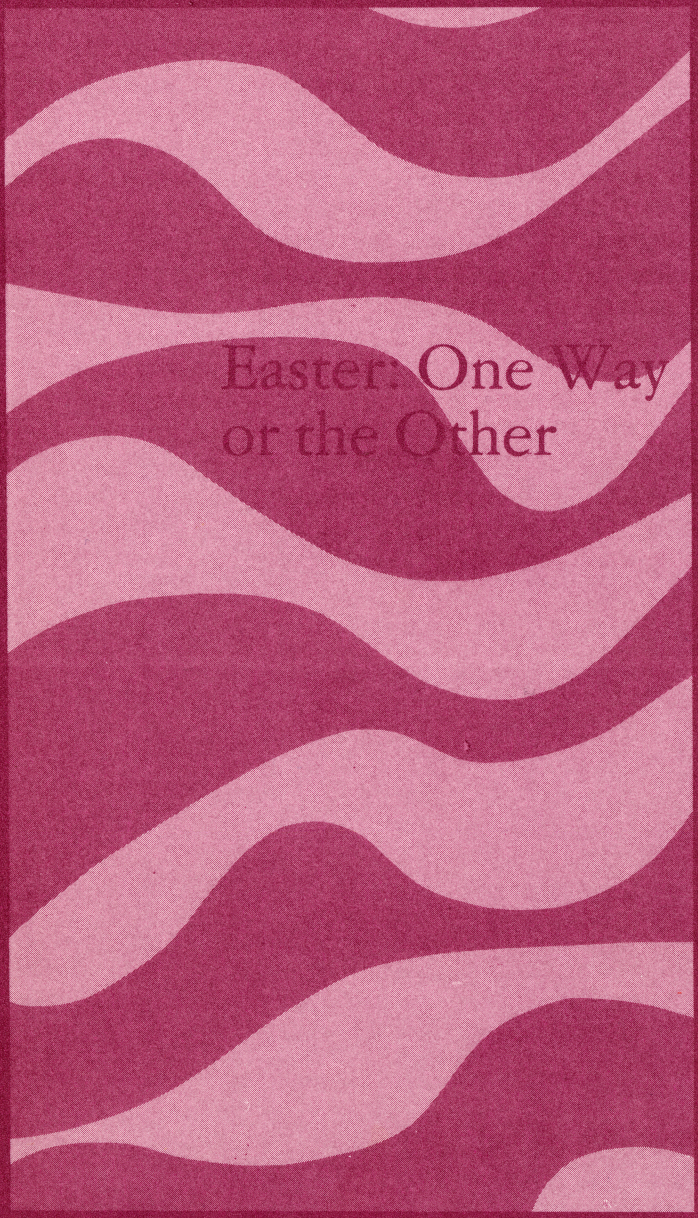
April 1989 Volume 16 Number 2



CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

in cooperation with
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

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

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

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

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

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

Editorial Board: **Karen Battle, Carol Rausch Gorski, Robert Klonowski, Stephen Krueger, Dennis Laskey, Richard Ramirez, Robert Trendel, Mary Vance-Welsh.**

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

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

Contents

Easter: One Way or the Other 82
Ralph W. Klein

God, Our Efforts, and Evil 85
Jerry K. Robbins

Ministry and Motherhood: A Collision of Callings? 95
Kristin M. Foster

Ministry: The Old Testament Background 104
Meinert Grumm

An Evangelical Doctrine of the Ministry 108
David Housholder

How Shall I Be Whole? Perspectives on the Meaning of Wholeness 114
Stanley J. Meyer

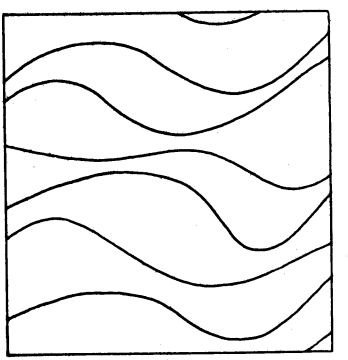
Review: *Miz Lil and the Chronicles of Grace* 121
Gail McGrew Eifrig

Flight 126
Elizabeth-Anne Vanek

Book Reviews 127

Seminaries and Lay Education
Dr. Jerry L. Schmalenberger
Inside Back Cover

Drawings by Barbara Wegener



Preaching Helps 141
Series C:
The Day of Pentecost—Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Easter: One Way or the Other

I was coming to the end of a telephone conversation with a friend whose terminal cancer had reached new heights of peril, when he added: "I'm really looking forward to celebrating Easter this year. One way or the other, I'm really looking forward to Easter."

His meaning was unmistakable: Here in the presence of family and friends or there in the presence of the Lord, he knew he would celebrate God's mighty victory over sin, evil, and death itself. I wept with him for joy.

Jerry K. Robbins addresses the same problem of evil and reviews recent intellectual responses to it by C. S. Lewis (evil as an ally of the good), Harold Kushner (God good, but not all powerful), and Elie Wiesel (God implicated in the promotion of evil). His own theocentric and activist theodicy urges believers to show people they do not suffer alone, to remind them that evil is being overcome by good, and to demonstrate to the sufferers their own personal worth. God is both powerful and good; God matters and our efforts matter in the final disposition of evil in the world.

"Ministry" is being probed and dissected in all corners of the church today. **Kristin M. Foster** suggests that the calling to gospel ministry and to family life often results in tension. As a participant in the struggles in Western Pennsylvania, she constantly heard the church's

univocal affirmation of family, but she learned that if a minister's taking a stand disrupted the family, the stand was considered by many a thing to be abandoned. What about the call to ministry and the call to family when the ministry call means underemployment for one's spouse or inadequate education for one's children? She rejoices in her calling to be a mother and her calling to be a pastor, but concludes: These callings are not "manageable"; it is beyond calculation how they will exert their claim in the future, or where the tension between them will surface again.

Meinert Grumm asks whether there truly is a lack of reference to "ministry" in the Old Testament. Through a study of Greek and Hebrew words he decides that the word translated "serve" means a proper disposition of the whole person as demonstrated in a life of godly conduct. True worship of God shows itself in serving God by conduct appropriate to a full commitment to God. The proper province of what we call liturgical worship is to make provision for whatever may nurture and encourage and help express our 24-hour-a-day spiritual worship.

David Housholder graduated from LSTC last year and won the national Piepkorn prize by writing an essay on ministry. Does ordination come from above and mark a sharp distinction between clergy and lay people? Or does ordination come from below and focus on the priesthood of all believers? Drawing on the Lutheran symbols, he seeks a third position: Ministry is an office whose central function is the spreading of the gospel through word and sacrament. Outside of this function ministry has no essence; without God's own authorization ministry has no power.

Stanley J. Meyer invites us to embrace the whole of life and experience and bring them into a harmonic balance called peace. His biblical and wholistic understanding of human nature helps us to include the intellectual, social/emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions of life in our search for health.

Finally, from the literary side, **Gail McGrew Eifrig** provides a stimulating review essay of Walter Wangerin's latest book, *Miz Lil &*

the Chronicles of Grace, while **Elizabeth Anne Vanek** contributes a poem evoking the feelings of Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Easter comes on March 26 this year, a few days after you receive this issue of *Currents*. Or it comes on every first day of the week when we assemble with all the faithful to celebrate the Lord's day. One way or the other, Easter faith reminds us that God's is the final victory, that ministers are sent by the risen Lord, and that life, all of life, has been restored and made whole by the mighty "Yes" of that first Easter.

Happy Easter, Carl!

One way or the other!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

God, Our Efforts, and Evil

Jerry K. Robbins
Morgantown, West Virginia

It is becoming increasingly clear that the crisis in theology today is a crisis of faith, not reason. In his study of the meaning of the cross, Anders Nygren notes how atonement theory has shifted its center of gravity away from focusing on God's action to focusing on human action.[1] Unable to accommodate an "objective" approach in which God is an active agent for redemption, modern thinking prefers to concentrate on the human factor in the equation.[2]

A similar shift from theocentric to anthropocentric thinking has occurred in the nagging intellectual problem of evil. Even so recently as two or three decades ago, a handful of theologians and philosophers argued that the solution to the problem of evil lay in a firm faith in God's intention and ability to defeat sin, pain, and suffering.[3] Recently, the focus of effort has shifted to providing rationalizations of the problem. Theocentric thinking has been edged out by utilitarian, moral, and metaphysical schemes.

In dealing with the problem of evil, the turn from "the ways of God" to "human ways" is unfortunate from both a rational and religious standpoint. It is logically mistaken inasmuch as the problem of evil is

---

[1]Anders Nygren, *Essence of Christianity*, trans. Philip Watson (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), chap. 5.

[2]Robert S. Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), chap. 4.

[3]M. C. D'Arcy, *The Pain of This World and the Providence of God* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1935); J. S. Whale, *The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil* (New York: Abingdon, 1936); Nels F. S. Ferré, *Evil and the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1947); Edwin Lewis, *The Creator and the Adversary* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1948); Austin Farrer, *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited* (New York: Doubleday, 1961, and London: Collins, 1962); George Buttrick, *God, Pain and Evil* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966).

generated by faith in God. Only believers encounter an intellectual problem of evil. The problem *assumes* belief in God's existence.[4] Job cries out in anguish because he is a believer. He "pours out tears to *God*" (16:20). The key in the problem of evil is how we conceive and relate to *God's* behavior.

Because living faith requires a living God, rational theodicies fail religiously, also. Just as our theories of atonement can obscure the cross,[5] so our theories about evil can obscure God's action against evil. While rational theodicies *intend* to defend God, they really justify human belief. Such effort constitutes a "theology of glory"[6] that attempts to replace the mystery of divine action with the clarity of rational argument. No matter how much a God-concept may figure in the demonstration, it is the demonstration that controls the thinking. In such a cognitive configuration, the living God becomes part of a formula or theory only.

I

Several recent popular theodicies illustrate these shortcomings and the general failings that plague our rationalizations of the problem of evil. In his classic study *The Problem of Pain*,[7] C. S. Lewis proposes to alleviate the intellectual problem of evil by blunting its harsh edge. Lewis maintains that the problem of evil originates within the assumption of God's omnipotence and God's goodness. Lewis will not qualify either of those terms in the problem. Although he also appeals to free will, Lewis insists God *could* intervene and *could* eliminate the abuses of free will if God chose to. Also, God is good as we measure goodness (loving, kind, altruistic), as well as in the sense that God commands what is right.

Nevertheless, God is not to blame for the evil in the world. Although God could control human beings, God does not. Such freedom leads people to choose themselves before God, creating a new species of human being caught in sin. Sin is the risk of freedom, and sin accounts for most of the evil in the world. Moreover, while we can't justify pain, pain is useful for repentance, faith, and moral growth. It is God's "megaphone," directing us to the path of perfection. Pain contributes to a "complex good," or good that emerges out of evil.

Among the many rational schemes to render evil innocuous, none is more popular than the argument that evil is useful for attaining some good otherwise lacking in the world. The claim that evil is a schoolhouse for character-building or a training-ground for spiritual growth often incorporates other standard strategies, such as the free-will defense and the best-possible-world argument. As a "theistic" solution, this approach has the considerable merit of not compromising God's nature in any way.

However, this strategy simply demands too much from the thinking believer. Anyone who faces evil squarely knows that it cannot be argued away as merely a lack of good or as a vital instrument in the production of good. To strip evil of its brutishness,

---

[4]D'Arcy, *The Pain of This World*, 30-31; Whale, *The Christian Answer*, 54; *Philosophers and Religious Truth*, ed. Ninian Smart (New York: Macmillan, SCM, 1964), 153; Thomas McPherson, *The Philosophy of Religion* (London: Van Nostrand, 1965), 127; Brian Hebblethwaite, *Evil Suffering and Religion* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976), 40.

[5]Gerhard Forde, "Outside the Gate: Atonement as Actual Event," *Dialog* 18 (Autumn 1979):248-9.

[6]Timothy Lull, "God and Suffering: A Fragment," *Dialog* 25 (Spring 1986):95.

[7]New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943; Macmillan Paperbacks, 1962.

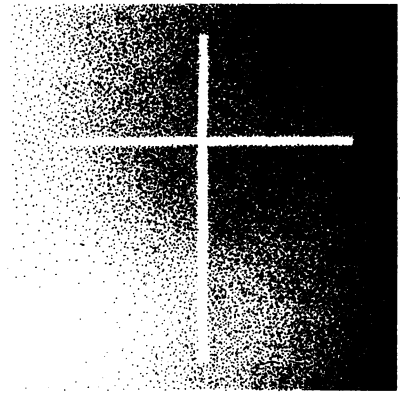
and turn it into an ally of the good, is a kind of word play or mental trickery of the worst kind. Squeezing all the poison out of evil, the argument asks us to believe that bad is good. It also spreads moral confusion, suggesting God uses evil for good, and implying that we should not oppose evil since it produces so many salutary benefits.

A second typical approach to the problem of evil is developed in Harold Kushner's *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.[8] Written against the background of personal tragedy, this book is an effort to wrest some meaning from suffering, and to offer pastoral support to others who are suffering. Although that purpose is clearly utilitarian, Kushner is not interested in offering a "defense" of God, and rules out all justificatory approaches. All apologies that assume God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence and try to justify evil for its aesthetic, educational, or spiritual utility fail miserably because they make God immoral and offer no comfort to the victim.

Instead, echoing one theme in the book of Job, Kushner proposes that God is good, but not all-powerful. We live in a world of natural order and free will.

> God does not cause our misfortunes. Some are caused by bad luck, some are caused by bad people, and some are simply an inevitable consequence of our being human and being mortal, living in a world of inflexible natural laws.[9]

Nevertheless, this is the best world possible attended by the best God possible. A world of constant miracle would be a shambles of disorder. Kushner also prefers this God to the sovereign God of orthodoxy: "I can worship a God who hates suffering but cannot eliminate it, more easily than I can worship a God who chooses to make children suffer and die, for whatever exalted reason."[10] Moreover, this God is available to help suffering persons cope with their trials. God sends assistance in the form of the care of health professionals, the support of others in community, and the courage and strength to cope that arises within us.



Kushner's book has enjoyed enormous popularity in both secular and Christian bookstores. Its appeal is likely due to both its personal tone and its common-sense theology. Exposing the emptiness in all justificatory maneuvers, the book resonates with the reservations felt by many people toward arguments that excuse God. Those whipped and beaten by life do not want to hear that all their suffering is actually for some good. Rather, they want to know their pain is real and God hates it as much as they do. They also want to know God has not abandoned them, but is nearby to help when the going

[8]New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1981; Avon Books, 1983.

[9]Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen*, 134.

[10]Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen*, 134.

gets rough. Kushner speaks to those needs with sympathetic sensitivity and warm pastoral support.

At the same time, Kushner's book is more complex than it appears and less satisfactory than it first seems. As with Lewis, Kushner's treatment includes several pillars in the theodicy temple, among them a free-will defense and a best-possible-world argument. However, if God is limited, as Kushner argues, these justifications are beside the point and are even rendered ineffective.

Although it shares certain affinities with the Christian notion of a suffering God, the strategy of limiting God's power, the way Kushner does, is no answer to the problem of evil. As with all dualisms in which God shares rulership with some other power or agent in the world, Kushner's solution merely pushes the issue back one step, thereby worsening the problem. By positing Satan or discreative forces as the cause of evil, it solves the problem of why there is evil, but it creates a new problem of why God makes or allows such things to exist in the first place. This is an even more horrifying problem, because now the issue is not that God has to contend with autonomous, destructive sources or beings, but God is helpless with regard to the *ultimate* shape of reality. What possible hope can we have in a universe where God has so little to do with its initial and overall design?

Not only that, but what hope is there in an unfolding history that can defy God's will and power? A limited God does not instill confidence that good will somehow triumph over or even outweigh evil in the end. Suppose God intends to punish the wicked by sending an earthquake, but cannot cause an earthquake to happen? A limited God may promise to support the faithful, but not deliver on that promise because God cannot hear their cries.[11] In these cases, God's best is simply not enough. We can only feel sorry for such a pathetic, puny God and for our own desperate situation. How can such a God possibly provide the consolation and assistance Kushner claims to offer?

> Those whipped and beaten by life do not want to hear that all their suffering is actually for some good.

A third study of the problem of evil distinct from the previous two is offered in the writings of Elie Wiesel. Rejecting both excusing strategies and the limited-God maneuver, Wiesel opts for qualifying the third term in the problem, the goodness of God. This is apparent in his play, *The Trial of God*.[12] Set in a town where a wholesale slaughter of the Jewish residents has recently taken place, the play features a mock trial enacted by three traveling minstrels who have arrived for the feast of Purim, a joyous Jewish celebration. Suggesting that the play place God on trial, the innkeeper, Berish—who with his daughter survived the pogrom—volunteers to take the role of

[11]Roland Puccetti, "The Concept of God," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (July 1964):239.

[12]New York: Random House, 1979.

the prosecutor. After great difficulty in trying to find a defendant for God, a stranger named Sam steps forth to fill the role. The play commences, only to be interrupted by the local priest bringing news of another imminent attack. However, Berish continues with his charges, just as Sam continues to build a case favorable to God. Outside, the rampaging crowd draws closer. In fear for their lives, the play-actors turn to Sam to save them. Sam seems willing to intervene, but in a final Purim ritual, when the participants put on their masks, Sam turns up wearing the mask of Satan. In the closing moments of the play, Sam is seen laughing scornfully and directing the menacing horde to attack.

The chilling, unredeeming ending of this play cancels all explanations offered in the course of its action. No justifying arguments can survive that horrifying finale. At the same time, the play does not argue that God is too weak to be blameworthy, or that God merely chooses to be a victim with the sufferer. Turning aside from these strategies, Wiesel directly confronts the issue of God's goodness, warning that God's justice may differ from ours and then delivering on his warning in the drama's outcome. He "solves" the problem of evil by giving up the notion that God is moral and has the well-being of the world at heart.

Along with Kushner, Wiesel is a Jewish writer who has received considerable attention from the Christian community. His popularity in religious circles is likely due to the searing honesty with which he deals with the reality of evil, while yet clinging to faith in God. He will allow no compromises with regard to the awfulness of evil or the sovereignty of God. In avoiding both insipid excuse-making and self-defeating finitism, Wiesel maintains a position attractive to all who wish to be true to both lived experience and religious sensibilities.

