows how unfettered God's energy really is. The gracious power spills over, reaching unlikely people, and sometimes the unlikely (and unwanted?) make the right response, while others hold back.

This story of the cure of the Samaritan (of all people!) is a kind of forerunner of the report of the mission of Philip the Evangelist to Samaria in Acts 8. In that strange place among a despised people, "multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip" (Acts 8:6). And all that is aftermath of persecution among the people of God in the holy city (Acts 7).

The story as Luke tells it is complex, proceeding beyond a natural stopping point (cf. 16:19-31). In Luke 17:11-14 we have a miracle story, and it looks complete in itself. But Luke wants not only to praise the power and generosity of God in Christ. He also wants to jog readers to think about response. And so he continues with verses 15-19.

"Were not ten cleansed?" (17:17). Good question. Were ten people made whole? Yes and no. At the climax of the story Jesus says to the lonesome Samaritan, "Your faith (cf. 17:5) has made you well." Gratitude or praise belongs to wholeness. Without it, a person is not yet really "well." RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Isn't that just like God! A group of people have a need; they cry to God for help; God helps them; and then God sends them on their way.

Several things jump out at me from this text. First, isn't it amazing how being down and out (like the lepers) breaks down all social barriers? These ten included both Jews and Samaritans. In the midst of health, Jews would never consider joining forces with Samaritans. In their dire need for friendship and companionship the lepers ignored society's boundaries and joined with one another, just as God originally intended. They worked together for the good of all.

Second, note the content of their cry, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Being down and out, they have a clear understanding of their needs. They need "Jesus" their "Master," and they need his "mercy"! They know they don't want justice; they know they have done nothing to deserve his attention or help. They cry for "mercy." Most of us want to help God to accomplish his will, and our prayers are usually something like, "God, help me to help myself." The lepers know they are totally at God's mercy. These ten need mercy, like the robber on the cross (Lk 23:43), like you and me. We would do well to use this chant, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," at the beginning of all our prayers.

Third, the ten are sent by Jesus to present themselves to the priests so that they might be declared ceremonially clean, and be readmitted to society. As they go to the priests, they are cleansed, and nine of them continue toward the priests so that they might be ritually "forgiven" of their leprosy. This allows them to go back to their families, jobs, friends, and life! What a great gift God has given them.

But one, a Samaritan, returns—"praising God in a loud voice"—and Jesus once again sends him on his way with these words: "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well." While the nine are concerned with the human, priestly stamp of approval, this one Samaritan returns for God's stamp of approval. Nine are concerned with ceremonial cleanliness, and only one returns for the cleansing that is more than skin deep. Not only is he healed; he is "made well." Anyone can be healed, but only those in a right relationship with God are "made well" again. SG

PROPHETIC VOICE

You can't "chain up God's news!" (2 Tim 2:9). With the spirit of forgiveness in conversion comes a spirit of acceptance and inclusiveness which welcomes the stranger, the "foreigner" (Lk 17:18), the outsider—even those outside the faith.

Central American, African, and Asian Christians may be leading the way in the liberating dialogue with "outsiders." An excerpt from a document of Indonesian Catholic bishops makes the point: "In proclaiming the good news of Christ, the church—and this is its main task—must bring people to the values of the Kingdom of God. We can also meet this value in the religion of Islam. So in the religious dialogue, we Christians hope that we, as well as our Muslim brothers, will be converted to the Kingdom of God." (Catholic Bishop's Document, Umat Baru—1980, "Voices from the Third World," Colombo, Sri Lanka, Vol. VIII, No. 4, p. 73.)

What an evangelism first! Imagine, Christians thinking about their own conversion to the

principles of the Reign of God as opposed to mission strategies for converting others! Saints Ruth and Naomi must be rejoicing in heaven! DP

Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost October 15, 1989

Psalm 121
Genesis 32:22-30
2 Timothy 3:14–4:5
Luke 18:1-8a

A FIRST READING

Not here but earlier (2 Tim 1:3) Paul speaks about his habit of constant prayer. In today's lesson he speaks of the equipment of "the man of God," meaning not just every Christian person but in particular the person (male or female) who has a task of leadership in the congregation. Paul describes that person's task (4:1-5) and the equipment for that task (3:14-17) without mentioning speech toward God. His mind is full of God's own speech toward us in Scripture and in Christ Jesus (3:14-17). And he thinks of the speech of the minister and evangelist (4:1-5).

But the other two readings are all about prayer, our speech to God. The mysterious encounter at the ford of the Jabbok fills Genesis 32:22-30. Jacob is renamed "Israel," and Israelites old and new are people who constantly wrestle with God at all the Jabboks of their lives. (Paul in writing to Timothy does speak of "suffering" as an integral part of ministry, 2 Tim 4:5.)

Since Luke 17:20 the topic has been the time of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Where is it? When can we stop praying for it and simply start having it?

Jesus told a parable, "to the effect that they ought always (2 Tim 1:2) to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18:1). The "God-figure" in the parable is not a very attractive type: "a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man." But that's parables for you. They are brief slices of real life tossed into a conversation, where they lie around ticking away until suddenly they explode, blowing our minds, scrambling our thoughts, provoking our imaginations.

Lest we miss it, Jesus tells us the point: "Will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? ...I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily."

God will fulfill the promises. Ah, but when the kingdom comes (17:20), will we who pray for the kingdom be ready? Will the returning Christ find faith on earth? (cf. 17:5) RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Legend has it that on extra busy days Martin Luther would spend an extra hour in prayer in order to get ready for the day. For those of us with hectic, busy lives, we could do a lot worse than following Luther's example.

Where do we turn in times of trouble? To our lawyer? The police? A trusted friend? Our spouse? Our bishop? To God in prayer?

Since we are "now" people, just as humanity has been for centuries, when we are in trouble we turn to whoever seems most likely to give us the help that we need the quickest. Whether the source is secular or "of God" we usually don't care. We want help, and we want it now!