However, the particular way Wiesel comes to terms with evil is too radical for most believers. Placing the demonic within the heart of deity, Wiesel constructs a negative theodicy in which God not only fails to act against evil, but is actively implicated in promoting evil. Since God's idea of what is good may not include our happiness, it is impossible to trust God to treat the world kindly or to bring all things to a good outcome. Actually, a God with absolute power, but no moral conscience, is capable of maximal destruction. In this worst possible world, one cannot worship God, but only cringe in fear of God. At the same time, human moral action based on religion collapses, for if God is not good, goodness lacks an absolute foundation.

These three recent theodicies well represent the kind of sincere, poignant reflection that takes place on the topic today. At the same time, their weaknesses signal the shortcomings that riddle most academic theodicies on the current theological landscape. Most important, these theodicies either contain or imply a defective concept of God, or elevate rationalization of the problem over divine action to eliminate the problem. As such, they contribute to the rather sober assessment of theoretical solutions that we have heard recently and continue to hear today. Many observers of current theology despair over the god of rational theodicies *doing* anything about the problem of pain and suffering.[13] Given these negative judgments, it seems fair to

---

[13]D'Arcy, *The Pain of This World*, 15-16, 132ff.; Ferré, *Evil and the Christian Faith*, 13, 18ff., 105-6; Farrer, *Love Almighty*, 17-18; McPherson, *The Philosophy of Religion*, chap. 6; Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 183-6.

say that perhaps no theological movement has wreaked more havoc with religious faith than the shift from theocentrism to anthropocentrism characteristic of the modern era.

II

A theocentric solution to the problem of evil is possible where there is attention to the mighty acts of God reported in Scripture, and a corresponding action against evil by the believer today. In order to "let God be God," we can turn to the biblical record which portrays the way God proceeds against the forces of evil. We look and listen to the Word of revelation rather than formulate our own argument. Then, secondly, we consider ways we can reproduce that action, albeit under human limitations, in the world today, in the name of God. Those who profess faith in God's mighty deeds of triumph over evil can carry on the battle against suffering and pain in the world today. Their sympathetic struggle against pain and suffering is a "statement" about God's love, care, and intention that evil come to an end. It is an action that "says" several important things to the intellectual problem of evil. Let us look more closely at this theocentric theodicy in its two stages.

For the most part, Scripture states that God's way of dealing with evil is to overcome it. It pictures a God who abhors evil and struggles against it. The reader can find only scattered attempts to explain or justify evil. Job struggles with the problem, crying out to God to explain to him *why* the good suffer and the evil prosper (24:1), and in particular *why* God contends against him (10:2). Jesus discusses the role of sin as a factor in the affliction of a blind man (Jn 9:1-4). In offering encouragement to persecuted Christians, Paul justifies suffering on the basis of its utility (Rom 5:3-5). Similarly, James notes how suffering can lead to faith and strength (1:2-4), and the author of 1 Peter links it to eternal life (5:10). Except for isolated references like these, the Bible seems little interested in rational theodicies.

Scripture is insistent, however, that evil is contrary to God's will and is under the attack of God's agency. In the Old Testament, God is a mighty warrior against evil wherever it raises its ugly head. At creation, God pushes back the surrounding chaos (Gen 1:2, Ps 33:7). Through divine creative power, God continues to hold back the forces of destruction (Is 45:18, 51:9-10; Ps 89:6-11, 74:12-14).[14] God takes action to guide, protect, discipline, and preserve Israel. Binding God's Self to Israel (Is 42:5-7), God guides the nation like a shepherd (Ezek 34:11-16), protects its innocent and poor (Mic 6:8), and champions its cause against the nations (Exod 14). When Israel breaks the covenant and goes astray, God strikes out against their sin with awful punishment (Amos 2:6-8, and others).[15] At the same time, the prophets do not waste their time with theoretical discussion, but call the people to action: "Cease to do evil, learn to do good" (Is 1:16-17); "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream" (Amos 5:24); "Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate" (Amos 5:15). Just as the people struggle against evil, God is mighty to save and will fully defeat the powers of evil in the future (Amos 9:9-15, Is 1:26). There are

---

[14]"Creation," by B. W. Anderson, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 1:728, 730; Farrer, *Love Almighty*, 130.

[15]W. Sibley Towner, *How God Deals with Evil* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

even a few penultimate victories in the present age (Job 42:10-17).

Jesus' ministry opposes evil and defeats it at every turn. Jesus doesn't use evil for some secondary benefit, but overcomes it.[16] His life, death, and resurrection rescue the human race from the three tyrants that terrorize the earth: the devil, pain and sickness, and death. Tempter, liar, corrupter, and destroyer, the devil would turn humanity against God in disobedience and despair. But Jesus turns the tempter back (Mt 4:1-11), opposes his ways (Mt 12:22-30), teaches his followers to do the same (Mt 6:13), and *acts* to defeat the grip of sin once and for all (Eph 1:21-22, Rev 12:10). By his faithful life and death, Christ overcomes the powers of darkness (Jn 1:5) and equips his followers for a similar struggle against the "principalities" and "powers" of this world (Eph 6:12).[17]

Jesus' presence and ministry is mighty to defeat the evil of human suffering. While momentarily slowed by a discussion of suffering and sin, Jesus moves swiftly to heal the blind man of his affliction (Jn 9:1-41). Jesus takes on the most fearsome demonic forces and destroys them by his superior power (Mk 5:1-20). Not even the sacred sabbath law (Mk 3:1-6) nor the scoffing derision of the skeptics (Mk 5:40) can stop his war on suffering. Jesus means to have people free of pain and disease. He does not argue or theorize or speculate about the causes, sources, or reasons for affliction. His will is for wholeness (Mk 1:40-42), whatever human unresponsiveness or lack of faith he encounters (Lk 17:11-19, Mk 9:14-29), or however intractable the problem (Jn 11:1-44). As the Father works tirelessly to heal, mend, reconcile, and raise to new life, so Jesus works for the same increase of good (Jn 5:1-17).

Christ is victorious over all his enemies, including the last enemy, death (1 Cor 15:24-26). This defeat is promised in much of his teaching about the final end and the reward of the righteous (Mk 10:29-30, Mt 5:10-11, Jn 16:20-22). It is also prefigured in several miracles in which Jesus raises a person from the dead (Mk 5:21-42, Jn 11:1-44, Lk 7:11-17). Of course, the resurrection of Jesus is the premier exhibit in the believer's case against evil. By that victory, Christ now sits at the right hand of God, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Eph 1:20-21). It is also the doorway to heaven for the believer whose suffering will finally give place to glory (Rom 8:18, James 1:12). In the face of the overwhelming bliss of that future life, all present evil fades into insignificance (Jn 16:20-21).[18]

The resurrection of Jesus is the premier exhibit in the believer's case against evil.

While the biblical testimony is the central hub of any believer's solution to the

[16]Frederick Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion, Second Series* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., and New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1926), 191-3; Buttrick, *God, Pain and Evil*, 35.

[17]Whale, *The Christian Answer*, 13-14; E. Lewis, *The Creator and the Adversary*, chaps. 11, 14, 15; Buttrick, *God, Pain and Evil*, 108-9; William Fitch, *God and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), chaps. 7-8.

[18]Hebblethwaite, *Evil Suffering*, chap. 7.

problem of evil, a fully shaped answer picks up several additional themes which radiate outward from that focal point. A Christian solution to the problem of evil includes active effort by believers to reduce the volume of evil in the world now. If this were not part of the solution, then the biblical testimony would be a mere story from the past, or a mere transaction in heaven, the latter a fault some critics find in classical atonement theory.[19] In order for a theocentric theodicy to matter in the world, it must also be an activist theodicy. Those are the two supports that can sustain a satisfactory approach to the problem of evil. As God has comforted us, so we are to comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-4).

In order for a theocentric theodicy to matter in the world, it must also be an activist theodicy.

Action for the overcoming of suffering and pain addresses the intellectual problem of evil. Unfortunately, this has not always been granted. Typically, the problem of evil has been divided into practical and theoretical aspects: how can we *cope* with suffering and pain, and what are we to *think* about its place in God's economy? It is argued that the practical problem requires a practical strategy, while the theoretical problem necessitates some theological response. But surely, the problem is not so neatly divided. It is well known that our mental state greatly affects our physical well-being. On the other hand, the actual course of disease or pain will have a profound impact on how we think about it. Action against human suffering is an important strategy that "says" several things to the intellectual problem of evil.

A practical strategy presumes that the intellectual problem of evil is not one problem but many. The issue of God's sovereignty and goodness in an evil world arises in the form of several personal questions. We grope toward a theodicy from an existential wrestling with evil that touches us individually and directly. Three of those probings are especially effectively addressed by active effort to overcome evil.

First, compassionate action to reduce suffering speaks to the question, "Why is God sending or allowing this suffering to happen to me?" Faced with a devastating disease or a disabling accident, victims often wonder if they have become subjects of divine punishment. The isolation brought on by sickness sometimes extends to a sense of alienation from God. Here the problem of evil emerges in the form of acute doubt about the goodness of God.

Companionable care of the afflicted can dispel these sickroom shadows. To stand with another in a time of suffering is to say that that person does not suffer alone. The mere presence of a caring person says that the cross carried by the afflicted is shouldered by the care-giver as well. At the same time, inasmuch as the care is extended "in the name of God," it makes a strong statement about God's identification with evil for its defeat. Such empathetic suffering mirrors the empathetic servanthood of

[19]Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 134-7.

the crucified God. Indeed, such care-givers bear in their bodies the marks of the cross, becoming Christ to the neighbor. The victim can then see that, as the care-giver stands with himself or herself, God stands with them both. God does not send suffering, but shoulders it with the victim and the companion.

Second, the intellectual problem of evil sometimes surfaces in the question, "Is suffering the final word, or can we hope that God will overbalance evil with good?" Pain and death call into question the ultimate harmony of life. Even though the previous step of empathetic support is some comfort, the identification of the care-giver and God with suffering may only seem to confirm the rule of evil, its grip now extended to include the empathetic care-givers along with the victim. In order for action against evil to be credible in the arena of theodicies, it must give hope that evil is being overcome and good will triumph in the long run.

Sensitive care for the afflicted conveys such a hope. As care-givers deal with the physical, medical, mental, social, and spiritual needs of the sufferer, they make a statement about the place of evil in the order of things. While it is real and insistent, evil is not sovereign. Self-giving, empathetic support of the afflicted says evil is not the last word, but love is. Such heroic support introduces a compassion that overshadows the primary suffering of the victim and the vicarious suffering of the care-giver. It declares that there is a power stronger than evil in the world, and that power is love. At the same time, it says that God intends the defeat of evil and successfully acts against it. It calls to mind the passionate love of the God of Israel who is mighty to destroy evil. It mirrors the ministry of the Great Physician who spent a great amount of his time curing illnesses. It fulfills the intention of a church whose disciples are to "overcome evil with good." Testifying to the power of God to turn back basic suffering, active ministry for the alleviation of suffering restores a sense of the profound *goodness* of life.

Finally, companionable care for the afflicted affirms the fundamental worth of the sufferer. Sickness can erode self-confidence and create profound personal despair. Empathetic care in those circumstances renews feelings of self-worth by celebrating the inherent value of persons and life. It says to the afflicted that they are respected as valued human beings regardless of their bad fortune. And, insofar as the care is extended in God's name, it affirms God's respect for that person—only in this case the association is more profound. Just as sympathetic care affirms self-worth as individuals, so God respects our *freedom* as autonomous human beings. The respect we show to others by affirming their importance, God shows to us by affirming our importance. God does not control our lives. God's power is qualified by relationship in which freedom is essential.[20] If God were to impose an order where evil is impossible, humanity would disappear as well. In its high regard for the value of the person, an activist theodicy mirrors that divine respect which the self-limiting God shows all of creation.

Conclusion

A theocentric-activist approach to evil maintains the reality of evil. Suffering is not turned into something good, but is overcome as an evil that both God and human

[20]Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 97-98.

God is with us to help only where people are with one another in helpful ministry.

beings abhor. It presumes that human happiness goes up as suffering goes down.[21]

In addition, this approach affirms that God is both powerful and good. In this theodicy, there is no doubt about God's intent or capability to defeat evil. God is mighty in love for and rule over the world. God engages evil for its defeat both penultimately and ultimately.

Also, theocentric activism fully employs human effort in overcoming evil. Unlike theological-theoretical approaches that ignore practical strategies, this approach includes active human effort in its proposed solution. While God's mighty deeds are the center and source of its formula, that equation is incomplete without human action "re-presenting" those divine deeds. In this view, God is with us to help only where people are with one another in helpful ministry.

Most important, a theocentric-activist theodicy restores *faith* as the basis for dealing with the intellectual problem of evil. Efforts to explain evil in the world often represent a failure of faith. They are an attempt to talk our way out of the problem. As such, they replace faith with reason. A theocentric-activist theodicy reverses that dynamic by restoring an emphasis on *God's* action against evil to the center of our thinking about the problem. In this view, an omnicompetent/omnibenevolent God who struggles ceaselessly to deny evil any rights over creation is the source of our hope. The way ahead is not through the "thin formulas of science or the abstract reasoning of philosophy,"[22] but a faith that is bold enough to believe *God* matters, and *our* efforts matter, in the final disposition of evil in the world.

Faithful activism is a style of theodicy especially well suited to the Christian and the church. While evil presses down hard upon faith, believers also have ready access to relief. The strategy of compassionate service for the alleviation of suffering is essential to Christian discipleship. The church need look no farther than its own calling as a community of care for an appropriate response to the intellectual problem of evil. While others may despair of any "answer," the church is especially well positioned to engage the issue. It is the very nature and mission of the church to be the body of Christ in the world for its healing and redemption.[23] As God suffered in the world on behalf of the church, so the faithful bear the cruciform shape of God's life in the world on God's behalf. The solution to the intellectual problem of evil is hidden in the very vision and action of faith. When the church lives out that faith, then it witnesses to its unique contribution to "solving" the problem of evil.

---

[21]Haig Khatchadourian, "God, Happiness and Evil," *Religious Studies* 2 (October 1966): 117.

[22]Buttrick, *God, Pain and Evil*, 36.

[23]Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, chap. 5.

Ministry and Motherhood: A Collision of Callings?

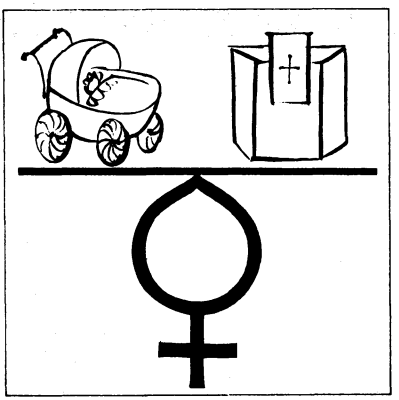
Kristin M. Foster
Zion Lutheran Church, Cloquet, Minnesota

> He who loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37-38)
>
> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all the rest will be yours as well. (Matthew 6:33)

When I was ordained to serve a small Lutheran parish in Pittsburgh in 1981, I was not at all certain that I had personally been called by God to be a pastor. I was perfectly certain, however, that God was calling women into the ranks of the ordained. Just by being female, therefore, I could feel that I was advancing the gospel. Every time someone in my congregation or community would say, "I used to have doubts about whether women should be ordained, but now that I've met *you*...," I would get a warm glow knowing that simply by being a female pastor I was breaking down spiritual barriers. The fact that I was also married to a man ordained as a Presbyterian minister placed me in two other spiritual vanguards as member of a clergy couple with an ecumenical identity. When people asked me whether we argued about theology ("in bed," they frequently added, chuckling at their own originality), I could honestly say that being clergy in different denominations had never been a point of tension in our marriage. Indeed, my husband and I had complete faith that equal partnership in all our choices and commitments would be attainable as long as we were reasonable and flexible. With this shared commitment, we would successfully manage and harmonize all the demands of a two-career family. And although I did not have a child until almost four years after being ordained, I bristled at the merest question of my capacity to be both minister and mother.

Experience has shifted my certainties. In midstream of that first parish ministry the call did come, not to me as a member of a

generic vanguard, but to me, Kristin, gripped by the awareness that I was answerable to God in the midst of a foundation-shaking situation. In the same period of time both my church and my newborn daughter took hold of my heart and laid their claims to my deepest loyalties. In the wake of that experience, I find myself asking some new and



disturbing questions about the tension between the calling to gospel ministry and the calling to family life, a tension I had so fiercely denied, a tension the church at large seems equally determined to ignore. The easy harmony of balancing my own self-chosen commitments was shattered when I faced situations in which I was torn between two compelling calls, face to face with the terrible question, *Which comes first?*

Questions few want to hear, myself included, now crowd in upon this first one. Is there room in one person's life for two primary callings, such as that of pastor and mother? Can I be faithful to one without betraying the other? Is the ordination of women really a sign of theological progress in the church? Or is it a sign that the office of the ministry is no longer treated as a radical, primary calling, but simply as a professional role exercised through a certain set of functions? Is the church, like me, avoiding the question of which calling comes first—family or gospel ministry—because it has already answered in favor of the family? Why indeed is there such a conspiracy of silence against the questions themselves?

It is not my intent here to pretend to have the answers or to provide a model through my own experience. Rather, it is my intent to violate the silence by describing the tension of the two callings as I have encountered it. If in so doing I can unravel a few old answers, stir a few others to uneasiness, and leave you staring with me over the edge of the questions, then perhaps we will be in a position to see, not only the depth of God's call, but the promise which comes with it as well.

Why are these questions real to me when they never had been before? Very simply, because I had never anticipated that I would find myself so compelled either by my ministry or by my daughter. Life up to that point had been primarily something to be arranged according to personal choice—my own and my husband's. Ordination for me had been a provisional arrangement, chosen on the assumption that the best way to find out if you want to do something is to try it for a while. Coming to Pittsburgh was a thoroughly pragmatic and short-term decision, the locus on the map where my husband could pursue a doctorate and I could find a call, a springboard to the rest of our lives. Even the decision to have a child was based not on any deep yearning (life was full enough without children), but on the notion that we might be missing out on something if we did not.

In the flush of our early marital idealism, in which all other life commitments would be carefully integrated around the one central commitment to each other, I had

never reckoned with the possibility that someday one or more of these other commitments might get a grip on me stronger than my carefully tentative grip on them. I was utterly unprepared, therefore, when both my child and my church grabbed hold of my heart with a force that was independent of my original reasons for choosing them. I was not the one doing the choosing anymore; my ministry and my daughter were somehow choosing me, laying a claim upon me which I could not just shake off if they interfered with my short-term sleep or my long-range plans.

I had never anticipated that becoming a mother would be so much like falling in love, with that same surprise of joy, the same irresistibility of the bond. Beginning with the hormonal euphoria of pregnancy and the awesome encounter of birth, my daughter exerted an influence on me that in no way arose from any prior conscious commitment of mine. It is true to say that I had a baby girl in July of 1985, but far truer to say that she had me, had me in her tiny unbreakable grip. And in that bond is her claim on me to do everything possible to enhance her well-being. It is not a matter of choice that I am now answerable for her best interests; it is a matter of heart and a matter of plain fact. It disturbs me enough to think of harming her, even unwittingly. It is almost inconceivable, however, to think of doing anything that I knew in advance could harm her or the bond between us.

I was not the one doing the choosing anymore; my ministry and my daughter were somehow choosing me.

The same unanticipated experience of something I had freely chosen turning into something which grabbed hold of me took place in the course of my ministry. Out of the provisional and pragmatic decision to come to Pittsburgh and be ordained to serve a small congregation, I stumbled into a purpose not of my own making and choices not of my liking. People, events, and issues began to stir and compel me more deeply than my personal plans and preferences allowed. No longer was my ministry simply a flexible variable in the vision for life I shared with my husband. Instead of getting an answer to my question about whether the role of pastor was right for me, I had to answer to God about what I was going to stand for in that role. Not my questions anymore, but somehow his to me, the questions arising from the ministry itself, were center stage. And in the uncomfortable course of answering those questions, I found myself caring far more about that parish and that city than was reasonable for me to care, caring far more than I could afford to care, given the life trajectory my husband and I had already set.

My experience of being called was inextricably bound to what was taking place in Pittsburgh as a group of congregations with the support of local unions began publicly challenging the city's economic powerbrokers on investment policies which were destroying the jobs and devastating the communities of hundreds of thousands of families in the steel valley. As several of the pastors leading the group (known as the Denominational Ministry Strategy) faced a crescendo of enmity and threats within their congregations, accompanied by pressure

from ecclesiastical and political leaders to stop making waves, I knew I was in no fence-sitting situation. I had to decide with whom I would stand—with the people taking the heat for speaking out in words and actions, or with the people who were putting on the heat.

I had everything to gain by staying on the sidelines, verbally neutral, critical yet sympathetic to both sides. The majority in my congregation would have approved. The majority of my colleagues in ministry would have approved. And I would have been in a golden position to move to another call with a glowing report from my bishop when the time came for my husband and me to leave Pittsburgh. Why get heavily involved in a community and its upheavals when you don't plan to stay?

And yet... and yet... I was stirred too deeply, I had seen too much from close up, to make the reasonable decision. I knew that neutrality in such a situation would only benefit those who already had the upper hand: it would amount to tacit support for the synodical machinery being set in motion to remove the blight of outspoken pastors even if it meant jailing and defrocking them.* As events unfolded, I knew I could not be comfortable staying comfortable. As disquieting as it was, I knew this was a situation in which I was not answerable finally to other people, even to the people whose offering paid my salary and provided the roof over my family's head. I was answerable to what I saw to be true. I was answerable finally to God.

Making that decision to stand against the tide, and making it repeatedly as the conflict intensified, put an entirely different light on every aspect of my ministry. Taking the unpopular position outside my congregation unleashed the fury of the controlling clique within my congregation. In a matter of months they went from revering me to reviling me, attacking me not only for that particular position of conscience, but for the way I was performing all functions of my pastoral role. Clearly, the issue was no longer how well I was performing those functions of ministry; the issue was to whom I as pastor was answerable. Just who was doing the calling and could therefore call the shots? My opponents were convinced that any pastor should be ultimately answerable to them. I was waking up to the fact that if God was doing the calling, then I was answerable not to my congregation's opinions or purse strings, but answerable for their spiritual guidance. And how could I guide them if I lied to myself?

Right about the time that the efforts of this group in my congregation to force my resignation were coming to a head, my daughter was born. During my pregnancy Pastor Roth had been in jail for refusing to abandon his pulpit. Tyler was born in the middle of Pastor Solberg's three-month jail sentence for the same reason. The question of how I would manage to combine motherhood with full-time ministry paled in light of the question of what I would do if I, too, were forced from my pulpit because of a position of conscience. Would I be willing to face the prospect of jail if that appeared to be the best way to be faithful to my call? Or would I finally yield the pulpit quietly to

*Two of these pastors, Douglas Roth and Daniel Solberg, whose pulpits were declared vacant as a direct result of their stand, were sentenced to two to three months in jail when they refused to leave their churches—Pastor Roth in the winter of 1984-85, and Pastor Solberg in the summer of 1985. Pastor Roth's church council, including his wife, were also sent to jail for two months for refusing to let the synod take over the church. Both pastors were defrocked at subsequent church conventions.

those who were working against me rather than risk a separation from my infant daughter? I could not conceive of choosing to be separated from her. But what did that mean about my commitment to my ministry? Was I committed only to the extent that it did not interfere with other more primary commitments? Would I back away from defending my call in a controversy because I was now a mother? Was there any way in such a situation that I could be faithful to one of my callings without betraying the other? Those questions hung suspended between my stomach and my throat for months. *And I still do not know what my answer would have been had I been forced to make that choice.* Perhaps it was God's mercy that I was not. The course of turmoil in my congregation took a different turn, and my pastoral leadership there gained new strength and momentum.

I had discovered within the same period of time, you see, the radical nature of two callings which I had previously regarded as matters of personal choice. In both ministry and motherhood, something other than my own plans and preferences was on the line, something which had put *me* on the line. I was now inescapably answerable for the long-term well-being of this new human being who was my daughter. I was also inescapably answerable to my church for holding fast to the vows I had made when I was ordained. Before I had experienced the stir and force of these calls, I had believed firmly that all basic commitments in life could be harmonized through flexibility. I was now discovering that a calling by its very nature is not based on personal choice or subject to reasonable limits. A true calling defies our best attempts to reduce it to one among a set of factors in making decisions: when reduced to proportions we can manage, it is no longer a call.

A true calling defies our best attempts to reduce it to one among a set of factors in making decisions.

Ministry for the modern dual career marriage is most manageable when the calling is equated with the performance of a professional role. With all the variables of two people trying to make mutually satisfactory decisions, ministry needs to be governed by the same rules of compromise as all the other variables. This delicate and reasonable balance breaks down, however, if ministry ceases to be simply a certain kind of role and becomes compelling in the midst of a specific situation. Just as my call as mother occurred when a specific child, Tyler, laid her claim to my life, so my calling as pastor happened when specific people in a specific situation impelled my heart and conscience. Both callings carried a long-range purpose which could not be fulfilled within the boundaries of short-term planning and provisional commitments.

Yet when the time came in the shared game plan of my marriage to leave Pittsburgh, I instinctively fell back on those very attempts to manage life rationally through a blend of compromise, commitment, and open-endedness. The trajectory of my marriage, with its own hold on my heart and head, was more longstanding and comprehensible than this new trajectory of my ministry, and therefore took priority. After

all, how could I allow this unanticipated calling of mine to ministry in Pittsburgh to take precedence over our long-range plans as a family? Would it not be presumptuous of me even to consider that my unreasonable commitment there should change the course of our mutual future? Wouldn't it be just a little fanatical to let one commitment in life dictate everything else? At the same time, I was unable to escape the recurring awareness that by doing the reasonable thing for the long-term vision of our marriage and family, I was abandoning something I had no right to abandon. As much as I kept reminding myself that ministry is not limited to one place or one set of people and issues, I could not escape the gnawing knowledge that I was betraying a purpose not my own to betray, playing dilettante with a loyalty, violating a matter of the heart.

I cannot look back from the safety of a *fait accompli* to say whether the decision to leave was right or wrong. Only God can make our wisest decisions right, and even our wrong ones God can use for his own purposes. What I can say is that the experience of making that decision has exposed the raw flesh of some questions which the church as well is still rigorously trying to ignore.

When push does come to shove, which comes first? Loyalty to family or loyalty to the gospel? The words of Christ throughout the Gospels leave no room for question as to where my first allegiance should lie. Indeed, the confessional document authoritative to my own Lutheran Church states explicitly that if faced with a choice of either denying the gospel or being forcibly separated from family, we must cling to the gospel rather than to our family (*Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXVII, 41). As true as it is theologically that the family is one of God's fundamental gifts and the raising of children within marriage one of our highest callings, there is no easy harmony between this calling of the family and the calling of the gospel.

But all the scripture and theology combined cannot remove the agony of choice when the two callings collide. In fact, it is my experience that knowing the theology only heightens the tension, because it presents me with answers which offend some of my deepest instincts. When my ministry was under fire for my convictions, I discovered that, painful as it was, I could face hostility, attacks, and losses without being deflected from what I saw as a matter of gospel loyalty. But it was one thing to allow the calling of ministry to disrupt my own life, disturb my own inner peace, and alter my own best-laid plans. It was another thing altogether to allow that calling in any way to disrupt my family. When circumstances arose in which following my calling could have been at the direct expense of my family, I instinctively backed away. When push came to shove, my loyalties to family life were stronger than my loyalty to ministry as the specific and compelling call it had become.

If the calling to the ordained ministry is something greater than the career in which it is normally circumscribed, then under certain circumstances that ministry will make demands on us which are in direct tension with the demands of home. When the calling breaks the bounds of the career, it begins to invade spheres of life reserved for other goals and responsibilities. It requires that a whole different order of choice be made, a choice not reducible to rational compromise based on probable consequences, but choices involving real risk and real sacrifice—not only to yourself, but also to the very people who depend upon you the most for their own well-being: spouse and children.

Nowhere do I see the American church (particularly in its Protestant expression) coming anywhere close to grappling with this potential for friction between loyalty to family and loyalty to gospel ministry. Everywhere the church, in both its conservative and liberal branches, is loudly proclaiming itself and its Christ as the last bastion for family values, the source of family unity, and the helping hand for every well-meaning parent. The church of today operates as if its very reason for existence is to support the family, especially the middle class church-inclined family. The message of the gospel is promoted as a mainstay of harmonious family living.

> All the scripture and theology combined cannot remove the agony of choice when the two callings collide.

Ordained ministry, too, has become in many ways an extension of American family values. Defining ministry primarily as a profession exercised through certain skills and functions streamlines it for middle class family living. The only tension between family and a strictly professionalized approach to ministry is the tension of time, which is certainly not unique to the profession of ministry. In the professionalized ministry of the late twentieth century, it would be preposterous to exclude women from ordination, mothers of young children included; a professional/functional approach to ministry makes it manageable as a job for a woman with significant parenting responsibilities. Ministry for male and female clergy alike is being conducted to accommodate middle class family aspirations.

In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther and other reformers attacked monasticism and priestly celibacy because the church was elevating the celibate lifestyle as a path to salvation. Today it is no longer monasticism which the church celebrates as a self-justifying way of life, but what might be called "familyism." Anything done in the name and for the sake of families is unquestionably good, and indeed gives the church a moral toehold in a society which might otherwise ignore it. Nothing takes precedence over the emotional and material security of the family, certainly not God, the biggest family-backer!

Nowhere has this attitude of familyism been more acutely apparent to me than in public reaction around Pittsburgh to the jailing of Pastor Roth and his wife (as a member of his church council) in the winter of 1985. What amazed and offended the greatest number of people was not the issue of legality (were they in jail for breaking the law or because the law was being manipulated illegally against them?), but instead the issue of family. How could they take a stand which led to jail when they had to leave four children in others' care, including a little girl not even two years old? How could a mother so violate basic maternal instinct? How could any Christian in this country believe that God might call them to bear witness by going to jail if children were involved? In the minds of most churchgoers, those questions had only one answer. If a minister's taking a stand disrupts the family, then it must be abandoned. God would not want it any other way.

The terrible irony is that while the cult of familyism is everywhere promoted in the church, families in the church (including clergy families) are everywhere falling apart in increasing numbers. Divorce rates are high among laity and climbing among clergy. Children of church-related families participate in the same world of drugs, alcohol, early and uninformed sexual activity, and other symptoms of family decline, as any other children. Families today face unprecedented strains which are tearing them apart or making the struggle to stay together over the long haul increasingly difficult.

There is little true strength for families from the American church today precisely because of familyism.

The cult of familyism is totally inadequate to address the real depth of the struggle to be a family today. The artificial insular strength of religious familyism does nothing but paper over the forces which are tearing marriages and families apart. Many times churchgoers do not even realize that they are opting for the paper doll version of family unity over the real thing. Church people in Pittsburgh tended to be far more offended by the Roth family's temporary separation as a matter of conviction about ministry to the unemployed than they are by the permanent separation of the clergy families who go to the divorce court because they are unable to resolve internal conflicts! The Roth family, putting the call to ministry first, is still together despite staggering stresses, while many other church families, putting their material and emotional stability first, are falling apart.

There is little true strength for families from the American church today precisely because of familyism. By making families first, it is depriving families of the strength which comes when God is first. By backing away from the potential tension between ministry and family, the church fails to equip families for dealing with other real life tensions.

By describing what I see as the cult of familyism in the church—this instinct to protect families rather than develop their strength—I am not pretending to offer a set of answers. The church has attempted to escape the tension between the calling of gospel ministry and the calling of family through familyism, which ends up weakening ministry and families both. But it would also be false to offer an escape from the tension between these callings by presenting some abstract and simplistic formula for putting ministry first. As long as there is more than one calling to stir and grip you, there will be tension. Recognizing that Christ calls us to put him ahead of our family only increases that tension. This clash of callings can never be resolved in the abstract; it can only be faced in the realm of experience, in the midst of specific and compelling situations.

Most ministry is orchestrated to avoid such experience. However, the tension here and there is bound to surface. What about the pastor doing ministry in a remote and impoverished rural area, or the pastor in an inner city congregation? Where will the call to ministry with those people stand when the spouse gets restless, or when the

children are about to be enrolled in an inadequate school system? Which call comes first then? How will a call to a small, low-paying congregation stack up when the family begins to face the prospect of college tuitions? What happens to a specific ministry when your spouse's career advancement requires the family to move? What happens if, because of your ministry in an issue of justice, the family starts receiving threatening phone calls and is widely ostracized in the community? Whose well-being comes first then? What happens if your family is at odds with you on a position you have taken in your ministry, and the tension at home is almost as thick as the tension outside? Which and who wins out?

"He who loves father or mother or son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me...." I consider myself uncomfortably blessed to have seen in such raw form the tension between my two callings and the force of my own instincts to back off from that tension, even when my specific circumstances of ministry and motherhood shoved the questions in my face. Can I be a pastor and a mother both? Oh, yes, I am still confident that arrangements can be made to survive and perhaps even thrive as a dual career family. But I no longer live under the illusion that the callings themselves are manageable. *They* have compelled *me*, not I them, and therefore it is beyond my own calculations how they will exert their claim on me in the future, or where the tension between them will surface again.

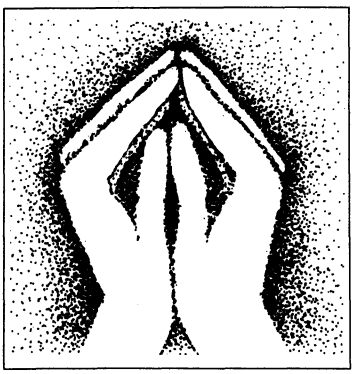
If there is any true harmony between the calling to gospel ministry and the calling of family, it cannot be a harmony based upon rational arrangements and the requirements of career and family security. It is in the nature of a true calling to take us further than that, to demand the unreasonable of us sometimes, to hold us accountable to that which does not make common sense, to refuse to fit snugly alongside every other piece of the family pie. But when that harmony of our own calculations has been tried and found wanting, when the questions press us to a precipice of impossible answers, then and only then do we approach the possibility of a harmony based not on our control but on God's gracious providence, a harmony not protecting us from the toughest choices but proceeding from the fact that the choosing is not all our own, a harmony which amounts to nothing more than the reality of a familiar promise: "Seek first... and all the rest will be yours as well."

Ministry: The Old Testament Background

Meinert Grumm
Stone Mountain, Georgia

The fact that the term "ministry" is the subject of serious and sometimes acrimonious debate in Lutheran circles is not to be wondered at. At such a time we all need to return to Scripture to rediscover what it has to say.

In trying to discover what the Greek terms *diakon-* (101 times) or *leitourg-* (15 times) mean, one is immediately struck by the fact that the English terms "minister/ministry" have gone down from 70 in KJV to 30 in RSV to 11 in NEB to 0 in TEV. Instead, the translators have given us words like "serve/service." This change reflects a basic shift in everyday language and, perhaps, an attempt to get back to the elemental, functional meaning of the words. At the time of KJV there was a highly institutionalized understanding of the term (note: "*the* ministry" in 2 Cor 6:3 and elsewhere).



Another problem confronting the person who wants to discover what the NT says about ministry is the fact that the *diakon-* words do not appear in the Septuagint. A prominent NT scholar made the flat statement: "There is nothing about ministry (*diakonia*) in the OT." That supposed lack is what this paper is all about.

Leitourg-, on the other hand, appears about 100 times in the Septuagint, referring chiefly to the service of worship performed by the priests and Levites in the Tabernacle or Temple. This is cultic service to God on behalf of all the people.

The use of this term has been curtailed drastically in the NT, where the OT cultic worship has reached its fulfillment and end. In the NT there is no longer the need for priests; all have been made priests (1 Pet 2:5, 9). The term *leitourg-* is never used in connection with apostles, presbyters, bishops, leaders in the NT community. In fact, it took several centuries for the term to be used in its OT cultic sense again, and in support of the establishment of a clergy-lay dichotomy and of the monarchical episcopate: the high priest, priest, and Levite are then seen as types of the ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. That and subsequent similar developments strongly influenced the conception of "ministry" in 1611—and they still do today.

Besides the Hebrew word *šeret* for "serve" there is another word, *'abad*, which is still more frequently used. With the translation of this word in the Septuagint we run into a peculiar and complicating fact: in parts of the OT (mainly Exod, Deut, Josh, and Judg), where the object of the verb is God or gods, the verb *latreuein* is used; otherwise there and elsewhere, and always in Psalms and the prophets, *douleuein* is the translation. Both of these words are carried over into the NT. That complicates our problem somewhat by bringing in the related idea of worship; but in the end it helps out by casting new light on the matter of ministry.