Look at the story Jesus uses to encourage his disciples to pray always. A woman wants revenge against her adversary, so she goes to a judge who finally grants her wish so that she will stop pestering him. First, she doesn't want justice; she wants revenge. The Greek behind "vindicate" means "to avenge or to punish the offender." She isn't looking merely to get this person off her case; she wants him beaten and flogged! The judge, a man with civic responsibilities, couldn't care less about her or her plight, or about the person that she wants punished, for that matter. But he grants her wish because "she bothers me" and he doesn't want her to wear him out with her continual requests.

Jesus then contrasts this scene with the comment, "And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? Of course not! God will "vindicate them speedily!" Look at what God did for his people when they were oppressed in Egypt (see Exodus). Look at what God did for God's people when they were held captive in Babylon! Not only were God's people freed, but the oppressors were crushed! Look at what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. SG

PROPHETIC VOICE

"Community" and "communication" come from the same root, with implications for dialogue, not monologue. The Bible, too often piously seen as the record of a divine monologue, is more accurately the record of a dialogue. There's give-and-take, something Jacob (Gen 32:22-30) and Jesus had in common, a *wrestling with God* (and God's Word), a "pestering" (Lk 18:5) process in a concern for "justice" (Lk 18:7, 8). Isn't that, after all, the meaning behind Jesus' parabolic call "to pray continually and never lose heart" (Lk 18:1, 11:1-13)? It's in a prayerful dialectic with the "holy Scriptures" that the person "dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work" (2 Tim 3:17).

In converted (liberated) community, the need to "refute falsehood, correct error, [and] call to obedience" remains, but guided by the principle: "Do all with patience and with the intention of teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). But for what? The emphasis in Jesus' teaching on a prayerful dialogue with God and the Scriptures is that we become "fully equipped and ready" for actions which "will see justice done, and done speedily" (Lk 18:8). DP

Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost October 22, 1989

Psalm 34
Deuteronomy 10:12-22
2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Luke 18:9-14

A FIRST READING

2 Timothy as a whole is Paul's last will and testament, his swansong, his farewell speech. The present passage begins with his sense that he is at the end: "I am already on the point of being sacrificed." It continues with an extraordinarily short biography: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." And the passage concludes with doxology: "The Lord stood by me and gave me strength" and "the Lord will rescue me" and "to the Lord be the glory for ever and ever."

If Paul had spoken only the middle part above, about how well he had conducted himself, then he would sound exactly like the Pharisee in Jesus' parable (Lk 18). But Paul from beginning to end of 2 Timothy sings the praise of God's grace and mercy (2 Tim 1:2, 9-10, 18; 2:1, etc.), even as he urges good and upright behavior which might make "the man of God" (last week's second lesson) look as respectable as the Pharisee. The juxtaposing of 2 Timothy and Luke 18 helps us to remember that "Pharisee" meant "respected religious leader." The parable is not a call to scold ancient Jewish religious leaders. It is a summons to self-examination.

And maybe the lectionary cuts off the Gospel too soon. Verses 15-17 are an illustration of the parable (vs. 9-14). It is all about receiving the Kingdom of God like a child. How we adults like to be right. I know! I like to be right. But children are, as a sainted teacher of mine put it, "the champion recipients of gifts." We adults seek independence, and that always means autonomy or ego-power, and we like to do it

ourselves. But children know how to accept gifts with unself-conscious delight. More like the sinner in the parable. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

For many years I have read this parable and been disgusted with the Pharisee and his arrogant opinion of himself. This time, I saw him in a different light.

Look how he compares himself with "robbers, evildoers, adulterers, and a tax collector." Now that's pretty stiff competition! Who *wouldn't* look good in comparison with this bunch? This fellow seems to lack self-esteem. Since he doesn't know who or whose he is, he sets up a series of "straw men" in order to convince himself and God that he is a good and pious person. He pretends to be on top of things, and yet, deep down, he really is unsure of his worth. As the old adage goes, look for the sins the preacher preaches against, and you'll find the sins he's guilty of committing. Maybe he is already a "robber, evildoer, and adulterer" and feels the need to convince God of the opposite.

Don't we often find ourselves doing the same thing, telling God of our worth by comparing ourselves to others of less faith or fewer good works? Do we really think we are kidding God? This is the God who created us. This is the God who has sustained us this far. This is the God who knows our needs even before we do, and is always anxious to give us everything we need.

Let's look at the situation of the tax collector. Although on the surface it appears he isn't on top of things, deep down he really is. He knows that he has sinned, and that the only way to right his broken relationship with God is to confess his unworthiness. He can do this because he knows he already belongs to God. He knows God will forgive him. Also, he knows that what he needs is not to convince God of some remnant of worth, but to confess his unworthiness. His prayer sounds very much like the cry of the ten lepers in chapter 17, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" He doesn't bother to compare himself to others. All he knows is that he needs God's mercy and forgiveness. He is concerned about the log in his own eye rather than the speck in someone else's eye.

The tax collector "went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be justified." SG

PROPHETIC VOICE

"The faith" (2 Tim 4:7) of which Paul speaks involves a virtuous (Lk 18:9) way of life footed in a solidarity with "crushed spirits" (Ps 34:18) and "the stranger" (Deut 10:18) which leads to actions of justice and mercy. The Pharisee was well versed in the systematic and confessional aspects of the tradition, but he had forgotten the historical narrative in which it was shaped. The Law, given to preserve elements of justice and mercy in protecting the rights of others, especially the weak, the helpless, and the stranger, itself became the object of protection and devotion. A new definition of what it meant to be virtuous came into play.