The usual Hebrew word for worship is *hištaḥăwāh*, which basically means "fall or bow down." In the Septuagint and in the NT the word used for this verb is *proskynein*, with a practically identical meaning. Both words become technical terms for temple worship. The underlying meaning of the word can be seen especially in Matthew, with people falling down at Jesus' feet. It comes again with some frequency in Revelation, where there is a visible object to which to do obeisance. But in line with the way Jesus in his conversation with the Samaritan woman frees the NT understanding of worship from being tied to a certain place and manner of action, this word does not become an operative term in the NT for Christian worship.

What does come through is the Septuagint's partial rendering of *'abad* as *latreuein*. Most of the 26 uses of the verb and noun in the NT have OT or Jewish contexts. The rest, whether translated as "worship" or as "serve," have a context indicating inner commitment and moral conduct rather than cultic worship. This is very much in line with the relationship and distinction in the OT between "worship" and "serve" (as preserved quite consistently in KJV and RSV). Deut 10:12- shows what is involved in service: a proper disposition of the whole person as demonstrated in a life of godly conduct. True worship of God shows itself in serving God by conduct appropriate to a full commitment to God. This distinction between outward cultic worship and inner service showing itself in mercy, justice, and righteousness is further sharpened in the prophets (Isa 1:11-17; Jer 7:3-10; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24).

This becomes the essence of NT worship, also in the magnificent passage we all

know by heart: "I appeal to you, therefore, sisters and brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Such twenty-four-hour-a-day worship is spoken of by Paul at the beginning and ending of Romans as "the obedience of faith."

Paul's thought here comes straight out of what we find in the Gospels, from Jesus' last parable in Matt 25:31-46, the Great Judgment, where the everyday service of concern for the needy neighbor is the evidence on which final judgment is made, from the many similar occasions when Jesus quoted Hosea, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt 9:13; 12:7, in reminding people of the prophets' emphasis on concern for the neighbor over cultic worship.

That is how *douleuein* is used in the NT: Rom 14:18 "serves Christ"; 1 Thes 1:9 "to serve a living and true God"; and then the other direction: Gal 5:13 "through love be servants of one another." There is a definite connection: Eph 6:6-7 (calling slaves to obedience) "not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to people"; Col 3:23-24 (again to slaves) "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not people, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ."

One might remember that they are to do this "so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" (Titus 2:10). They are to serve Christ and bear witness to their Savior God by serving with an honest day's work. That is their spiritual worship, offering their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is their service—or, in the older way of saying it, their ministry. What comes through from the OT to the NT in the matter of worship for NT believers is not the *proskynein* of formal temple worship, not the *leitourgein* of priestly service, but the *latreuein/douleuein* of service to God and fellow human beings.

No *diakonia* in the OT? Technically, no, but essentially, yes.

And though *douleuein* and *diakonein* are not completely identical—the first has the background of the service of the slave, and the second has the ground meaning of serving at table—both of them together are quite capable of carrying forward to the NT that element that is essential in the Hebrew words *'abad, 'ebed, 'abodah.* It is he who fulfilled all that the prophet spoke about the Ebed Jahweh who said, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), and whoever would be first among you must be your slave (*doulos*); even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (*diakonein*) and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:26-28). And he who is both Savior and paradigm for those he called to follow him, says, "For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves (*diakonon*)? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27).

No *diakonia* in the OT? Technically, no, but essentially, yes. It is not the exclusive, set-apart serving of the priest and Levite. It is the everyday faithful serving of all of God's people who share in the call and

work of the Ebed Yahweh. It began with the call to Abraham and Sarah, and it was made strong and explicit to the whole people of Israel at Sinai: "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all people; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:5-6).

The tragedy is that many in Israel failed in this service. But not all: one there was who carried through with his *diakonia*, to the point of giving his life as a ransom for many. By doing so he freed his followers to carry on the *diakonia*: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." So to the new Israel the call is repeated (1 Pet 2:9): "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

There are, of course, many more things indicated in the NT writings which can be said about worship under the New Covenant, even though direct precepts are scare. Despite all the detailed prescriptions about worship in the Pentateuch and encouraging calls to worship by the Psalmists, there is from the beginning in the OT a definite reluctance to speak of a command to worship God. To serve, fear, love, cleave to, obey, yes; but directly to worship, practically nil. Beginning with Cain and Abel and the patriarchs, what we call worship is always shown as an awe-filled response to a revelation, to something given. It was communion, two-way communication, at a place where God appeared. God establishes the meeting-place, and then later the mediating ministry of priests to assist the people in their worship, "if" and "when" (note how almost every paragraph in Leviticus' early chapters begins with one of these words). Jeremiah puts the case bluntly (7:22-23): "In the day that I brought them out of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them: Obey my voice, and I will be your God and you shall be my people."

It is that point which is reflected in the NT writings. It is the "spiritual worship" of which Paul speaks in Rom 12:1. The proper province of what we call liturgical worship is to make provision for whatever may nurture and encourage and help express our 24-hour-a-day spiritual worship. It is the end that should determine the provision of the means: "You will know them by their fruits." The relation of church service with daily service is well shown in Col 3:16-17: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word and deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Worship, in this light, is the full response of expectant openness and sacrificial thanksgiving to God's empowering call to serve as his priests, mediators between God and the world.

The essence of ministry, given to all (1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 4:11-12), is to exercise our gifts of service in the body of Christ toward his ends.

Both worship and ministry are subsumed under the common term "serve/service."

We can go on from that beginning, but the beginning is a foundation and not a dispensable scaffolding.

An Evangelical Doctrine of the Ministry

David Housholder
Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany
1988 graduate of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

This essay was the winner of the 1988 Piepkorn Prize, an annual contest open to all Lutheran Senior seminarians and graduate students. The contest seeks to encourage research into the ongoing legacy of Arthur Carl Piepkorn (d. 1973), longtime professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

It is indeed a symbol of the rich diversity of the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that a senior seminarian of Norwegian-pietist heritage would have the privilege of learning so much from an encounter with the strand of North American Lutheranism so well represented by the person and work of Arthur Carl Piepkorn.

Piepkorn was a man of such stunning erudition that we dare not relegate his work to the past, but we should keep returning to his writings to see what they are saying to the current situation. Solid scholarship never goes out of style, especially solid scholarship in defense of the gospel.

The task

The doctrine of the ministry is one of the most controversial theological issues facing the church today. If a Gallup poll were to be taken on the subject, very few pastors or teachers of the ELCA would mark the "no opinion" box. As Piepkorn points out, such diverse opinions do not emerge *ex nihilo*:

> Almost all of the positions that Lutheran theologians take (concerning the ministry and ordination) reflect to a greater or lesser degree the traditions of their own past which they are espousing or against which they are reacting.[1]

At the risk of oversimplification, positions taken on this issue fall into two general categories.

Some subscribe to "ordination from above" and the *ordo* of ministers which results from such a rite. Biblically speaking, they cite passages such as the following from 1 Timothy:

---

[1]A. C. Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40:11 (November 1969), 552.

> Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you. (4:14)

This "instituted ministry" camp has a great deal of respect for the liturgical heritage of the Western Catholic Church. Pastors of this persuasion are usually comfortable with making the sign of the cross, wearing chasubles, or processing with incense. Ordination is at *least* a "quasi-sacrament," and the boundary between laity and clergy is not very hard to find.

The second position is supported by proponents of "ordination from below." They point to the writings of Paul, with special emphasis on passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:

> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (vv. 4-7)

The "priesthood of all believers" is the rallying cry of this second camp, and those within it see their authority, following Luther's *Babylonian Captivity*, as flowing up from the Christian community. The marks of worship resulting from this "functional ministry" group tend more toward emotional hymns, free prayer, and informal liturgy.

Sometimes these two "parties" refer to one another in polite conversation as "high church" and "low church." But terms like "chancel prancer" and "trailer camp protestant" get used behind each other's backs. Both groups consider themselves biblically and confessionally well-grounded, but they come up with radically different results because custom, taste, and inbred loyalties become prime criteria for their positions.

The upcoming study on the doctrine of the ministry in the ELCA may have the makings of a giant tug-of-war, with each side scrambling around frantically for "heavyweights" to anchor its side of the rope.* Seminary refectories have been abuzz with gossip about prospective members of the study, and those on the outside fringes of the issue are digging in their heels.

The question is this: How can the ELCA avoid basing its doctrine of the ministry upon taste and style? To succumb to such an option would be to repeat the mistake of legitimizing practice by creating a theological rationale around it, rather than having procedures flow from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The church has often been likened to a ship, and the ELCA is a new little boat indeed, with its wood still a bit green and the pitch still moist in the joints. The maiden voyage will certainly be tricky, with our situation not unlike that of Ulysses as he and his crew faced the task of sailing through the Straits of Messina while keeping Charybdis to the port side and Scylla to starboard.

With opposing interests fighting like conflicting currents for possession of the boat, shipwreck is a distinct possibility. A far more likely scenario, however, would be for the "crew" to avoid the polarized hazards ahead by "dropping anchor." We could make the current *status quo* official and write a complex-sounding doctrine of the ministry to convince ourselves that we have actually accomplished something.

What I have described is a disheartening picture of clashing currents, narrow straits and hazards, and a divided crew.

---

*This essay was written before members of this Task Force were named.

How do we sail from Babel on this side of the Straits of Messina to Pentecost on the other side? In both Genesis 11 and Acts 2, linguistic difference is a factor. In the former, it divides; in the latter, it is overcome. It wasn't overcome by hammering out all the details of the particular languages until what was left was a kind of Middle Eastern Esperanto; rather, all the participants were able to affirm the same mighty experience by transcending themselves and focusing on a higher good.

There are two ways of finding consensus in the midst of controversy. The first is to take the points of disagreement, one by one, and manipulate them until they are mutually palatable. The second is to articulate a good or a virtue which most everyone can subscribe to, and build a consensus around it. This latter model is the one Piepkorn proposes concerning the doctrine of the ministry.

Back to the Confessions

The ELCA's teaching on the ministry and ordination should represent a corporate act of confessing. It should communicate to those inside and outside the ELCA a commitment to what we hold to be the essentials of the faith.

As with any act of confessing, we must remind ourselves that we didn't invent the Christian faith, but we stand in a long line of Western, Catholic, Evangelical tradition. To get our bearings we should look first at the Lutheran Symbols, as a "norm of teaching and of administering Sacraments, to which an individual solemnly and voluntarily committed to them strives conscientiously to conform."[2]

The purpose of such confessional hermeneutics, in Piepkorn's own words, "is to facilitate the discovery of the sense of the text for oneself and for the purpose of communicating it to others."[3] As far as the ELCA teaching on the ministry and ordination is concerned, the question "What have we confessed?" is necessarily prior to "How do we express this confession in praxis?"

We must remind ourselves that we didn't invent the Christian faith.

Piepkorn calls the Lutheran Symbols a "classic formulation of our own grateful response to the divine revelation."[4] So the task of confessional hermeneutics is to bring this classical formulation into clearer focus, so that the standard against which we are normed is not marred by distortion.

One of the first tasks of this process is the establishment of the proper relationship between the Confessions and Scripture. This is especially important at present, because *all* opinions voiced concerning the doctrine of the ministry will claim Symbolic and biblical basis. One of the surest safeguards against misuse of such claims is a clear and understandable principle about the relationship between the Apostolic witness of Scripture and its restatement and preservation by the reformers.

---

[2]A.C. Piepkorn, "Suggested Principles for a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Symbols," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29:1 (January 1958), 1.

[3]Piepkorn, "Suggested Principles," 6.

[4]Piepkorn, "Suggested Principles," 1.

A good description of this relationship can be found in Piepkorn's "Hermeneutical Principles" article. It is very important that it not be taken for granted that the pastors, teachers, and administrators of the church have a clear understanding of how the authority of the Bible and the Confessions is related.

Most everyone agrees that Scripture comes before the Lutheran Confessions. The Bible is the "primary norm" (*norma primaria*), and the Lutheran Confessions are a "secondary norm" (*norma secundaria*). The Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, while the *Book of Concord* is not.[5]

However, it is wrong to stop here. The Lutheran Symbols are more than just a second-rate authority. The Confessions also exert a type of control over the Scriptures: that of the *authority of interpretation.* Piepkorn quotes C. F. W. Walther's idea that Lutheran clergy and teachers in their public teaching must "interpret the sacred Scriptures according to the Symbols and not vice versa."[6] At first this sounds presumptuous. But the alternative is unbridled subjectivism, an anarchy of opinion in which the personal convictions of any given preacher or teacher would become for them their true symbols.[7] Two clear examples of this are the extreme forms of rationalism and pietism, which replace the Confessions with reason and Bible, respectively, as norms of interpretation, leaving the door open to virtually any opinion, including those which cause the mystery of Christ to decrease in importance and centrality.

The Symbols get their authority from Scripture, and the Bible is in turn interpreted in the light of the Confessions, which point without fail to the centrality of Christ. We have, thus, a hermeneutical circle of sorts. The problems arise when this ring is broken and *dis*cord, rather than *con*cord, is sown.

Saying that the Symbols interpret Scripture is not enough. What *are* these "Symbols" that are used to bring the Bible into clearer focus? One needs to understand a tool before using it. Everyone understands the purpose of an expensive Nikon camera, but only those who understand its particular "essence" can use its full potential to take excellent pictures. So with the Confessions: only in fully grasping their internal integrity can they properly be used to interpret the Bible.

According to Piepkorn, the best way to come to an organizing principle for the Symbols is to find the canon within this canon. The Confessional counterpart to Luther's biblical principle (*"was Christum treibt"*) is, of course, Article IV of the *Augsburg Confession*:

> ...that we can obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God not through our merit, works, or satisfaction, but that we obtain forgiveness of sins and become righteous before God by grace for the sake of Christ through faith if we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sins are forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us, inasmuch as God wills in His sight to regard and reckon this faith as righteousness. (AC IV [German])[8]

Judging all confessional statements by this central statement guards against an interpretation of the Symbols in which all its claims are leveled to an equal stature. The

---

[5]Piepkorn, "Suggested Principles," 4.

[6]Piepkorn, "Walther and the Lutheran Symbols," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 32:10 (October 1961), 612.

[7]Piepkorn, "Walther and the Lutheran Symbols," 612.

[8]Theodore Tappert, ed. & trans., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 31.

canon-within-the-canon of Scriptures (*was Christum treibt*) and the Confessions (AC IV) is promoted by those who opt for a solidly grounded, Christocentric method of theological authorization. Such an authority principle is dynamic rather than static, Christ-confessing rather than ideology-based.

Now that we have clarified the relationship between the Bible and the Evangelical Symbols and established an internal exegetical criterion for the latter, we are better equipped to bring this understanding of the Confessions to bear on the question of ministry.

Evangelical Catholic Ministry

In his landmark article, "The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church," which is a slightly modified version of his monograph by the same title which appears in *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV*,[9] Piepkorn proposes a *via media*. Far from being "middle of the road," this approach is a call to the *living core of our faith* and its embodiment in the shape and function of the ordained ministry.

He sees this as the best way to break the stalemate between a "high-church-ordination-from-above" ministry and a "low-church-ordination-from-below."

Piepkorn criticizes both positions using Article V of the *Augsburg Confession*, the core of which reads as follows:

> To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is provided the gospel and the sacraments.[10] (German version)

This passage flows directly from the central exegetical criterion of the Confessions, Article IV. In fact, the expression "such faith" refers specifically and directly back to this keystone of the Symbols.

Taking Article V as our yardstick, how do the two common positions on the ministry measure up? According to Piepkorn, the first view sees the "sacred ministry as the contemporary form of the primitive apostolate and as the personal representation of Christ."[11] In this understanding of the ministry pastors see themselves as filling a role which is not defined by the shape and size of their egos. Rather, they are participating in an order, filling the shoes of the position. They do not see their authority as standing or falling with the success or failure of their personalities. They see themselves as bearers of a tradition which they did not invent, and honestly attempt to represent Christ, rather than themselves, at hospital bedsides.

Article V has God instituting the office of the ministry *for the purpose of* nurturing faith; God did not institute the gospel to give the ordained ministry something to do. AC V affirms the concept of ministry as "office," but cautions that this office must always perform its central function: the spreading of the gospel through Word and sacrament.

Moving on to the countervailing position, we begin as before with Piepkorn's definition of it:

> ...the sacred ministry is only the activity of the universal royal priesthood of all believers, the public exercise of which the Christian community has solemnly committed to certain persons merely for the sake of good order and efficiency.[12]

---

[9]Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church," in *Eucharist and Ministry: Lutherans and Catholics in dialogue IV*, ed. Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), 101-19.

[10]Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 32.

[11]Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry," 552.

[12]Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry," 552.

Proponents of this view have a merely functional understanding of the ministry. The office is seen as subservient to its mission, which is the promotion of faith through Word and sacrament.

The major problem with this position is its overemphasis on the priesthood of all believers. Piepkorn points out that "the Symbolical books nowhere attempt to derive the sacred ministry from the universal priesthood of the faithful."[13] The priesthood of all believers reflects Luther's earlier writings rather than the Confessions themselves, and is more an attempt to protect the Evangelical movement from Roman ecclesial hierarchy than a natural theorem flowing from justification by faith.

Those who champion the "ordination from below" ministry often see themselves as a democratizing force opposed to the "captivity" of the ordained office in a caste of priestly nobility. The error here is in seeing the problem as an "either/or" situation. The truth is, neither the universal priesthood nor the historic episcopate *possesses* the ministry. There is no gift without the giver, and God is the only giver (AC V) of ordination. Ordination is not from below, or even above, but from God alone.

The dynamic and functional nature of the office of the ministry built around the propagation of the gospel is to be affirmed, but the "priesthood of all believers" is not to be viewed as the primary source from which flows authority for the ordained ministry.

Conclusions

Rather than ending up with a hybrid "middle church" with ordination "from up *and* down," a careful look at the ministry through the polished lens of the gospel as confessed by the Evangelical Symbols yields an Evangelical Catholic ministry which, in the words of Piepkorn:

> ...sees the sacred ministry as a divine institution that is essential to the church's existence. It regards the responsible public proclamation and application of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments as the primary content of the sacred ministry.[14]

This position is a virtual paraphrase of AC V, and it offers a firm foundation on which to build the ELCA teaching on the ministry and ordination.

What I have been proposing in this essay is an office of ordained pastors which sees its very existence resulting from God's gift of ordination to the church, and that this office has no "being" outside of its function: the spreading of the gospel. In short, the ministry is dominically-instituted *and* functional.

Questions remain. What is to keep pastors from abusing the gift of ordination? How is this office to be held responsible both to the ministerium/episcopate and to the Christian laity? What is to prevent "direct pipeline to God" pastors from short-circuiting the authority of the people of God?

These questions must be answered. Let us remember, however, that we need to answer them in any way that does not displace God as the giver and sustainer of the ordained ministry *and* does not construct a static, rather than functional, office.

We have the freedom to put in place ecclesial structures which are ecumenically sound, confessionally valid, and distinctly North American. It is our generation's turn to witness to all humanity that God has loved us though the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. May God grant us grace to be equal to the challenge.

---

[13]Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry," 557.
[14]Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry," 552.

How Shall I Be Whole? Perspectives on the Meaning of Wholeness

Stanley J. Meyer
Campus Pastor, Texas Lutheran College
Seguin, Texas

One suspects that there is a connection between the "yuppie" phenomenon and the rise of interest in "wholistic health." It is quite fashionable to have an intense interest in one's *physical* well-being especially. To move about in the world of fitness centers, jogging tracks, and health food stores is to be really "into" the modern scene. Advocates of this new interest in "the whole person" speak evangelistically about their love for this whole person philosophy, for it has given life new meaning and zest.

"Evangelistically" is a word well-chosen, for there is the flair of religious fervor about this new "ultimate concern." It has the marks of a faith that should be embraced. It has an air of salvation about it as it promises hope. It even has its own body of holy writ as its followers pore over health magazines and food labels.

As with any action, there is often a reaction. Some view this new interest in the self with alarm. It has the marks, some think, of "secular humanism," for it elevates the individual and invests within the individual the illusion that they can be self-saving and self-sufficient. As a result, some may pull away from this interest in the whole person for fear that they will lose faith with God.

An interest in the whole person is, however, very much a part of the Christian tradition and biblical agenda. The very existence of Christian liberal arts colleges and universities (such as Texas Lutheran College) is testimony to the importance we place on the well-rounded, fully-potentialized human being. A review of the biblical material substantiates this conviction. To have the "abundant life" is to be whole.

I propose to look at the notion of the wholeness of life from a biblical perspective. It will become evident that the biblical record not only enjoins us to embrace the whole of life and experience, but to see all these things as summed up in what it means to be a person. We do not *have* bodies, minds, spirits, and relationships; we *are* these things. If we are to be whole and at peace, we are to bring these elements of ourselves into a unity. It will also become evident that our modern-day notion of wholeness, which finds its temple in the weight rooms, saunas, and high-fiber diet kitchens, is not a wholeness at all. All this interest in physical well-being has excluded other areas of our wholeness, especially our intellectual, social/emotional, and spiritual sides.

1. Psychophysical Unity

The Judeo-Christian tradition was a corrective to the ancient Greek notion of dualism that fractured the sense of wholeness. The Greeks had espoused a separation of body and soul. Humans were thought to be composed of a superior and an inferior part: the "breath-soul" that inhabited the "body." The breath-soul was of a higher order—the essence of the person, pre-existing in the realm of perfection and continuing after the death of the body.[1] The body, by contrast, was of a lower nature—identical to the mortal flesh and synonymous with "corpse." Hence, the body was thought to be merely a dwelling place for the "vital force" or breath-soul and an evil in which we are trapped like an oyster in its shell.[2] Death only meant the liberation of the soul.

Perhaps the sages of Israel recognized the dangers involved in this kind of thinking, especially the danger of dismissing the value of our corporal nature. The Old Testament gives no support to this dualistic thinking. Indeed, the Hebrew language has no word that it can use as a substitute for the Greek "body." To the Hebrew mind, a person does not *have* a body (as a lesser, evil, inferior part); he or she *is* a body. "Body" denotes man or woman as a total phenomenon. The unity of human life is described well in Genesis 2, in which God is depicted as having taken earth, shaped and molded it, and in-breathed the "breath of life" so that it became a "living person." That is, the human person is the sum of the physical (clay) and spiritual (breath of life) aspects of the self.[3] Hebrew thinking conceived of human beings as "animated bodies," not as "incarnated souls"; human life is made up of many parts forming a psychophysical unity or totality.[4]

The New Testament continues the thought of the OT. Jesus' world-view knows of no dualism of soul and body. He approaches people as psychophysical unities. In fact, he often uses the words for body, soul, and self interchangeably to mean the totality of our personhood.[5] Jesus illustrates this totality of the self when he reaffirms that we must respond to God with our "heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Mk 12:29-30). St. Paul echoes the notion of the

---

[1]Karl-Wolfgang Troger, "ψυχή," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 608-60.

[2]Eduard Schweizer, "σῶμα," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, 1024-94.

[3]Gary L. Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 18.

[4]N. W. Porteous, "Man, nature of, in the OT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 3 (New York: Abingdon, 1962): 243.

[5]S. V. McCasland, "Man, nature of, in the NT," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 3: 246.

indivisibility of the self and the equal importance of our physical and spiritual life[6] by asserting that there is a "holy wholeness" (1 Thess 5:23) and that the body will be saved (resurrected) along with the rest of our total self (1 Cor 15).

Wholism is, then, deeply a part of the biblical understanding of the nature of human life. We are, in our several "parts," a total unity, and our several parts have an equal importance and value. Physical, spiritual, social/emotional, and intellectual aspects of the self always belong together in OT and NT thought. And, in fact, any attempt to divide and value-rank these aspects of the self is summarily denied.

2. Intrinsic Value of the Parts of the Whole

If, then, we are to be interested in the whole of our selves precisely because our self is a whole, it becomes important to know how to embrace the whole. Clearly, the yuppie who is interested in a finely tuned physical organism has not quite found what is meant by "wholism." Our body is but a part of our wholism. There are other parts. Though these parts may be broken down into various categories, a frequently heard division includes these four: intellectual, social/emotional, spiritual, and physical.[7] A look at each of these from a biblical perspective will illustrate what we need to work on if we are to pursue a "whole person" philosophy of life.

Intellectual

Keeping your mind healthy is a part of being whole. Education does not stop with high school or college. It is is a life-long process. Keeping current in your skills, reading in areas of interest or curiosity, enjoying dramatic and musical events, and exploring new areas of understanding are all ways to exercise the mind to health.

The biblical sources also show a deep respect for the intellect despite some Christians' distrust of reason. In the biblical record there is no distrust of reason that is used wisely. Reason is part of our distinctiveness. Those who find reason suspect (based on such passages as Col 2 and 1 Cor 1:18-25) fear that reason might be naturally opposed to faith (defined as "blind trust"). Pitting reason against faith, however, is a false opposition.

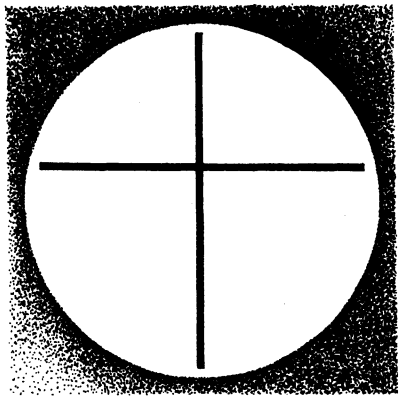
In the OT human reason is understood to be a gift, something that sets us apart from the rest of creation and helps secure our dominion over creation. Because we have such created capacities, we have been designated the caretakers of the created world, acting in the stead of and along with the Creator. The creation of humankind is seen as the climactic, central event of Genesis 1-2, and the use of the descriptive phrase "the image of God" (Gen 1:26-27) to designate humankind reinforces the significance of our higher mental and relational capacities.[8] The importance of knowledge and reasoning is finely honed in the Wisdom literature. Proverbs contains strong injunctions about living wisely, about knowing and obeying the Law, and about using common sense in daily affairs. Indeed,

---

[6]D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 37-39.

[7]These are the divisions used at Texas Lutheran College, Seguin, Texas, within the Krost Life Enrichment Program—a program dedicated to whole person development.

[8]Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 41-80.



within Proverbs wisdom becomes personified as a great woman, worthy of respect, pursuit, and embracing.

Jesus also did not dismiss the life of the mind. Throughout the Gospels Jesus assumes an autonomy on the part of his hearers that makes them able to recognize truth and respond to it. His appeal to them approaches them through their reason as well as their emotion. St. Paul points to the mind as a means of understanding God (Rom 1:19-20) and encourages his hearers to ascend to the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16).[9] As the history of Christianity can attest, Christians have a great respect for the intellect, see its usage as a matter of stewardship, and work to utilize it in the service of God, the church, and the world.

Social/Emotional

To be whole also means to be at one with others, with one's environment, and with one's self—something that is an abiding interest to psychologists and social scientists. Our "fittedness" with all that surrounds us is a measure of our health and well-being. That runs contrary to the modern misguided notion which extols the virtue of being self reliant, for self-reliance implies an independence from any connectedness to one's surroundings.

Our age may look with admiration on the personality of James Bond (007) and the way in which he exemplifies the individual who stands within himself, who is "above" being emotional, and to whom "relationship" means a skillful interacting with others to gratify self, but this is not what it means to be socially or emotionally whole. Nor is it socially or emotionally whole to be fully *de*pendent on others so that one's self identity is lost in the group identity. To be socially and emotionally whole is to be aware of one's self, one's needs, one's motivations, and one's connectedness in such a way as to cultivate wholesome and beneficial interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Being at one with *others*, first of all, is a prime ingredient of our wholeness. The OT begins with prototypical man reviewing the animals in search of one who was "fit for him" (Gen 2:20) and with whom he could enter into relationship. From there onward through the OT there is the persistent theme of one's relationships with others being essential to one's own existence. Indeed, salvation is thought of not in individual terms in the OT but in terms of God's saving activity on behalf of the group: the people of Israel.[10] That was the nature of the covenant God made (Gen 12), the focal point of the foundation of the nation of Israel (Deut 30),[11] and the theme within the preaching of

---

[9]R. C. Dentan, "Mind," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3: 383-84.

[10]John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 132-37.

[11]Gerhard Von Rad, *Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 184-85.

the prophets. The Israelite person had identity only in relation to Israel, the people of God. Separation from the community was synonymous with disintegration, disease, and death. Hope and healing meant restoration to the community.[12] Such emphasis on relationship continues into the NT with Jesus' emphasis on the love which heals the brokenness between persons (John 15:12-13), with the early Christians' interest in community (Acts 2:42-47), and with St. Paul's fondness for the imagery of the fellowship of Christians bound together as the "body of Christ" (1 Cor 12).[13]

> Too many of us have lost a sense of connection between ourselves and the earth.

Learning how to listen and how to speak, how to care and how to encourage, how to assert what you need while hearing others speak of their needs, and how to be aware of your feelings and motivations as they affect the present situation is a lifelong learning task. It requires openness, sensitivity, objectivity, and subjectivity. It requires help from others and an intentional effort to reflect on one's self and one's relationships. The rewards are many, but the disappointments are few for those who take time to tend to this area of their wholeness.

Being at one with one's *environment* is, secondly, an important part of our wholeness. The creation story affirms our kinship with the temporal world, even while asserting our uniqueness within the created order. In the NT Jesus echoes this respect for creation and kinship with creation (Matt 6:25-33). St. Paul carries the unity of creatures and creation forward as he speaks of the desire of both to be touched by the healing, saving hand of God (Rom 8:22-23).

Too many of us have lost a sense of connection between ourselves and the earth. Insulated from creation by central air conditioning and ABC Pest Control technology, we do not feel our own connectedness to the earth. "Dominion" over creation is no longer stewardship, but exploitation. The call of wholeness—echoed in the cry of the environmentalists—is to love creation and to value our relationship to it. It is to build wise cities and to preserve natural wildernesses. It is to work with nature and not against it. It is to make all things "fit" together in harmonious and mutually beneficial ways.

Being at one with one's *self* is, finally, a part of what it means to be socially and emotionally whole. In the OT there is probably no better example of a person's exploration of "self" than in the meditations of the Psalms. Reflecting on the meaning of one's life (Ps 8), on the joy of living (Ps 1), on one's anger and disappointment (Ps 69), or on one's confidence (Ps 46), the Psalms provide an excellent model of what healthy self-assessment and awareness can look like. Likewise in the NT, as Jesus caresses

---

[12]Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person*, 19.

[13]Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul*, 190-98.

children (Mark 10:16) or weeps (John 11:35) or expresses anger (Matt 21:12) or compassion (Matt 9:36), we have yet another model of what it is to be in touch with one's self and one's inner experience. St. Paul, too, provides an example of an inner wholeness as he expresses his tender feelings (Rom 1:8-12) or anger (Gal 1:6-10) or internal turmoil over his own motivations and actions (Rom 7:15).

Learning how to know and love one's self is one of the great tasks of maturing. It involves discovery, a determination not to deceive one's self about one's self, an openness to others' appraisal, and a sensitivity to one's own feelings and experiences. Only when people make their inner experience available to their consciousness will they begin to have the insight to relate to their world in turn. And only when such self-exploration has been undertaken will they begin to experience wholeness in their relationship to themselves.

Spiritual

Some who pursue an interest in the whole person will overlook the importance of their spiritual life, giving further credence to the idea that wholistic health has the air about it of being its own religion. Others will redefine the "spiritual" in order to make it more palatable. Spiritual comes to mean our "life-philosophy" or our "creative center" or our "personal values." But even this broad interpretation of the meaning of spiritual helps to highlight the important function served by the "spirit of the individual": to focus our relationship to things ultimate and to help us find meaning in life.

The biblical material is most interested in a narrower interpretation of the spiritual, of course, for it is devoted to the question of God's relationship to the human family. According to Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 30, to be truly alive is to be in relationship to God. In the NT this relationship is understood in intimate terms when we are described as the "temple" of God (2 Cor 6:16) or when we are told that the "kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Our intimate interconnection with God is further strengthened in a sacramental way as we understand the eucharist (1 Cor 11:23ff.) and baptism (Rom 6:4) to be our union with Christ.

Our spirituality shows itself in trust and in the choices and commitments that fill our life. If we are whole, we will understand not only the nature of trust as it operates within us, but we will also understand the identity of that which we trust ultimately. It is from that ultimate trust that we generate our values, priorities, and fundamental life principles.

We express the nature of our trust in the choices we make. Sometimes those choices prove irresponsible and ill-conceived. The result is "sin," which is death in the same way that separation from the community is death (Rom 6:23). Sin, then, becomes the major disrupter in the wholism of the self and the community. For that reason the prophets, Jesus, John the Baptist, and Paul call for repentance from sin in order to reorient our mind, personality, and self toward our spiritual center (i.e., God).

Finally, our spirituality takes life in our actions. Those who are spiritually whole display a life-style that represents a harmony between belief and activity.[14] They are new creations (1 Pet 2:9-10), who find themselves at peace with their own spiritual natures and their own actions and choices.

---

[14]Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975).

They have received "new life" (Rom 6:4). This life is the opposite of the death-as-separation from God and community that the biblical writers otherwise warn against. To be whole we must emerge as congruent persons, true to our spirituality by living within our commitments.

Physical

Here, at last, is the place where an interest in physical well-being and conditioning fits into the concept of a whole person. This fourth area of wholeness points far away from the dualism of the ancient Greeks. It is instead a reminder of the unity of our physical natures with all the other components of our self.

Because our physical natures are part of the created good, they are to be cared for and respected as though they were the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16). Jesus underscores the wholism of the self by the fact that he was a healer.[15] His consistent attention to the physical ills of the people reinforces the nature of wholism as a matter of physical and spiritual life. His incarnation stands as an eternal mark of hallowedness placed upon human life.

Paying attention to one's physical wholeness is more than being on a perpetual diet. Physical wholeness requires an appreciation for one's health habits: knowing how to choose foods wisely, how to eat for the benefit of one's heart, and how to avoid the foods that increase one's potential for disease and obesity. It requires an appreciation for one's physical development: pursuing appropriate exercise, ending bad habits that include tobacco or alcohol, and being aware of the optimal levels of health for a person of one's age and size. And it requires genuine love for one's self: practicing good grooming and self-care habits, being proud of one's physical appearance, and carrying one's self with good posture.

Conclusion

Wholism is fundamental to biblical anthropology. It differs from modern notions of wholism in its insistence on the essential value of the whole person rather than a special interest in physical well-being. In the biblical understanding, human life is thought to be an intricate fabric, a weaving together of the many parts of the self into one single seamless garment. To try to segment human life into parts of varying weights and importance is entirely foreign to the biblical concept of the nature of human life. We *are* our bodies, minds, spirits, and relationships.

Nowhere is this wholism more finely expressed than in the biblical concept of "peace."[16] Whereas the word is used in classical Greek to mean the absence of strife and war, the OT and NT use the word in a far more expansive and positive way. In biblical usage the word means a total harmony of daily relationships, life experience, internal feeling, sense of community, well-being, prosperity, and righteous living before God. It is an ideal state in which all the threads within the fabric of being and life fit together with a pattern and sturdiness that is beautiful to behold. Such peace is our true *wholistic health.*

---

[15]John Reumann, *Jesus in the Church's Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 205-11.

[16]C. F. Evans, "Peace," *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: Macmillan Company, 1950), 165-66.

Review: *Miz Lil and the Chronicles of Grace* by Walter Wangerin, Jr.

Gail McGrew Eifrig
Valparaiso University

Most of the Germans I know have faces that look somewhat pushed into shape, but Walt Wangerin's Viking face looks as if it had been chopped out of some hard substance with a sharp object. This observation is only relevant because it provides an image with some implications for autobiography, and Walter Wangerin's new book, *Miz Lil and the Chronicles of Grace*, is an autobiography.

As a subspecies of history, autobiography presently engages the minds of those who like to puzzle over boundaries and edges, demarcations and definitions. These people have a favorite question which can be stated like this: To what extent is a history—that is, a created object which organizes into narrative form some details from a segment of the past—similar to a novel, another created object which organizes into narrative form details from some segment of imaginary past?

One of the implications of this question is the recognition that authors of autobiographies do, in fact, see themselves as heros or heroines, and tend often to shape narratives accordingly. The author of an autobiography, for instance, may indeed begin with an implicit statement very like the one that begins Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield*: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show."

It is at this point that my initial metaphor becomes useful. Reading autobiography, we are presented with the developing figure of the person whose life is being displayed before us. As the teller becomes this hero, we make a number of judgments about him or her. Do we see a figure which is merely being pushed into shape, as a child manipulates the dough of a recalcitrant gingerbread boy, or do we have the sense

that the character is being created with all the energy, the force, and even the potentially dangerous strokes of the chisel working against granite? The best autobiographies, even when we acknowledge that their central character is being to some extent self-created, convince us that the life itself, as well as the record of the life, has been formed with those strokes, and that in recording them, the autobiographer is being true to the nature of the experience that makes some lives really worth writing about, instead of merely interesting or entertaining. Wangerin's book, though it has faults, does convince us of this central fact. Chisel and granite are in evidence.