Jesus commended and recommended the sinful tax collector rather than the virtuous Pharisee. The tax collector had the virtue, finally, of admitting his wrongdoings and of casting himself onto the mercies of God. He went home with a real sense of security. DP

Reformation Sunday
October 29, 1989

Psalm 46
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Romans 3:19-28
John 8:31-36

A FIRST READING

Jeremiah saw a new day coming, when pious people would no longer have to urge one another: "Know the Lord!" (31:34). They would not have to nag at one another or remind one another, "Come close to God, seek God's presence!" For the day is coming when God will quite simply be as close as loving wife with loving husband. "From the least of them to the greatest" they will "know" the Lord and be one with the Lord, as sin drops away and they are embraced by forgiving arms.

That day, says Paul, has dawned. Paul had once rejoiced in Moses and in his own performance of the law, but no more. He had once stood tall with a good reputation among his peers, seeing Gentiles as unclean outsiders, but no more. He had once viewed the God of the Mosaic legislation as the God of the good Israelite, period, but no more.

Paul's life and thinking had been turned upside down by his encounter with the crucified-and-resurrected Jesus. It was precisely the God of law and prophets who had raised Jesus, the despised Jesus, the lowly law-breaking Jesus. So Paul looked again at the cross, a second time, after he had encountered Jesus as resurrected. Now he no longer saw a sinner on that cross, suffering for his own sins, but now he knew Christ as gift of God, sent forth by God, offering his powerful life as an expiation, a cleansing flood, a redeeming stream, pouring forth on behalf of "all" (Rom 3:23), really "all."

Paul comes away from his encounter with the Christ with a fresh appreciation of the ancient "Shema" with its accent on the fact that the Lord our God is "one." God is the Creator of all, not of some. God has offered the Christ for all and not simply for some. One divine reality reaches out to embrace all—Jew and Gentile, young and old, female and male, rich and poor—in the selfsame loving grasp.

That is the bold "truth" that can yet make us free (John 8). Libraries carve the words of Jesus on the lintel, but they miss the point. It takes more than the knowledge stored in reference books and great works of literature to grant the freedom of which Jesus speaks. The "word," says Jesus, will liberate. What "word" is that? The word of Law (Torah)? The word of Logic or the voice of Reason? No. It is rather the Word incarnated in the flesh of Jesus, the will and voice of God enfleshed in that "Mighty Victim from the sky." He who is Truth can set us free. Discipled to Jesus who is the gracious Word that issues from the mouth of God, we will know liberating truth. And experience what Jeremiah and Paul and Luther knew. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

For years one of the most popular game shows on TV has been "Truth or Consequences." Contestants from the audience are asked questions which, if answered incorrectly, require the person to perform some outrageous stunt. Some attribute the show's popularity to its handsome, congenial host, and some to its wacky array of stunts. But, when *I* was a child, the attraction—and the fascination—was "Beulah the Buzzer," the raucous electronic sound that signalled time was up. As I remember, "Beulah the Buzzer" often sounded right after a contestant was asked a question, leaving them no time to answer—right *or* wrong—and leaving no doubt that wild and silly "consequences" were sure to follow.

The title of that show was "Truth or Consequences." But the title for today's lessons, especially the Gospel, might well be "Truth *and* consequences."

Jesus says, "...and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." This is not the consequence we might expect. For telling the truth about ourselves (and about our church) seems likely to mire us more deeply in bond-

age—to sin, to timidity and inertia, to those who might use the truth of our frailty against us. As Paul writes, "For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The Good News, however, is that when God tells the truth, when God's Spirit reveals the truth, our bondage is broken forever. For God's truth declares us justified, our former sins "passed over." And God's consequence is freedom: where there was death, there is now life. Where there was alienation, there is now community and an everlasting welcome.

Reformation Sunday has a troubled history. In years past, Lutherans marked the day defensively, using their celebrations and sermons to emphasize and foster separation from their Roman Catholic sisters and brothers.

But a more charitable wind has been blowing through the church, a wind which gathers all Christians under the banner of grace. Thus gathered, all of us—individuals and denominations alike—may dare to let the truth be told: that our lives and our structures are always tempted toward bondage, either shackling ourselves to old, unloving ways or keeping our brothers and sisters shackled out of our own pride or prejudice.

Today, then, is a most appropriate day on which to pray for hearts open to God's daily reformation, begun in baptism. Therefore, "let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus," that together we may be re-formed by the Holy Breath of God into new creatures of a new covenant, called and equipped for new ministry, a ministry of renewal, of liberation, and joy. LK

PROPHETIC VOICE

When Jesus spoke about "truth" and "freedom" (John 8:31, 32), he meant a truthfulness to the oppressed in terms of a solidarity with them in their struggles for liberation and freedom. DP

Or, Twenty-Fourth Sunday After Pentecost October 29, 1989

Psalm 145
Exodus 34:5-9
2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12
Luke 19:1-10

A FIRST READING

Moses and all the people had to prepare scrupulously for the fresh revelation: new stones to cut, no flocks, no herds, no humans on any slope of Mount Sinai, a lonely journey to the pinnacle (Ex 34:1-4). Then the Lord descended in a cloud and proclaimed the name of the Lord, and the Lord's name is "the LORD, a God slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ex 34:5-9).

The Gospel climaxes in a verse which, as well as any other, summarizes Luke's whole message: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Some think that steadfast love of God was reserved for the law-abiding, the upright. But Jesus vividly demonstrates how "love divine, all love excelling" actively reaches out to embrace unlikely folks, shattering old stereotypes of God and of the people of God.

Zacchaeus was "small of stature" (19:3) and was small in the eyes of the religious community as well. He had no standing among the pious and was elbowed out of spiritual circles. For him the sycamore was a tree of life. He climbed up "to see him," namely Jesus, as he passed that way. Compare the action of the woman with the flow of blood in 8:43-48.

Jesus surprised everyone (cf. 5:8, 21, 30) by calling to Zacchaeus, "Come down" = Get down out of the tree. Come down from your isolation. "I must stay at your house" = The mysterious plan of God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, lays necessity upon me.