Miz Lil is about the action of grace upon a life.

Miz Lil is about the action of grace upon a life. And there is of course a pun here, for the author, writing as the pastor of an inner-city congregation, describes how Grace Lutheran Church has worked on his life to produce its characteristic shape. Its people and their lives, their looks and habits and styles and words and deaths have been the chisel strokes to bring this life into its sharp reality. Sensing that any record of such a creation must tell not only about the chisel but also about the stone, Wangerin places between the accounts of the people of Grace the tales that describe his parents, grandparents, boyhood, and schooling. The alternation of these two forces gives the book its own form, for it is not a continuous narrative, but rather a series of eleven narratives, each separate yet telling parts of the same story. Like the songs in a song cycle, each has its own subject, and its own tone, its melody and key signature. Yet all have as central principle the developing life of their central figure, the one who is becoming, the one who is telling his own life in relation to these other lives. The simple terms or labels with which we usually describe these relationships do not begin to convey their complexity, and Wangerin's stories work hard at those complexities as he recounts his own developing sense of what it means to be "grandson," or "pastor."

Beginning with a preface that describes the peregrinations of the clergy family in which he grew up through the forties and fifties with his own single parish in southern Indiana, Wangerin comments on his own journey, "out of his Egypt, learning to walk" (xi). He asserts at one point that there are two journeys in his life stories, but I do not read them that way, for the journey of a life must be one journey, however multiple it looks to the one who lives it and is thus conscious in his bones of its diverse paths.

The tracing of the journey can be done in a number of ways. Typically, autobiographies have yet another sub-category, the confession. It is significant, therefore, that Wangerin has chosen to place as epigraphs for his book two quotations, the first from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, the second a great poem by George Herbert. In the first, the quintessential church father asks of God what fruits can be expected from this autobiography of his, in which he confesses "to the people, also in Thy presence, what now I am against what I have been." Such a comment points to another element in the definition of autobiography, for here the author says that his words have two audiences, both of whom are witnesses to his

confession. As a form, the confession itself has two dynamics, for at one level it attempts to re-create the reality of the past moment, but at the other it comments, from the perspective of the present, upon that moment of the past.

The writer thus, in the present, attempts to show us a 'true' image of the past—her past—yet also consciously shows us that past through the re-creating lens of the present. And in a confession, the present is charged with a sense that the author speaks now as she could not have spoken in the past, since some great awakening has overtaken her in the course of the journey she is attempting faithfully to describe. Thus the text of a confession always endures the tension of these two demands: that the writer be true to the past, and that in doing so she is true also to the stance of the present time, the arrival point of the journey. Writers like Augustine, and one presumes like Wangerin, know that their witnesses, God and people, care about these demands, this truthfulness.

It is never possible to judge with real precision how close a writer comes to that truthfulness, particularly if one lacks some other controlling record against which one can place the personal account, but I would guess that one criterion is simple: how well does the writer convince us that she is capable of understanding the significance of the events of her life? And here I have one small reservation about this book (which may be based on an idiosyncrasy) because I tend to trust the record partly in relation to the age of the writer. Can a young person write an account of a life, getting the shape of it right, tracing the journey so that its central motion can be correctly observed, when so much of it lies yet ahead? Probably the answer to this nagging question of mine, which came up several times as I read the book, is yes, and no doubt many good examples can be given to show that the journey can best be described by the person who has just completed it. Though here I think there must be a modification of the definition of the work, for we are dealing with a record of a stage of the journey, and not the whole of it. So this book, and others by young authors, ought perhaps best be viewed as a Confession, Part I.

This book, and others by young authors, ought perhaps best be viewed as a Confession, Part I.

The second epigraph is the poem "Easter Wings," an examination of which will bring us immediately to the specific content of Wangerin's "confessions." In the poem, Herbert (also a clergyman) prays that the shape of his life, which has suffered a diminution because of his own sinfulness, may, through a connection with God's suffering, ultimately experience an expansion into the true fullness of God's very being. (Anyone who knows the poem will, I hope, excuse this over-facile generalization of its magnificent meaningfulness.) The poet recognizes his own qualities; he is "most poore," and "most thinne." But in "affliction" and in "fall" the poet expects to experience an advance, or a furthering of "the flight in me." I assume this to refer, in Wangerin's case, to his perception about his own poor thinness, and the affliction and fall which have worked to move him toward fullness.

Now anyone who knows clergy knows that though they may be prone to "thinness and poorness" language, they frequently exhibit a fat richness in their attitudes, at least toward their clerical position. And a clergyman who is also a powerful preacher, and who is frequently told that he is a powerful preacher, has an even greater than usual temptation to a fatness about his own being. It is extremely difficult for a writer to describe his own excellences, and then to describe how he learns the failures and fatuities of those excellences, but this is the task Wangerin has taken on, and it is a task he executes creditably. Much of this author's excellence is to be assumed by the reader; Wangerin is an author whose books have won prizes, a speaker and teacher who can hold any variety of audience spellbound, a preacher of unparalleled eloquence and passion. He takes trouble to describe here the ways in which those excellences have been formed, but also the ways—the devastating ways—in which they have been found wanting.

> We are allowed to hear the confession of what he now is against what he has been.

His conversations at the church door with Miz Lil provide for him a kind of touchstone in this awareness. Sometimes she says, "Well, you taught us today," and sometimes she says, "Pastor, you preached today." When pressed for a further explanation by the young pastor eager for yet more approval from an already admiring congregation, Miz Lil expatiates, though she does not thereby explain:

> "When you teach," she said, instructing me, "I learn something for the day.... But when you preach—" She lowered her voice and probed me the deeper with her eyes— "God is here. And sometimes he's smiling," she said, "and sometimes he is frowning surely." (37)

Now the young pastor is pleased to interpret this as the desired compliment; his preaching has brought God into the place. But her words are not, he gradually learns, the compliment he takes them for. It takes another occasion, and perhaps many occasions, before the young pastor hears what Miz Lil is saying. Later, after a sermon whose story he gives us, she says to him, "you preached today, God was in this place." But she herself was not smiling, and she tells him then that his strong preaching, the preaching that had brought God into the little church, brought with that presence a condemnation of his own words. For though they had been spoken with fire, with certainty, and with the righteous sword of the Lord in hand, they had not been spoken with pity.

How can the word of the Lord be preached with fire, with certainty, with righteousness, and with pity, with humility, and with faithful love? This is the lesson which the people of Grace teach the pastor of Grace. In one of the most painfully revelatory stories, "Horstman," we are told what monstrous obstacles those people have to overcome in their teaching. "Horstman" is the story I have always suspected, but never heard, a scathing account of the vicious hatefulness of the prep school atmosphere, the "system" as it is still called in the

circles of those who were trained there for the clergy from the age of fourteen onward. No doubt, as readers have heard in many versions from the English boys' school narratives in the early biographies of dozens of great Englishmen, this atmosphere has its good side, for bonds of comradeship and even love have been formed in its nurture. But other qualities have been formed there too. Facing the inevitable fear, insecurity, failure, loneliness, and isolation experienced by all young people, generations of good men learned to deal with these feelings by bravado, denial, self-righteousness, alienation, and pride. To learn that such strategies were frequently encouraged by the adults in these schools is shocking, but not surprising.

In telling "Horstman," Wangerin does not neglect to blame himself for capitulating to these evils. Rather, he acknowledges the distance the people of Grace had to go in demonstrating to him the overwhelming mercy and pity of God. Following "Horstman" with the account of Pastor Cherie's baptism of her own daughter, "Baby Hannah," he makes the connection utterly clear. To learn the mercy of God, to learn to hear the voice of God, one must unlearn the lessons in which we are caught, even by the best-intentioned of our teachers. We must be "born again," perhaps, as he describes the sense of being born from the very body of the mothering God, knowing in that birth God's pain and tears and love for us.

The record of a journey is not the journey. We cannot experience the revelation of grace that Wangerin has experienced, however skillfully he describes it. But it is good to walk with him in imagination, tracing his steps. We are allowed to hear the confession of what he now is against what he has been, and in those words perhaps we are encouraged to perceive our own biographies, not as shapeless tangles of unrelated events, but as journeys toward our own hearing of the voice of God.

Flight

Resolutely
we flee Jerusalem,
head for Emmaus,
village of safety,
leaving behind
deception and dead men's bones,
failed prophecies,
crucified dreams,
wild imaginings
which will lead to madness
for us all.
Grief has unhinged
the minds of friends,
conjured up angelic visions,
whispered sweet nothings
in the wind,
smeared the smell
of resurrection
across flower-filled fields,
cruelly teasing
those who wait—
those who believe
in Death's defeat
and in the triumph
of Truth.

Now
a third strolls beside us,
a stranger in no hurry
to reach his destination,
one seemingly unperturbed
by the city's news
because he finds solace
in the prophets
and in their prediction
of Christ's glory.
Hearts burning,
we slow our pace,
devouring words
like manna in the desert
and as evening nears,
press him to stay
that we may break bread,
perhaps draw strength
from his presence....

—elizabeth-anne vanek

Book Reviews

PAUL THE APOSTLE AND HIS CITIES. By Sherman E. Johnson. Vol. 21 in the Good News Studies. Edited by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987. 325 pages. Paper. $9.95.

In this book's opening paragraph the author states the purpose of his study on Paul to be "an attempt to introduce him as a traveler, a pioneer missionary, and a creative religious thinker, in the setting of his age and the places where he lived and worked." This is a laudable goal for any study on Paul. It is always important to recall that Paul did not do theology in a vacuum. To understand Paul one cannot divorce his theology from the settings in which he carried out his ministry.

Unfortunately, when it comes to presenting Paul's creative religious thinking Johnson's contributions are minimal. His presentations of Paul's theology are not in dialogue with the major Pauline studies of the past decade. He does little more than offer a general summary of a particular letter's content. There is no systematic attempt to understand the central aspects of Paul's gospel from which the apostle addressed various contingent situations. He only gives a few short lines to issues of significant scholarly debate which color any presentation of Pauline theology (e.g., the authorship of 2 Thessalonians and Colossians or a supposed shift in Pauline eschatology from the time 1 Thessalonians was written to the time of Philippians).

When dealing with "Paul's cities" Johnson's work is more helpful. He presents interesting and concise reports on the various locations associated with Paul in the New Testament (especially in the Book of Acts). Nevertheless, the reader will also encounter a few problems here. For example, the book suffers from a lack of maps (the only two being found on the back cover depicting Paul's journeys according to Acts). Yet Johnson gives detailed descriptions of Asia Minor, Tarsus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus, and Athens which cry out for corresponding maps. In his depiction of Corinth at the time of Paul, Johnson makes passing reference to "the thousand prostitutes of Aphrodite," a remark which most scholars no longer regard as grounded in historical fact.

All in all, the general reader or the pastor preparing to teach on Paul will probably do better to use the ample maps, pictures, and discussions on Paul's theology and letters found in the *Harper's Bible Dictionary* or in the *IDB* than to rely upon this study by Johnson.

Richard P. Carlson
Ross Lutheran Parish
Roseau, Minnesota

RECLAIMING THE HUMANITIES: THE ROOTS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN THE GREEK AND BIBLICAL WORLDS. By R. Thomas Simone and Richard I. Sugarman. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986. 215 pages. Paper. $10.25.

In ancient Rome a person who was a member of the foremost rank was termed "classicus." Literary classics are writings of the very first rank, and they enjoy their status because of their ability to communicate across great divides of time and culture. Not everything that has survived from ancient times in Hebrew, Latin, or Greek is classic in this sense. But it is no mere chance that brought immortality to the Bible and the works of Homer, the tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides), Plato, and Aristotle—to cite only those that are discussed in the Simone-Sugarman book. By virtue of their own intrinsic merit, they have made their way into the structures of our thought and culture.

Already at the turn into the twentieth century, Greek and Latin were gasping for breath, as physical and social studies began to edge out the humanities in school curricula. And Basil Gildersleeve, dean of United States grammarians, lamented that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find intelligent response to biblical allusions. Simone, who teaches in the Department of English at the University of Vermont, and Sugarman, in the same university's Department of Religion, are to be congratulated for publishing an antidote against barbarism. Humanism has to do with what it means to be human, and as modern technocratic, economic, and social developments threaten to put humanity into a tragedy of its own making, interest in the question of what constitutes humanizing influences becomes crucial.

Homer's stories of the Trojan War and the travels of Odysseus encode the problems and the aspirations of human beings of every time and clime. As in contemporary civilization, or the lack of it, the thirst of Oedipus to know brings him to the very precipice of self-destruction. In Plato's dialogues we are taught to value the universal and to distinguish it from the parochial. Aristotle (discussed by guest contributor Robert J. Anderson, of the Department of Philosophy at Washington College, Chesterton, Maryland) teaches us that true happiness is realized in the excellence of virtue.

It is regrettable that the chapter on the humanistic contribution of the Bible falls so far short of the depth of sympathy that is generated by much of the gripping discussion of the Greek classics. Some of this default is due to the fact that the Greek portion of the Bible, which features some of the most dramatically human experiences, is not even discussed. If the *Odyssey* deserves recognition alongside the *Iliad*, the NT ought to be recognized alongside the OT in a publication of this type. In this book the Greek texts are the winners. It is also almost unforgivable to deny readers a reference to Paul Shorey's *What Plato Said* (Chicago, 1933), one of the most readable and reliable interpretations of Plato ever published.

Frederick W. Danker
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

BEING POOR: A BIBLICAL STUDY. By Leslie J. Hoppe, O. F. M. Vol. 20 in Good News Studies. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987. 240 pages. Paper. $9.95.

WHO ARE THE POOR? THE BEATITUDES AS A CALL TO COMMUNITY. By John S. Pobee. Vol. 32 in the Risk Book Series. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987. 71 Pages. Paper. $5.50.

The emergence of liberation theology has done much to alter current theological discussion. One of its most significant impacts has been to prompt a re-examination and re-evaluation of what the Bible has to say about the poor. These two books join a host of others currently being written and published on this topic.

Hoppe provides an excellent introduction to the wealth of biblical material devoted to the theme of poverty. He guides the reader systematically through the Tetrateuch, Deuteronomy, the former and latter prophets, the wisdom tradition, the psalms, the apocalyptic literature, and the New Testament, with a closing excursion through the rabbinic tradition, as he explicates who the poor are, why they are poor, and what attitude is taken toward the poor in the various traditions of the Bible.

Although each of the biblical traditions maintains its own viewpoint toward the poor, Hoppe's overall position remains clear: the Bible "is unanimous in asserting that material, economic poverty is a scandal, that it should not exist, that it is not in accord with the divine will." Although the biblical tradition also finds the experience of the poor "an apt metaphor for the universal need for salvation," there is no room for an overall spiritualizing of poverty in the Bible. The NT tradition stands in essential continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures in its understanding of poverty. Individual texts which deem poverty blessed are to be interpreted as variations on the normative biblical tradition which views poverty as a scandal rather than the norm itself.

Hoppe's book can be highly recommended. It is solid in its exegesis and written well. The author is restrained in pointing out the contem-

porary implications of the texts under discussion, yet the implications are many and obvious. It is a book that deserves numerous readers as the Bible's forgotten theme of poverty regains among us the prominence it already has in the texts themselves.

Pobee's *Who Are the Poor?* is a different kind of book. It had its origin as a series of five Bible studies given at an ecumenical institute sponsored by the World Council of Churches. Pobee himself serves as associate director of the World Council of Churches' Programme on Theological Education.

Presented as a study of the beatitudes, Pobee's book interprets a variety of biblical passages pertaining to poverty and the poor. Noteworthy, especially in comparison to the exegesis of Hoppe, is Pobee's advocacy of an inclusive interpretation of the biblical witness to poverty. This means Pobee gives much greater significance to poverty as a spiritual attitude. While preferring Luke's reading of the beatitude, "Blessed are the poor" (over Matthew's "Blessed are the poor in spirit"), Pobee seems to favor an interpretation which understands poverty as, first, a quality of the spirit, and only secondarily as an economic state. Nevertheless, Pobee is most pointed as he criticizes those who contribute to poverty in his native Africa.

> The situation in the world today is like the huge elephant dancing in a small room and shouting "freedom" in the midst of frightened chickens running about. Obviously the chickens stand no chance and will be trampled under foot. The nations of the North, like the powerful politicians and the rich in African societies, are today's elephants who are dancing in the midst of scared chickens, the small nations, the poor of the earth.

Pobee's study proves most interesting as he discusses what poverty means in the world today, especially in Africa. His biblical interpretation serves well his more homiletical intention. The book is limited, however, in its value as an exegetical resource.

Craig L. Nessan
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

ON JOB: GOD-TALK AND THE SUFFERING OF THE INNOCENT. By Gustavo Gutierrez. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987. xix and 136 pages. Paper. $9.95.

1988 marked the fifteenth year since the name Gustavo Gutierrez became known to a wide circle of North American readers with the appearance in English translation of *A Theology of Liberation.* In the years since the publication of this significant volume, the work of Gutierrez has provoked heated debate between those supportive and those intensely critical of his proposals for a liberation theology. A pivotal argument among the opponents of the theology of liberation has been the accusation that this theology draws more from Marx than from the Bible. While not directly entering the fray of this discussion, Gutierrez ably demonstrates in *On Job* that his theology and spirituality are deeply rooted in biblical soil.

On Job is theological interpretation of the Bible at its very best. Gutierrez' elucidation of Job is undergirded by the solid exegesis of recent interpreters of this biblical book. Yet the theological problem Gutierrez finds addressed in the book of Job is one contemporary with the concerns of the Latin American poor: How in the face of extraordinary human suffering do we speak today about God? The language of Job's friends was mired in the categories of retributive justice. If Job suffered, then in one way or another it must have been his own fault. Job battles against all such facile arguments to assert the suffering of those who are innocent. In so doing, Job comes to identify with all the suffering ones of the earth—the poor, the sick, the grieving, the distressed. The climax of Job's struggle for a more adequate theology of suffering occurs through his encounter with God.

Gutierrez discovers in Job's conversation with God the basis for a new kind of God-talk. God-talk based upon divine retribution gives way to the affirmation of a divine justice located within the arena of God's purely gratuitous love. Such talk of God leaves room for human freedom, yet gives priority to the inscrutable freedom of God. What emerges is a language about

God which is both prophetic and mystical (i.e., grounded in the divine–human encounter).