In the preceding chapter Jesus had said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom" (18:25). What one rich man could not do, by God's grace rich Zacchaeus was enabled to do. He gave half his goods to the poor, and in addition restored fourfold (Ex 22) anything he had taken by fraud.

He received Jesus into his home with repentance and faith. So Jesus concludes: "Today [cf. 4:21; 23:43] salvation (*soteria*) has come to this house." This man, like the blind beggar (18:42) has been made well and whole (*sesoken*). RHS

PROPHETIC VOICE

This is a remarkable set of lessons to reflect on what it means to be heirs (Ex 34:9) of a faith tradition rooted in God's covenant with Abraham (cf. Lk 19:9). If the material realities related to the "eternal sovereignty" of God are not clear in Psalm 145, then they are certainly made clear in the Jubilee reality (Lk 19:8) which comes into play when the moment of "salvation" (Lk 19:9) comes to the house of Zacchaeus.

Conversion to the way of Yahweh involves a radical reshuffling of economic realities so that the poor and oppressed, those cheated out of what they are entitled to (Ps 145:15, 16), begin to share in the material realities of the creation. And while we tend to spiritualize the communities to which Paul's letters are addressed, the exhortation to "complete all" being done "through faith" (2 Thess 1:11) clearly relates to the probability of Jubilee communities (like the one described in Acts 2:44-47 and 4:32-35) which would have come into being around the conversion experiences of the likes of Zacchaeus. These are the very realities which led to "persecutions and troubles" (2 Thess 1:4) in an empire which claimed for the Caesars that which belonged to God.

We may not be directly responsible for the injustices and oppression which exist in places like El Salvador or in the coalfields of Appalachia. We may indeed be "third and fourth generation" (Ex 34:7) heirs to problems created by others. But the moment of accountability and responsibility is now ours, and Zacchaeus shows how exciting conversion experiences can be. DP

Twenty-Fifth Sunday After Pentecost (or, All Saints' Sunday) November 5, 1989

Psalm 148
1 Chronicles 29:10-13
2 Thessalonians 2:13–3:5
Luke 20:27-38 (or, Matthew 5:1-12)

A FIRST READING

In Jesus Christ, God has loved us and has given us "eternal comfort and good hope through grace" (2 Thess 2:16). The ground of good hope is spelled out in David's prayer to God in 1 Chronicles 29. The opening praise (*baruch*) of that prayer is the pattern for the doxology of the Lord's Prayer ("for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever," Matthew 6:13 in some ancient manuscripts). God's majesty does not recognize the borders drawn on maps by cartographers and politicians, and God's greatness is not defeated by the biological border we call death. David praises the Lord, "Thou rulest over all!" (1 Chron 29:12), and he really means "all."

Jesus has trouble with the Sadducees who try both to tease and discredit him with their little story of the woman who had "seven" (cf. Lk 17:4, Pentecost 20) successive brothers as husband.

Jesus' rebuttal of the Sadducees basically amounts to an accusation that they are earthbound in their thinking. They apparently are unable to take God seriously. The only act of generation they can imagine is that by which a man and a woman have children and thereby

beget new life. But, as all of Scripture including the Pentateuch (which alone was authoritative for Sadducees) attests, God is Life-Giver and Creator.

This episode stands here in the lectionary at the end of the church year and here in Luke's Gospel near the end of Jesus' earthly life for good reason. As Jesus nears his own death, he is yet full of confidence and joy, because unlike the Sadducees he counts on God the Life-Giver. At the cross he will forgive (23:34) and make extravagant promises (23:43) and willingly hand over his own life (23:46). He does it all because he knows God as "Father," source of all life, sovereign over all other powers. Jesus, who himself lives and dies in "good hope," calls us to join him on his path and in his confidence. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

When I was a child, one of my grandmothers would sometimes go to her room, sit quietly in her rocking chair, and gaze long hours at a small black-and-white photograph. When I grew older, she would beckon me into her room and lovingly point out the people in that picture: a little girl, perhaps 4 or 5; a little boy, perhaps 3; and a young woman stretched out in a simple casket surrounded by sprays of lilies, roses, and palms. The girl was my grandmother; the boy, her brother Philip; the young woman, their mother, dead of influenza.

It was the only picture, indeed, the only link with the only woman who had loved Grandma gladly, freely. For only a year after that photograph was taken, Grandma had a stepmother who hated her stepchildren, who once left them—hopefully to die—inside a burning tenement, and who at last convinced their father to send them away and sever himself from their lives.

Years after my grandmother died, I learned how she would gather up my mother, just a toddler then, and wander from church to church, from office to office, from town to town, seeking some trace of her mother: her grave, at least, or perhaps some family, some continuing link with the love she once had known. She never found it in this life. Yet she remained singlehearted in hope, singlehearted in her confidence that God would reunite them, if only on the other side of death.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," or, as one translator put it, the singlehearted, those whose hearts are fixed on God. Such faithful focus amid the ambiguities of life seems difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. Pain and loneliness, frailty and confusion are strong distractions, and the very questions of life cause us to waver and blink. Perhaps such singleheartedness is a gift for only a few extraordinary saints.

But Isaiah and Revelation tell us "No." They announce instead that we, too, carry within us the precious link between who we are and who we shall be. The burning memory of the One who loved us and in whose love we shall live radiantly once more, the promise of reunion and fulfillment is sealed by the cross on our foreheads and renewed simply, daily in the water, wine, and bread.

And we are sustained by the signs and witness with which our God surrounds us. The helplessness of the infant, the constant love of a parent, the fierce courage of the dying, the steadfast service of the old, the dauntless vision of the reformer—in saints ordinary and saints extraordinary, God gifts us with a great cloud of witnesses who encourage us and cheer us on, ever pointing us toward God our Home.

Finally, in the eucharistic meal, God joins us with the saints of every time and place, gives us a real and delicious foretaste of the feast to come, and unites our hearts and voices in one great anthem, a singlehearted song of thanksgiving.

PROPHETIC VOICE

If the church can continue to believe in something as radical as "the resurrection of the body," why is it so hard to be in solidarity with those who believe in and want to work for new and different economic and political realities?

It seems clear that reactionary forces on the religious right (or even its moderate or liberal wings) aren't that much different from the opposition to Jesus, so Paul's prayer seems relevant,

"that we might be preserved from the interference of bigoted and evil people, for faith is not given to everyone" (2 Thess 3:2). But at the same time there is thanksgiving for those living "by faith in the truth" (2 Thess 2:13). The incredible faith of third-world people in "the greatness, the power [and] splendor" (1 Chron 29:11) of the God of the living is an invitation to join in the transcending hymn of praise of Psalm 148. And their faith is an invitation to praise God with actions of justice and peace. DP

Twenty-Sixth Sunday After Pentecost November 12, 1989

Psalm 98
Malachi 4:1-2
2 Thessalonians 3:6-13
Luke 21:5-19

A FIRST READING

In response to admiration uttered concerning the temple and its splendor (Lk 21:5), Jesus begins to speak about the days "when there shall not be left here one stone upon another." He foresees total destruction. People asked "When?" and "What sign" will warn us of that day? In response, Jesus named political signs (disturbances in human history) and cosmic terrors (great signs from heaven).

But the heart of it seems to be Jesus' declaration that "before all this" (v. 12), that is, before the very last day, there will come persecutions of all kinds. And that "will be a time for you to bear testimony" (v. 13). The new community is a prophetic community and lives by the Word and for the Word. And the community need not be anxious about its speech and need not even meditate beforehand how to answer! The key is not human preparation but divine gifts. Jesus says, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom" (v. 15), and no matter how hot the persecution becomes, he promises, "Not a hair of your head will perish."

That is an extravagant promise and does not seem to be true to the facts of church history, even as Luke himself reports that history in the Book of Acts. Perhaps it is exaggeration, but in a profound sense it is true. Jesus was crucified, but he did not perish. Peter was jailed, but the angel led him out (Acts 5 and 12). Stephen was condemned and killed on earth, but heaven was open above his martyred head, and the Lord in heaven vindicated him (Acts 7:56). Paul was stoned, whipped, and imprisoned, and yet continued on his way. He went down into the sea, as Jesus had gone down into the earth, and like Jesus he came through safely, rescued by God (Acts 27-28).

The Book of Acts is the story of a new community living by and for the word, not spared persecution but enduring in persecution, and gaining life—life at once genuine and imperishable. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Television weather forecasters are an important part of the nightly newscast. Many watch them seriously before planning vacations or plantings—or a trip to the storm cellar. Others watch with perverse delight to see the forecaster squirm and reverse yesterday's confidently optimistic prediction.

In my viewing area a new twist has been added: we now have a team of environmentalists who not only explain the how and why of weather but also help viewers understand how local weather is related to the health of our whole planet, its atmosphere, and sun.

The prophetic messenger of Malachi, writing of the day of God's coming, reminds me of that weather team. In this brief but blunt book, the messenger reports the local "weather"—the turbulent storms of infidelity among God's priests and people, the dark clouds of selfishness and greed, the thick fog of faithlessness. In such conditions, the land and the people suffer and fail. And the "weather" is intimately connected

to the general climate of arrogance and evil, to the general atmosphere of a people more comfortable in darkness than in the sun's clear rays.

Yet hope is on the horizon for those whose hearts are turned. The prophet promises that the sun of righteousness shall rise. Its rays will bring healing for the land and for the people. Its ascending ushers in *shalom*, God's everlasting climate of health and vindication, justice and peace.

Indeed, that sun has risen. It is the One of whom we sang at Christmas:

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness.
Light and life to all he brings,
Ris'n with healing in his wings.
(LBW #60, stanza 3)

It is the One we greeted on Easter morning:

Christ is himself the joy of all,
The sun that warms and lights us.
Now his grace to us imparts
Eternal sunshine to our hearts;
The night of sin is ended. Hallelujah!
LBW #134, stanza 4)

It is the One whose Spirit continues to turn our hearts toward the Life-giving Sun. Like tender plants we stretch, eager for the warm rays that will encourage us and nurture us in our growth, in our growing up into God.

And in these last days of the church year, as we come full circle in the story of salvation, we dedicate ourselves anew to being God's tender messengers of *shalom*, healers, reconcilers, witnesses, and lovers of the whole creation, until that final day when we shall dwell together in the eternal *shalom* of our heavenly home.

Light of light eternal, all things penetrating,
For your rays our soul is waiting.
As the tender flowers, willingly unfolding
To the sun their faces holding:
Even so would we do,
Light from you obtaining,
Strength to serve you gaining.
(LBW #249, stanza 3) LK

PROPHETIC VOICE

When this Sunday's Gospel is read in Iglesia Luterana "La Resurreccion" in San Salvador, it will have a far more significant meaning than when it is read in most of our first-world churches. The realities for this and other third-world churches are freeing them from the deceptions (Lk 21:8) to which we are still too often captive in our culture. "The day" (Mal 4:1) of which Malachi speaks calls for a reexamination of our priorities and for how we understand the mission of the church. The problem of idleness (2 Thess 3:6-12) in the Church of Thessalonica probably had something to do with some faulty expectations about the second coming. But when the same faulty perceptions lead us into a mission of activism and church calendars full of meetings which have nothing to do with questions of justice and liberation for the oppressed so clearly raised in the Gospel of Luke, we have a problem greater than idleness.