Gutierrez strongly emphasizes Job's discovery of the gratuitous love of God:

> Only when we have come to realize that God's love is freely bestowed do we enter fully and definitively into the presence of the God of faith. Grace is not opposed to the quest of justice nor does it play it down; on the contrary, it gives it its full meaning. God's love, like all true love, operates in a world not of cause and effect but of freedom and gratuitousness.

Lutherans who share a vision of the priority of God's grace but who also insist upon the significance of God's call for justice will find this interpretation of Job most refreshing. One discovers here a gospel which encompasses the needs of the poor both spiritually and materially.

This book is not only for those who want to deepen their understanding of the book of Job; it is also for those who want to examine the biblical basis of liberation theology by the foremost proponent of this theology. Even more, it is a book for those who struggle, like Job, to make sense of God-talk in a hungry world, in a world where the innocent do suffer.

Craig L. Nessan

MATTHEW AS STORY. By Jack Dean Kingsbury. Second edition, revised and enlarged. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988. x and 181 pages. Paper. $10.95.

This is Kingsbury's revision of his important book analyzing Matthew on literary critical grounds supplemented by more traditional historical-critical methods. According to the author's preface he has substantially revised his book, especially the chapter on the Son of Man terminology. Also, he has added two entirely new chapters: on Jesus' antagonists, the scribes and the Pharisees, and on the Matthean Great Speeches.

In chapter one Kingsbury analyzes Matthew using narrative analysis. Matthew's structure, narrative technique, the implied reader, and characterization are some of the topics addressed in this chapter. The next three chapters discuss Matthew's plot. A chapter each is devoted to the Son of Man designation, the Great Speeches, Jesus' antagonists, the disciples, and the life setting of Matthew's community. The book ends with a short chapter summarizing Kingsbury's findings.

Traditional historical-critical analysis of Matthew is challenged by Kingsbury's literary analysis of the Great Speeches of Jesus. Here they are not viewed as the high points of Matthean theological thinking grafted onto a revised underlying Markan text, but rather are integral to the dramatic flow of Matthew's narrative itself. As a unified narrative Kingsbury sees the Great Speeches fitting seamlessly into the plot of Matthew's Gospel. But he also sees them as literary devices which speak beyond the events narrated to the implied reader in his own time and setting.

His analysis of the Son of Man title hinges on his distinction between christological titles, which tell who Jesus is, and technical terms, which have precise meanings within Matthew, e.g., Kingdom of Heaven. Kingsbury provides very telling literary evidence, from within the Gospel itself, that Son of Man is a technical term. However, he is—at least to this reader—not as clear as he should be in precisely defining the Matthean meaning of this technical term. Does a distinction really exist between christological titles as disclosures of Jesus' identity, and the term "the Son of Man" as Jesus' self-designation? At times Kingsbury's distinction seems to be little more than semantic hair-splitting.

Because of its format it is hard to determine whether this book is an introductory text for the lay reader or for the scholar. Lay readers might be confused by the intermittent technical discussion, while scholars and students will miss the lack of indexes to subjects and authors.

All too often those of us trained in historical-critical analysis atomize texts into sources, Aramaic loan words, or I-sayings, thus losing the thrust of the text. Kingsbury does us an invaluable service by emphasizing this overall

thrust of the text through the functioning of its constituent literary elements. He also reminds us that the Gospels are literary texts worthy of aesthetic consideration and respect.

Lynn Allan Kauppi
M. A. student
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

BREAD NOT STONE. By Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Boston: Beacon, 1986. 208 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Schüssler Fiorenza's collection of six essays originally presented from 1979 to 1984 is subtitled "The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation." The subtitle's ambiguity (whose challenge is it, anyway?) is significant. In overlapping essays, she addresses and illustrates the challenge of feminist biblical interpretation—to feminists, to other scholars, to "ordinary believers," and to Christian feminist biblical scholars.

The focus of the essays, despite the book's primary title, is not specific biblical texts (chapter 4, with its focus on the household codes, is an exception). Rather, it is on what we are to do with those texts, what our methods are, what our assumptions are—as scholars, as exegetes, as preachers, as "ordinary believers."

Using the historical critical method and applying the insights of liberation theology, the author proposes a feminist biblical interpretation that has some unique characteristics:

1. It assumes that the Bible and most of its public interpreters have been androcentric and therefore subject to suspicion.

2. It acknowledges its own biases towards the experience and empowerment of women, and challenges all other biblical interpreters to acknowledge their own biases.

3. It rejects as irrelevant unredeemably androcentric texts.

4. It proposes "woman church" (*gynekklesia*) as a place of discernment for texts and their applicability to women.

Schüssler Fiorenza is not willing to accept old hermeneutical principles as appropriate for feminists. Rather, she proposes a hermeneutics of suspicion, a hermeneutics of proclamation, a hermeneutics of remembrance and historical reconstruction, and a hermeneutics of ritualization and celebration.

One of the refreshing things about Schüssler Fiorenza, as well as other feminist scholars, is that she does not hesitate to ask the questions that traditional scholars steer away from. She refuses to divorce scholarship from its implications for the faith community. As a top-notch biblical scholar, she cannot be accused of sacrificing scholarship to ideology. As a feminist scholar, she counters that scholarship cannot be divorced from ideology—by her or by anyone else.

This book is not easy reading. The essays are dense, and Schüssler Fiorenza's English is not quite as readable as it is elsewhere. One finds oneself longing for an organized book with a thesis and a structure, rather than a collection of essays. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Early Christian Origins*, her more famous book, is a monumental contribution to biblical feminism, and a hard act to follow. Still, *Bread Not Stone* is a valuable resource which will no doubt become more valuable on subsequent readings. It provides necessary tools and important interpretations, if not easy narrative.

Jessica Crist
Great Falls, Montana

CHRIST AND HIS BENEFITS: CHRISTOLOGY AND REDEMPTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Arland J. Hultgren. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. 285 pages. Cloth. $24.95

Endeavoring to fill a gap in christological study, Professor Hultgren (of Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary) discusses the interest of New Testament writers in the significance of Jesus Christ as redeemer. In his study the term "redemptive" is an umbrella term for "the work of God in Christ, or Christ's work itself." The expression "redemptive christology" refers to the ways in which NT writers portray Christ in his redemptive significance.

Hultgren isolates four types of redemptive christology, which contain one of two primary features, or both: a theopractic, which displays God as the principal agent; and a christopractic, which focuses on the work of Christ.

In all four types the cross and resurrection are important, but with a range in stress as to the role played by them in the redemptive achievement. In type 1 the cross is the point at which redemption is realized. In Paul, God reconciles humanity through the death of Christ, and in Mark—the other representative of this type—Christ's death becomes a ransom for many. The second type is represented by Matthew and Luke, and like the first is theopractic, but the cross and resurrection event becomes the occasion for the proclamation, not the instrument for making forgiveness possible. A christopractic accent is found in type 3, which is present especially in Colossians, Ephesians, the Pastorals, 1 Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation. Christ comes on earth to effect redemption and then returns. Type 4 features Christ as mediator, and redemption comes through him as God's revealer.

Hultgren concludes that the first type coheres with the larger canonical context and the historical ministry of Jesus. The other three bear the marks of reflection in the direction of an emphasis on a larger-than-human portrait of Jesus Christ, with the second and fourth types assigning little or no significance to the death of Jesus *per se*.

Since this is a pioneer study, Hultgren admits that there is need of some fine tuning. Some of this has to do with the problem of overlap in the four types. And one wonders what conclusions would have been reached had the enterprise been expressed differently in some of its parts. For example, what would have resulted from a comparative analysis of Luke's and Paul's faithfulness to canonical data on God's redemptive activity? Nevertheless, there is much to be learned from this study, which meets the needs not only of professional church workers but of a broader public that is willing to invest some intellectual and spiritual energy in probing the significance of God's action in Jesus Christ.

Frederick W. Danker

JESUS AND THE NEW AGE: A COMMENTARY ON ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL. By Frederick W. Danker. Completely revised and expanded. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988. xx and 410 pages. Paper. $19.95.

Jesus and the New Age needs no introduction; first published in 1972, half a generation of seminary students and pastors found it a helpful resource as they preached on this gospel. This new, extensively revised edition reflects the significant research Danker has done since its publication: the Proclamation Commentary *Luke* (rev. ed., 1987), a series of articles and papers on Luke, and a major work, *Benefactor* (St. Louis, 1982), in which he illuminated christological language from ancient inscriptions recognizing public benefactors.

D's development is evident in this second edition's preface. It is most clear in the section titled "Supreme Excellence," in which D summarizes "the Greco-Roman ideal of superior excellence" as the main resource for interpreting the significance of Jesus. The language recurs throughout the commentary, with frequent reference to ancient texts on which D builds his case. The commentary thus has a clear focus: the Benefactor theme.

D rarely refers to texts from Greek or Eastern mystery religions. If he did, would his comment stand that "only persons of exceptional excellence (*arete*) gained entrance into what Greeks since Homer's time called the Elysian Isles of the Blest"? The so-called mysteries did not stress excellence as much as initiation—and that without reference to *arete*.

D describes Luke's purpose as writing a coherent account of the things which have been accomplished among us. Luke has a pandemic interest; but D does not make clear whether this is literary (entertaining or cathartic), evangelistic, apologetic, or moral in scope. He holds that Theophilos is a Roman official with a Greek name "who might do much to clear the Christians of charges of anti-Roman activity." Yet D maintains that through him Luke's work went out to the "People of God." Does it have inner-Christian or apologetic concerns?

Three helpful changes are immediately obvious. The new edition is about 150 pages longer—with many more words per page. An annotated selective bibliography points the reader to additional resources for understanding Luke. Third, an index of "ancient authors and writings" allows one to locate references to D's ancient authorities.

D is concerned to use inclusive language and uses Son of Humanity instead of Son of Man. It is surprising that D did not seek consistency in his citation of ancient writers; usually he translates ancient book titles into English, e.g., Aristophanes' *Wasps*. But Augustus' great autobiographical propaganda inscription is named the *Res Gestae*, not *Things Accomplished*. Some Greek names are transliterated (Aischylos, not Aeschylus); some retain their English, not Greek, form (Aristotle, not Aristoteles; Plato not Platon); others, even less well-known, retain their Latin form (Apollonius, not Apollonios). To read Epicurus next to Epiktetos jars. I wish D had gone all the way in transcribing names. Some of D's phrases will jar at first, e.g., "Director of the People of God" for Jesus. But careful consideration of the significance of the phraseology will usually reveal an insight for which the reader will be grateful.

The virtues of the first edition are all still present: clear language, concentration on Luke's message, comments that point the way to modern proclamation, and striking formulations that in themselves will stimulate reflection and understanding. This is a preacher's commentary that scholars dare not overlook. Its new dress should insure it a long life.

Edgar M. Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

ERASMUS' *ANNOTATIONS* ON THE NEW TESTAMENT. FROM PHILOLOGIST TO THEOLOGIAN. By Erika Rummel. Erasmus Studies 8. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1986. xii and 234 Pages. Cloth. $35.00.

Desiderius Erasmus edited the *editio princeps* of the Greek New Testament. Published in 1516 by the great Basel printer John Froben, it included his own Latin translation (not the Vulgate!) on pages facing the Greek text. In addition, *Annotations* discussed variant manuscript readings and justified Erasmus' translation against the Vulgate on philological grounds. In subsequent editions (1519, 1522, 1527, 1535) Erasmus revised and expanded the *Annotations*. Luther's German New Testament of 1522, translated from the second edition (1519) of Erasmus' Greek Testament, demonstrates the influence of the work.

In this magnificent study, Rummel calls Erasmus' *Annotations* "the most impressive monument to his biblical scholarship." Her research amply demonstrates the basis for that evaluation. The first chapter is biographical, describing Erasmus' scholarly development up to the publication of the Greek Testament in 1516. His interest in NT studies developed gradually; John Colet was not, contrary to much opinion, the major stimulus to this activity. Nor did Erasmus conceive of editing a New Testament prior to his arrival in Basel in 1514. John Froben urged him to the task and its completion.

The second chapter describes the sources (manuscripts) and authorities (ancient and modern) consulted by Erasmus in preparing the Greek Testament for publication. The next chapter describes his aims, principles of work, and methods as described in the *Annotations*, while the last chapter describes the book's reception and the revisions and expansions Erasmus made in subsequent editions as a result.

Erasmus had clear aims: to explain the obscure, to correct faulty translations done earlier, and to present a Latin version that was free of solecisms and had a certain literary elegance. (His indebtedness to classical grammarians and rhetoricians seems clear.) The concern for ele-

gance, a stylistic nicety, did not win general approbation among theologians, according to Rummel.

Erasmus fares very well in this volume: he comes off as learned, witty, urbane, and devoted to meticulous philological interpretation. Each edition of the Greek text was based on a greater number of manuscripts. The annotations draw on a wide range of Greek and Latin authors of antiquity—and a comparison with the notes of Lorenzo Valla shows that Erasmus was probably working from his own knowledge of the texts, not a "catena" of well known references. He frequently cites Jerome on matters historical and geographical; yet his reservations against some of Jerome's views (as well as those of other fathers) angered some early readers. Other fathers frequently cited are Hilary, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Origen, Cyril, and Theophylact. In philology Erasmus argued his case sharply, in later editions engaging his critics in sharp polemics. He frequently claims medieval glossators obscured the text and is critical of Thomas, Nicolaus of Lyra, and Duns Scotus. He is more generous with his contemporary Valla, expressing appreciation for his philological acumen.

Conservative theologians (Dorp, Lefèvre d'Etaples, Béda, and others) accused Erasmus of "Lutheran" tendencies, forcing him to engage in polemics in later editions of the *Annotations* and in other works. Rummel analyzes Erasmus as apologist and his defense of the use of Greek manuscripts, e.g., in the case of the omission of the comma Johanneum in 1 John 5:7-8. Erasmus also attacked monks, theology professors, and ritualism. He was a controversialist of ability.

This is an utterly fascinating book. Rummel shows that Erasmus' original plan was to publish his notes; the addition of the Greek text and Latin translation came later. His revisions rarely were retractions. Usually he adduced additional argumentation to support his interpretations. Her careful reading of the sources, her knowledge of modern Erasmian scholarship, and her flair for writing make this a book to treasure. It is a worthy addition to the series *Erasmus Studies*. It will be frequently cited in the years ahead.

Edgar M. Krentz

JESUS, THE GOSPELS, AND THE CHURCH. ESSAYS IN HONOR OF WILLIAM R. FARMER. Edited by E. P. Sanders. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987. xxxviii and 286 pages. Cloth. $38.95.

Every scholarly discipline needs its Socrates—its gadfly who calls assumptions into question, demands an accounting of methods used, and puts forward theories and models that "go against the prevailing winds." William R. Farmer has done New Testament scholarship that service for thirty years. He has been in the forefront of rethinking the relationships of the Synoptic Gospels, challenging both the priority of Mark and the utility of the Q hypothesis. Farmer revived the Griesbach hypothesis, which argues for the priority of Matthew; that naturally led him to consider the implications of his research for the formation of the New Testament canon. However, Farmer has not been a one-theme scholar. He was active in Palestinian archaeology, early Jewish history, and many other topics. He also has shown a profound empathy with the poor and a strong sense of social justice.

Farmer strongly influenced his students at Drew University and later at Perkins School of Theology. Their research continued along the lines he started, but in a creative, not slavish manner. The names of many are now well known in New Testament scholarship: E. P. Sanders and Philip L. Shuler are representative. The present volume is a tribute organized by former students, with contributions by an international team of scholars. David B. Peabody introduces the volume with a warmly appreciative biographical essay that gives the reader insight into Farmer as human being and scholar. I thoroughly enjoyed the account and vicariously appreciate the insight into the power of an effective teacher.

The articles concentrate on Farmer's own areas of research and illustrate the influence he exercised in the study of the Gospels, research in Jesus and his milieu, and in the history of Early Christianity. It is always dangerous to pick out essays from a *Festschrift* for special praise. In a volume of high quality I found David Daube's discussion of the "Temple Tax," David L. Dun-

gan's evaluation of "Jesus and Violence," and C. F. D. Moule's "The Gravamen against Jesus" especially rewarding. This is a worthy tribute to an influential teacher. It is graced with a good picture of William Farmer and a bibliography of his scholarly writing.

Edgar M. Krentz

MORAL EXHORTATION, A GRECO-ROMAN SOURCEBOOK. By Abraham J. Malherbe. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1986. 177 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

Accurate theological understanding of both the post-Alexander OT and the NT writings depends in part on recognition of the ethical and moral instruction that were common property in the Greco-Roman world. The uniqueness of Christianity is, after all, not some alleged higher morality but God's consummate gift of Christ, through whom the problem of moral failure and the question of one's relationship to God can be resolved.

Once the uniqueness of Christian belief is appreciated, it is possible to probe with profit the ethical thinking that takes place outside Jewish-Christian experience. Professor Malherbe's compilation of passages taken from Greco-Roman thinkers in the traditions of Stoicism, Cynicism, and Epicureanism is a welcome invitation to such an enterprise.

The genres of literature cited include speeches, letters, summaries of a line of thought, and compilations of moral counsel. Among the many subjects discussed by sermonizers in the ancient world were civic responsibilities and a variety of matters relating to self-control, such as resistance to covetousness, anger, lust for recognition, supine catering to influential people, and surrender of conscience to superiors. In a homily on sexual conduct, Nero's chaplain Musonius Rufus justified marital intercourse only for the purpose of begetting children, and he condemned same-sex activity along with adultery. Also included in the compilation are numerous pieces of "pastoral" counsel from Plutarch, St. Luke's contemporary.

Malherbe's "sourcebook" may also stimulate more discerning discussion as to what constitutes an aretalogy, for the term *arete* ("excellence of the highest order," frequently rendered "virtue") is scattered throughout these citations. In the last analysis, a catalog of goodness that can be recited about an individual is that person's aretalogy. May Philippians 4:8 prove to be every Christian's aretalogy.

This is a reader-friendly book.

Frederick W. Danker

1 CORINTHIANS. By Roy A. Harrisville. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987. 301 pages. Paper. $14.95.

Harrisville, Professor of New Testament at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, sets himself a formidable task in this volume: to interpret 1 Corinthians in 290 octavo pages. He succeeds admirably, because he has a good sense of what is important and what not.