The reign of justice celebrated in Psalm 98 is not going to come any more dramatically or supernaturally than the "second coming" those deceived Thessalonians were looking for. God is not going to come with magical and miraculous solutions to problems of injustice and oppression. If we have a vision of liberation and justice, we need to work at it. DP

Twenty-Seventh Sunday After Pentecost November 19, 1989

Psalm 68:1-4
Isaiah 52:1-6
1 Corinthians 15:54-58
Luke 19:11-27

A FIRST READING

The parable in Luke 19 is far longer and more complicated than its counterpart in Matthew 25:14-30. It appears to be a mix of three elements. (1) With regard to the end of the world, it says, "Not yet." Jesus by virtue of his resurrection is already Lord, but we haven't seen anything yet! At his return (cf. Acts 1:11) he will openly display all things subjected under his feet. (2) The imagery of a nobleman traveling to a distant country in order to receive kingship is reminiscent of the journey of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, to Rome in 4 B.C.E. He was one of his father's heirs, and he traveled to Rome to have his father's will confirmed. Some Jewish citizens hated Archelaus, and they sent a large embassy to the imperial capital in attempt to block his elevation to power.

But (3), most of all, Jesus in this parable wants to summon the waiting community to responsible living in the interim.

To three servants the departing nobleman gave three different amounts of capital. Upon his return there came a tallying of results. The return of the master will be not merely a triumph of his power but a time of reckoning.

The Lukan parable mingles the twin elements of high hope and homely responsibility. And Paul does the same in 1 Cor 15. After all the exalted rhetoric and powerful arguments about the future victory of God over all the enemies of God, including the victory over death itself, the apostle concludes on a sober and practical note: "Therefore... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (v. 58). And what is that work? In 1 Cor 13 Paul has sung his great hymn to love (*agape*). From the beginning to the end of 1 Corinthians, Paul is everywhere spelling out "the work of the Lord" in quite concrete and down-to-earth fashion.

Part of what it means to have faith in the resurrection and hope in the returning Lord is that our deeds of love in the here and now are not in vain. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Old Pop Schneider, my adopted "grandpa" in childhood, was an ever-willing prankster. His repertoire ranged from catsup "wounds" to pratfalls and served both to unnerve protective mothers and to delight their protected children. One trick, useful at birthday parties, was to wrap a series of boxes, from tiny to tremendous, and watch the excited recipient unwrap them all, only to find nothing in the last. (Of course, there was always a real present, given at the very moment of disappointment.)

The text from 1 Corinthians is like those boxes. Using Paul's own language, death appears to loom before us all, the ravager and devourer of life. Indeed, in the face of HIV disease, cancer, and drug addiction we are confronted with infants and children stung with death's fierce sting even before their birth; we gaze at young men and women withering in their prime; we watch our loved ones struggling with stubborn and terminal pain. In cities coast to coast and in the heartland, it is all too easy to despair, for Death's victories are mounting rapidly. And the Conqueror looms tall and large, like that garish first box, larger than life itself.

Yet the secret now revealed brings us joy and confidence in the midst of such sorrow and despair. For Christ's own death and rising reveals that beneath Death's powerful display lies only emptiness. God's victory in Christ has stripped away the gaudy wrappings of Death, has stripped away Death's ability to devour our lives and our hope, has stripped away the facade of Death's cruel laughter—and has revealed the hollowness of its victory.

And we—all who face death in this moment and all who later shall—find ourselves wrapped in the "imperishable," adorned with the "immortal." Our mourning clothes have been exchanged for the garments of gladness, for we have put on Christ in the water of baptism.

Indeed, the real gift is Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life, the gift not even Death can take from us. Therefore, having put on Christ, our birthday garb extraordinaire, we may confidently and joyfully walk through the doorway of death into life, every morning and in the hour of our death. As the hymnwriter declares:

Jesus, your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.
(LBW #302, stanza 1)

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! LK

PROPHETIC VOICE

"The Lord's work" (1 Cor 15:58) seems so clearly expressed in the Gospel of Luke that there should be no misunderstanding about the "Parable of the Pounds." Those who would find some justification for a capitalist ideology in the parable must deny everything else in Luke's account of the life and mission of Jesus. It is a parable about profitable investments to be sure; but it says nothing about endorsing an economic system based on the maximization of profit. On the contrary, the whole context of Luke's Gospel suggests that we are to invest all that we are and have in the mission of bringing "good news to the poor." Mary could easily have added to her own Psalm of rejoicing in Yahweh (cf. Lk 1) the line from Psalm 68:1: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered!" "The Lord's work" is the good news of justice, and that is the enterprise in which we are called to invest. A new day is coming, and with it a new understanding (cf. Is 52:6). DP

Thanksgiving Day
November 23, 1989

Psalm 65
Deuteronomy 8:1-10
Philippians 4:6-20
Luke 17:11-19

A FIRST READING

"Prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" means many things. One thing seems obvious: people frequently do turn their prayers into complaints or laundry-lists of needs without thanksgiving, without any recognition of what they have been given. And that prayer, minus thanksgiving, is the sign of a heart that probably will not find a way out of anxiety. To the one who prays and makes requests "with thanksgiving" Paul promises "the peace of God" (Phil 4:6-7).

Paul has been making requests of the Philippians, but he is turning at the end of his letter to thanks. He is taking his own advice to meditate on "whatever is true, ...honorable, ...just, ...pure, ...lovely, ...gracious, ...excellent, ...worthy of praise." And he offers himself as an example. The whole letter, in fact, is a meditation on what "the God of peace" (4:9) is ready to grant us, if we have among ourselves the "mind of Christ" (2:5). But if instead we have the mind of conceit and selfishness, then we will experience discord with one another (4:2-3), and we will have anxiety in ourselves.

Paul the prisoner (1:7, 13-14) rejoices. He gives thanks (cf. Acts 16:25, singing hymns to God at midnight in jail). He has "learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want" (Phil 4:12). What is the secret? The promise and the reality of the presence of God. And the divine presence is mediated and made real in the care the Philippians bestow on Paul. They have entered into intimate "partnership" (v. 15) with Paul, sharing gifts with him and risking official wrath by standing by him in his imprisonment. Paul was part of a vital *koinonia*, or network.

Surrounded by tokens of their care, Paul meditates on the "riches" (v. 19) by which God surrounds and supports the people of God. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Each Christmas afternoon when I was a child, my mother would sit me down with a box of thank-you notes and stamps and stand over me until I'd written thank-yous—always in a prescribed form—to everyone who'd given me a gift. It was a routine that drove me to distraction. For outside the window my playmates were visibly enjoying the gifts they'd just received, while I sat glumly trying to describe a gift I'd never tried.

The Gospel for this day could easily lend itself to a sort of "Emily Post for Christians" sermon, a morality lesson that teaches us to mind our manners with God, to remember to say "thank you." But if, as Robert McAfee Brown says, the gospel always comes as "unexpected news," then the point of the story is something more.

The story of the ten lepers is perhaps better understood as a story about first things first. First things first for God... and first things first for people.

First things first. When the lepers came to ask for mercy and for healing, Jesus asked for no payment, even thanks. Instead of commanding or demanding a thankful heart, Jesus did what had to be done first: Jesus healed them, restored them, gave them something to be thankful *for*. And then he waited—waited to see if anyone would recognize the difference, if any heart would blossom into praise; waited to see if even one person would understand how gift and giver were now inextricably linked.

First things first. When the lepers first approached Jesus, they stood at a distance, as was required by law. They stood apart from their God and apart from their families, apart from their communities and the worship of their ancestors. And one of them even stood apart within the circle of the rejected, for he was a Samaritan.

And when they were healed, they were on their way back—back to relationships, spouses and children, honest work, and the ability to stand next to and touch those near and dear to them.

But the leper who returned recognized that a thankful heart for the Healer was the first step to a life within the community. He realized that only when the relationship between God and the gifted was firm and whole could life with others be a life of confidence, praise, and joy, a life renewed and not a rut resumed. That person realized that never again would he be an outsider or an enemy, at least in God's eyes.

First things first. For us, like the leper, the Good News is that God will always wait. God does not coerce or manipulate our thanksgiving any more than Jesus demanded thanks from the lepers in this Gospel. And just as God did not rescind the healing of the nine, so God will never take from us the promise of healing, forgiveness, and unconditional love.

First things first. For us, too, there are times when we feel, if not shut out from the community, then at least left to live on its very edges, unnoticed, unwanted, uninvited. In such times and in such circumstances, we too are assured that we are—by the grace of God—worthy and whole. And we then may run with joy to share the news of God's healing grace, gladly calling: "Come with me, sisters and brothers! Come to the community of welcome! Come and be healed for life!" LK

PROPHETIC VOICE

Our third-world sisters and brothers know the reality of poverty from first-hand experience. But no matter how difficult and painful that experience is, we hear from them a constant word of praise and thanksgiving to God (Phil 4:4). Meanwhile, first-world Christians living in privilege and plenty often seem to be in "uproar" and "panic" (Ps 65). We need to listen to our poorer sisters and brothers and re-learn the lesson of celebration. DP

Christ the King Sunday November 26, 1989

Psalm 95:1-7a
Jeremiah 23:2-6
Colossians 1:13-20
Luke 23:35-43

A FIRST READING

Jeremiah looked into the future and saw not just smoke and fire and destruction but the victory of God. In the end, says the Lord, "I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

A strange figure fulfills Jeremiah's vision: Jesus at his cross looks like anything but royalty, and yet Luke insists that the inscription is correct. Jesus really is the King, and this very day (v. 43) and by means of this very cross he begins his reign. He will pass by means of death into his sovereignty, and he will receive the criminal, and every repentant sinner, into his presence. "Paradise" is an old Persian word for the king's royal park or garden. In the saying of Jesus at the cross, the old word does new work. The word of Jesus is a powerful promise of forgiveness and companionship forever.

Colossians 1:13-20 sounds in some respects like a commentary on the Gospel reading. God has rescued us from one sovereignty and transferred us to another, from darkness to light. At this point the author of Colossians supports his thought by quoting two stanzas of a primitive Christian baptismal hymn.

The first stanza focuses on the place of Christ in the wide expanse of the universe as a whole. He is the "icon" or "image" of the invisible God and holds a position high and exalted above all other things and beings, persons and powers, whether seen or unseen. "Head" of the universe, he is recognized by faith as "head of the body, the church."

The second stanza looks less to his status and more to his work. By fully indwelling Christ, God has acted in him to "reconcile" all things to himself, to defeat rebellion, to befriend and embrace a wayward creation, to displace enmity with love, "making peace" (and "blessed are the peacemakers," Matt 5:9). And all this good work has occurred not through the might of Jesus, not through his miracles of exorcism or walking on water, not through his stunning words that stopped the mouths of his opponents, but "by the blood of his cross," through the stooping low of God in Christ, through the divine ministry, through mysterious *agape*, through holy patience and forgiveness. That is the "power" of God in Christ. That is why the cross is a throne or the door to the royal garden (Luke 23).

This is the sovereign for whose advent we cry when on this last and climactic Sunday of the church year we pray, "Thy kingdom come!" RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

When I was a young girl in New York City, a new musical opened which revolutionized musicals and which ran for years and years. That musical was "The Fantasticks," and although some may never have seen the show, I would guess most of us know its most famous song, "Try to Remember." The song begins, "Try to remember the kind of September when life was young and oh, so mellow..." and goes on, asking the audience to remember, each time ending, "...and follow."

Remembering and following are key to the Gospel for this day and for the very festival itself. Sermons and hymns, Scripture and banners all combine to help us remember the signal events of salvation history, the signal events of our community of faith, and the signal events of our individual lives of faith. In story and song we remember birthing and dying, repenting and rising, and we follow the story to its final glorious fulfillment when all the flock shall be gathered, when none shall be missing, when all shall be "transferred... to the kingdom of God's beloved Son."

In our daily lives we often need help remembering; lists and journals, tape recordings

and home movies, and a host of other devices assist us in remembering how things used to be, how we used to be, and what must yet be accomplished.

The penitent thief on the cross was devoid of such assistance. Yet in his last hours he remembered all too clearly who he was: "...we are receiving the due reward of our deeds." His past and his crime filled his brain with honesty and his heart with remorse. The past and the present were all too clear; what was not clear was how it all might be... transformed. It was then that he was moved, by the amazing grace of God, to call out: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingly power." It was then he sensed that Jesus had the power to change the outcome of his story. It was then he understood that in Jesus lay a future of peace, safety, and forgiveness.

And it was then that Jesus looked at him, saw a sinner and a saint to be, and promised him Paradise at the very door of death. Jesus invited him to follow where no footsteps were needed, where only a repentant heart could lead. And Paradise invaded the darkness of that moment.

In these last days and hours of another year of faith, Jesus invites us to remember who we are: frail sinners and failed saints. And Jesus extends to us anew the invitation to Paradise, calling us to follow him through death into life, through the cross into everlasting joy.

In the body broken and the blood, we find the very fullness of God. In the body broken and the blood, we remember how God reconciled us. In the body broken and the blood, we find peace and safety and courage to follow our Shepherd-King. LK

PROPHETIC VOICE

The mission of Jesus celebrated by Luke is the fulfillment of Jeremiah's vision about "honesty and integrity in the land" (Jer 23:5). The forces of imperialism were so threatened by Jesus that their only solution was to have him executed. They succeeded in killing him, but they couldn't destroy him.

In the world of social, economic, political realities we do not have choices between the imperfect and the perfect. We face choices between sinful forces of oppression and sinful forces of liberation. That is why the Spirit needs to process our thoughts and actions within communities of conversion and liberation. It is there, struggling with one another and with God, that we will discover the understanding and the power to act on the reality that "Yahweh is a great God, a greater King than all other gods" (Ps 95:3). And there we will learn "never to give in" and to "bear anything joyfully" (Col 1:10, 12). DP

A Way to Sense Our Oneness

William E. Lesher
President, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

It is a hot, muggy, June afternoon in Chicago—that time of year when my attention pivots from concentrating on things that have been to what will be. More specifically, this is the day I turn from the past academic year and begin to plan and project and prepare in detail for the 1989-90 school year that is fast approaching.

Coincidentally, I have just received, as many of you have, "A Message from the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," in which Bishop Chilstrom sketches his vision that he calls, "Mission 90." Though this is primarily a vision of the ELCA through synods to all the local congregations across the country, I have been wondering what it would be like to take up the challenge of "Mission 90" in a seminary community.

The vision focuses on three words: see, grow, and serve. *Seeing* has to do with the common faith we share in the ELCA. Part of it centers in the basic teachings of our church and part in Bible study, using the New Revised Standard Version to be published in 1990. These are everyday topics at a seminary, of course. Scripture and doctrinal studies occupy the major portion of time and energy for students and faculty. Biblical texts and theological concepts are wrestled with, often at a profound and personal level. Much less time is spent sharing these personal insights regarding our common faith with one another in a simpler, more relational, setting. Undoubtedly, a new dimension of community would be achieved in small groups of students, faculty, and staff gathered around these basic resources of our faith. Added to this is the notion of doing this in common with pastors and members of congregations throughout the church.

There is unique strength in such common activity. A church I once served was part of a parish of nine congregations. The pastors met each Tuesday for prayer, Bible study, and sermon preparation. We had a vision, too: that over the years, all nine congregations, by hearing sermons on the same texts and with similar interpretations, would begin to sense a oneness of faith and mission—and they did. "Mission 90" could give us all, seminaries included, a taste of that corporate wholeness embodied in the bishop's vision.

Growing in this vision means tithing and witnessing. Seminaries are regularly critiqued for their failure to prepare students adequately in the fields of stewardship and evangelism. In turn, seminaries claim to prepare students biblically and theologically, often adding that the classroom is not the place to perfect the practice of ministry. There is some truth to both the

critique and the claims. "Mission 90" could give seminary communities an occasion and an incentive to add practice to theory in these vital areas of pastoral ministry. Seminary circumstances dramatize the need for growth in churchwide stewardship. For the most part, seminaries are an underfunded area of Christian higher education. Salaries, scholarship funds, and resources for research are only marginally adequate. Must the people of God always do with less than what is needed to achieve the excellence to which they aspire? "Mission 90" could give the seminary community the incentive, in a place where the needs are dramatically known, to grow together with the whole church in sacrificial giving.

Serving in the bishop's vision means reaching out with partners around the world to effect peace and justice in the creation. Again, coincidentally, another vision appeared on my desk this last week. It is conveyed in a study entitled, "The Common Good: Social Welfare and the American Future," sponsored by the Ford Foundation and conducted by a group of distinguished Americans. Based on a pragmatic assessment of both our needs and our resources, this prestigious panel lays out recommendations for our nation to build a social system that would provide: all children with a decent start in life; youth with job preparation; adults with economic opportunity; and older people with security and peace of mind. This is not a vision that originated in the church, but it is inherent in the church's sense of justice. "Mission 90" provides the occasion and the incentive to pick up such grand visions and, together with others in our church, in other churches, and people of good will throughout the land, push such common visions forward for the sake of the common good.

Some will say "Mission 90" is just another "program," and it can become that, to be sure. It did not start that way! It started as a bishop's vision. It could become a church's vision, even a seminary's vision; and it could be another way to express our oneness in the ELCA.

(P.S. A copy of the study, "The Common Good," can be obtained from the Ford Foundation, Office of Communications, 320 East 43 Street, New York, NY 10017.)

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