The twelve-page introduction provides essential data for interpreting the letter, both Harrisville's reconstruction of the history leading up to the letter and the basic "thesis" underlying the interpretation. Paul's first preaching in Corinth in 50-52 C.E. founded the church; Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus in 55. While Harrisville points out similarities between Gnosticism and the Corinthian "heresy," he posits a "homegrown" pneumatic faith that grew out of a misinterpretation (even caricature) and misapplication of Paul's preaching. Moreover, Paul did not intimately know or "borrow" terminology and thought patterns from Stoicism; such language and concepts were simply in the air.

The commentary itself is a clearly written, running interpretation that blends linguistic scholarship, literary analysis, and historical perceptiveness into a crisp explanation of Paul's thought. Here and there Harrisville expands the discussion to expound key theological motifs, e.g., the Lord's will in 4:19 or the resurrection. While the commentary is not burdened with formalities of

scholarship, Harrisville in a short bibliography and in 116 footnotes points the reader to ancient texts or modern scholarly literature that will deepen what he is able to do in this relatively constricted text. Some motifs run throughout, e.g., enthusiasm and Spirit. Yet Harrisville holds that the Corinthian enthusiasts did not develop a consistent interpretation of Paul's preaching.

I trust it is clear that this commentary is a valuable work. Some small points of criticism must be made, however. Harrisville states in his introduction that "This commentary will attempt to show that chapter 15 is the 'authentic commentary' on chapters 1-14." In my opinion that attempt is only partially successful. Harrisville might have argued more consistently that all of the Corinthian problems are in one way or another an expression of a misinterpretation of baptism as resurrection, expressed in the conviction that Christians are to live the heavenly pneumatic life in the here and now. 1 Cor. 1:17, 4:8-13, 12:1-3, and 15:12 read together lead me to that conviction.

Finally, there are factual errors in the description of ancient Corinth, which may not materially affect the interpretation but should be corrected in the next printing. Harrisville refers to a temple of Ephesian Artemis in the city. That is almost certainly wrong. Pausanias 2.2.6 refers only to a statue of the Artemis of Ephesus that stood in the agora, possibly in a small building in line with the bema. The main Corinthian temple (not mentioned by Harrisville) was dedicated to Apollo in the sixth century B.C.E. Harrisville locates Acrocorinth "high to the west"; it stands south of the city. The synagogue inscription (p. 14) is from the lintel, not the door; its Greek script is so crude that it probably is later than the first century. The three menorahs on the capital of an engaged square column are of much higher artistic quality and better evidence for an early presence of Jews in Corinth. The Gallio inscription at Delphi should properly be called a rescript, not a letter (p.14).

But these last are minor things. The major point is that this excellent commentary will benefit pastors in their preparation for sermons and adult education and is written so clearly that it deserves a place in the parish library of every congregation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is an achievement.

Edgar M. Krentz

THE GRAMMAR OF THE HEART: NEW ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY. Edited by Richard H. Bell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988. xxviii and 259 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

The product of a 1987 symposium on Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein in honor of Paul Holmer, *The Grammar of the Heart* is a fitting tribute to a scholar, teacher, and churchman who has labored passionately in the worlds of both philosophy and religious faith. This *Festschrift* well reflects Holmer's Wittgensteinian mission to unknot our tangled theological thinking, and his Kierkegaardian interest in inwardness and moral integrity. Arranged in two sections, each introduced with a keynote essay by Holmer, the book echoes the concern for ethical and spiritual vitality that characterizes Holmer's writings.

Part One begins with an essay by Holmer from his book *The Grammar of Faith*, about the nature of the religious life and the role of theology in fostering that life. D. Z. Phillips follows with an analysis of Holmer's list of "confusions" caused by too much theological attention to philosophy, and a description of Holmer's role as "guardian" of the language of religious faith. Rowan Williams traces Wittgenstein's rejection of Freudian dualism and Bonhoeffer's skepticism about the private self in order to better assess Ricoeur's "project of Christianized Post-Freudian suspicion." An essay by John Whittaker argues that while Kierkegaard maintains that Christianity is not a doctrine, religious construals arise out of fundamental principles, and "religious beliefs state facts of a sort that give life a purpose." H. A. Nielsen suggests that Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein both put us on alert regarding the tendency of science to conceal the truth, and encourage us to be aware of the baffling side of nature. Ronald E. Hustwit

faults Alvin Plantinga for confusion in his portrayal of religious belief and for inadequately stating the "risk, passion, paradox, and duty" that go with that belief. Jean Glebe-Møller traces Wittgenstein's two views of religion as personal and social, i.e., as non-verifiable first-person language that, nevertheless, develops in a social context.

Part Two opens with an essay from Holmer's book *Making Christian Sense*, entitled, "Making Sense Morally," in which Holmer makes a plea for restoring virtues as "the grammar of life" that enable us to make sense of that life. Building on that lead, H. E. Mason cites Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein against the notion that morality is based on principles and in favor of a proposal that specific judgments are central to ethical decisions. "Applying Wittgenstein's idea of conceptual grammar to virtues," Robert C. Roberts suggests that twentieth century psychotherapies are virtue-systems we should evaluate fairly and use wherever helpful. Examining the notion of inspiration, Patrick Sherry suggests a full definition that includes both secular and sacred theories. In the conviction that the language of faith is the language of emotion, Don Saliers argues that "prayer and worship allow us to become 'grammatical' in such personal capacities as gratitude, awe, contrition, hope, and compassion." Timothy Polk describes Kierkegaard as a biblical thinker who found in the Epistle of James the diagram for his "logic of the heart." Finally, Sylvia Walsh expands on Kierkegaard's point that love forms the heart by offering a "grammar of love" that identifies Christian love as transcendent, transforming, inclusive, edifying, abiding, spontaneous, and indirect and inverse.

Paul Holmer approached the religious arena from the ethical, which is the anteroom for the spirit. The mansion of faith is bulwarked about by the pure heart, chastened and compassionate. This collection of aptly named essays accurately radiates the concern of Holmer for a passionate faith, singular in allegiance and manifold in devotion. At the same time, these essays are intellectually provocative, underscoring Holmer's commitment to clear thinking and logical rigor. As Richard Bell writes in his introduction, "The essays included in this book" focus on "the integration of language with human life, beliefs with emotions and passions, mind with heart, doubt with faith—without sacrificing a philosophical concern for clarity of thought, certainty, and truth." Insofar as these essays accomplish that integration, they honor Paul Holmer, and call for the attention of all who wish to make rational sense of their religious faith even while nurturing its place within the heart.

Jerry K. Robbins
Lutheran Campus Center
Morgantown, West Virginia

GOSPEL AGAINST PARABLE: MARK'S LANGUAGE OF MYSTERY. By James G. Williams. Bible and Literature Series. Edited by David M. Gunn. Sheffield: Almond, 1985. 244 pages. Paper. $16.95.

Literary studies of Mark's Gospel have been rolling off the presses at a healthy clip for the past decade. Some of them have advanced our appreciation of this story: the shape of its plot, the impact of its characters, the reality of its tone, the sophistication of its ending. Regrettably, Williams' monograph is not one of the better offerings.

Instead of breaking new ground by rigorously pursuing a specifically literary motif, Williams resorts to an old-style search for thematic backgrounds for various Markan ideas. Many of his connections are suspect. For example, he notes correctly that boats and sea-crossings dominate the earlier chapters of the Gospel. But then he concludes that the boat becomes a symbol of "the vessel of faith, the carrier of the new community on the oft treacherous waters" of life. This is the stuff of which weak piety, not sturdy scholarship, is made.

Again, instead of concentrating on the literary world which the text makes for itself, Williams goes outside the text to find the key to its meaning. Thus he holds that the Old Testament, particularly the Isaianic "Servant of the Lord," is the "seedbed" or "seminar" which serves as the

paradigm for the people, places, and events in Mark's story. Admittedly the Gospels abound in OT allusions, but an intentionally *literary* study would focus more on the story's internal motifs rather than on their external referents.

The heart of this study is supposed to be its treatment of Jesus' parables. Occasionally Williams correctly targets their function within Mark's narrative. "The parables may be viewed... as protection of the gospel narrative," he says, "keeping it opened up to the unstoried dimension of reality, to the beyond, to the transcendent." He argues that Mark's narrative is an amalgam of Greco-Roman biography with Jesus' own parable style, which has resulted in a new form which captures the mystery of the kingdom of God.

Those well versed in the new style of literary biblical studies may well find a handful of challenging insights here. But newcomers to the field would be well advised to look elsewhere.

Mark I. Wegener
Mount Olive Lutheran Church
Minneapolis, Minnesota

DRAWING DOWN THE MOON. By Margot Adler. Revised and expanded edition. Boston: Beacon, 1987. 608 pages. Paper. $14.95.

In religion, people will get or invent what they need. People move to places on the religious spectrum which are points on their psychic compass. Thus they fill in the blanks, so to speak, of a spirituality which is missing, strayed, or stolen in order to aim for what they believe will be wholeness. The church can rant all it wants about having the bases covered, but common folks believe differently in their hearts. Hence they consult astrology charts, undergo rolfing and bio-feedback, and join movements some of us consider odd.

I do not know how large the neo-pagan revival is in the U. S.; Adler estimates it to be as large as the Unitarian Universalist Church and the Society of Friends. Think in terms of *several hundred thousand people* whom we can identify because they have joined with others on the pagan path. The number of seekers may be much larger, since neo-paganism is a do-it-yourself kit which attracts many different folk.

Our question is, why? Well, for some people it is fun; but this is not a major reason. Neo-pagans consider themselves fun-loving and playful about their religion, but they want you to know that their playfulness doesn't mean they aren't serious. Many have simply not found a spirituality that offers them a chance at feeling and living whole in a broken world, which Christianity promises but so often fails to deliver. Many neo-pagans want smaller groups and are not concerned about ecumenism in the same way Christian churches approach the issue, namely, by organizational wholeness. They would sacrifice bigness for intimacy, and uniformity of doctrine is simply not an issue: the old ways come through a myriad of tribal and national traditions, and there is no need to merge these into one melting pot.

David James, pipe-smoking Yale Ph.D. in English literature and sometime high priest of the New Haven Pagan Community (also known as *Oak, Ash and Thorn* for the three trees sacred to the faerie) lent me the first edition of Margot Adler's compendious book in 1980. David knew I was interested in spiritual paths and ritual ways. I had attended Beltane and Yul fests with the community network that gathered at his abode in Short Beach. He took the book with a flourish from one of the groaning shelves of his huge library of mythology, linguistics, and folklore. As he handed me the book, David said emphatically, "This is without doubt the best book on the market as both an introduction to the scene and as a catalogue of what's going on." He was correct then, and he is still correct today.

No other book on the market compares with it. Here is why.

1. Adler covers the contemporary neo-pagan scene in the United States and tells in detail the broad sweep of belief and ritual that one will find across the country.

2. She gives numerous lists of shared interests, ideas, and values which help us to see the interrelationships among the various groups.

3. There are three appendices to the book. The first covers the results of her 1985 questionnaire concerning pagan beliefs, values, and attitudes. We learn from this that most pagans sampled were adamantly against the use of drugs and chose ritual means to altered states (drums, chant, and dancing rank high); the pagan population is a cross-section of the total U. S. population; most pagans have ordinary jobs, with a high percentage involved in science and computer-related industry; pagans want you to know that they do not worship the devil, that their religion is not a joke, that they are not supernaturalists but rather follow a spirituality of the ordinary and the earthy, that they believe their pathway offers "the best possible pattern for the understanding of personal power and responsibility." Folks who responded to Adler's questionnaire said that the movement is changing to include more children and old people, that a deeper level of scholarship and better books about paganism are now available, that there is more communication among pagan groups, and that the predominant form of emergent pan-paganism in the U. S. is the Wiccan tradition.

4. The second appendix includes five rituals from different sources in the pagan world. These rituals range from a self-blessing formula to a full setting for Beltane (Mayday). The pagan movement uses ritual to evoke an alternative consciousness in participants by poetically naming new realities; ritual is an extremely important aspect of the neo-pagan movement. We could have wished for more rituals to be included in this book, but Adler indicates resources to check for further information. At the same time, there was no need for her to duplicate efforts at ritual-making that one finds in Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), which is by far the best-selling book on the subject.

5. For those who want to search in contemporary neo-pagan thought, the third appendix lists resources. Adler lists 135 different publications (newsletters, magazines, occasional papers), 79 different groups, 55 different festivals, and 37 books to consult. This listing makes for an exponential progression; for those who want more, she indicates which resources to write to straightaway for even larger lists. She includes her own address, a rare occurrence even in such reportorial works (Margot Adler may be familiar to readers from her years of work with National Public Radio), for those who wish to correspond or send further information.

Sandwiched in with the resources is a helpful 14-question "cult danger evaluation frame" by Isaac Bonewits, a leading intellectual neo-pagan writer; this is included, in part, to show that pagans wish not to be confused with cults. Anyone could use this questionnaire with profit. Adler points out (ouch!) that the most dangerous publicized cults in recent memory have been Christian-identified (Children of God, the Moonies, and Jim Jones' Peoples' Church).

This is an extraordinary work, and Christians should browse in it to see where people are shopping for alternative spiritualities when the church is not offering them much.

Jay C. Rochelle
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

SPIRITUALITY AND LIBERATION: OVERCOMING THE GREAT FALLACY. By Robert McAfee Brown. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1988. 158 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Most of us, at one time or another, have struggled with the tension in our lives between withdrawal and activity, the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the secular, or, in the words of Robert McAfee Brown, spirituality and liberation. In this book, Brown deals with these apparent dualisms head-on and comes to the conclusion that both terms in each pair are two ways of saying the same thing. Both terms address the same reality—our response to the activity of God in our lives.

Brown begins by calling our attempts to dichotomize the world in this manner "The Great Fallacy"—as in the book's subtitle—and traces "The Fallacy" back to Christianity's early Greek influence. Using biblical tradition as a base, he then skillfully leads us to the awareness that

liberation, when understood biblically, always includes spirituality; and spirituality, when understood biblically, always includes liberation. According to Brown, "the inclusive reality to which each of them points is the same reality." And the arena of each is always the same—the world in which we live.

This book is hard not to like. Brown's arguments are convincing, his language colorful; his style engages and enlightens. The book abounds in poignant quotes, such as Dag Hammarskjold's: "In our age, the road to holiness passes through the world of action." And Brown's own:

> One way of eating and drinking to our own damnation may be to accept food from the Lord's table without making sure there is food on other tables.... Our worship is defined by how we act for justice, and how we act for justice defines our worship.

Brown contends that feeding the hungry and providing shelter for the homeless are only first steps in our journey of spirituality/liberation. Systemic changes must be made in our political, social, and economic structures if there is to be true liberty and justice for all.

This is a great book to read and discuss in a group. When we read it alone we may be left feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand. In the last chapter Brown tells the stories of "a cloud of witnesses"—people who have taken seriously the call to spirituality/liberation. These stories are both heartening and inspiring. They call us to ask ourselves, "Who are the poor and oppressed in my life? And how do I advocate for them?" One thing is certain: we cannot make the journey alone. We need the support and encouragement of other journeyers. We need a community in which we can share our own stories and our own struggles freely and honestly—a community that will also hold us to our commitments and keep us honest with ourselves. (Such a community—The Church of the Saviour in Washington, D. C.—is described in Elizabeth O'Connor's books *Call to Commitment* and *Journey Inward, Journey Outward.*)

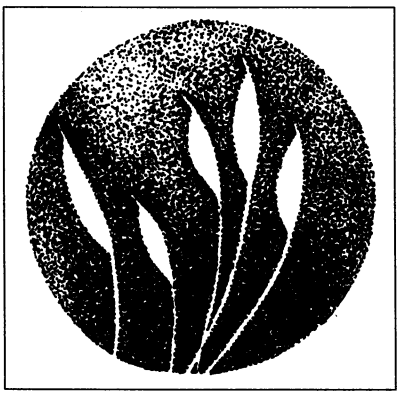
How do we build that kind of community? And how do we show solidarity with the poor? The subject of another book, perhaps.

Jane Seagren
Batavia, Illinois

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

Preaching Helps

The Day of Pentecost—Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, Series C



"Wheat That Springeth Green"

The speaker got my attention the other day when she said that she sometimes thinks of this season of the Church's Year as "the Black Hole of Pentecost." It lacks powerful festivals celebrating the high moments of Jesus' life. No Christmas, no Epiphany or Transfiguration, no Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, or Ascension. Nothing to get your teeth into. No landmarks to get your bearings. A Black Hole.

So my mind wandered. Not black but green, I thought, and not empty but full.

After a lapse of a quarter of a century J. F. Powers has just written another novel, once again about the church and priests, once again to critical acclaim. For the title of this new one he stole a line from the Easter hymn and calls it, *Wheat That Springeth Green.*

It's all about a priest's career from steamy adolescence, through years as a fanatical seminarian (hair shirt and all), into zealous priesthood and mature (singlemindedly and sometimes confusedly spiritual) tenure as pastor, up close to the time for nagging cynicism and disturbing nostalgia, reminiscence, and retirement.

It reminded me of Georges Bernanos' *Diary of a Country Priest* (a book I resolve to pick up again and finish this time). In both books we readers see a priest from two angles: inside and outside. The author takes us right inside the head and heart of the priest, and we also see how other characters in the book (classmates and colleagues, parishioners and young assistants, housekeepers and bishops) interpret and misinterpret the priest's actions and words.

How easily, how readily, misunderstanding and misjudgment find fertile soil. And how difficult it is for priest or minister—wrestling with God—to sustain sanity and humor in the face of misunderstanding. How often women and men of God—ordained or not—dispense with protests lest they sound whining or petty or defensive. Better to just rest their case with the One to whom all hearts are an open book (Luke 16:15).

In that knowledge, knowing we are known by the Lord of life, known and judged and embraced all in one, is joy and life indeed.

We are creeping up on the green season of Pentecost, and it will be good to meditate again on what it is the Lord of life is up to with us, with our church, with our world. Pentecost brings the promise that through all our days and through all the seasons of our lives, God does arrange it so that "Wheat Springeth Green."

For these opening weeks of the Pentecost season Wilhelm C. Linss, Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, has contributed the "First Readings," models of crisp and pastoral exegesis in which he concentrates on the Gospel for each Sunday.

The "Pastoral Reflections" are the work of the Rev. Mary H. Rowe, Director for Campus Ministry in Regions 1 and 2. Her contributions are rich fare, spiced with apt recollections from her reading and always enlivened with anecdotes from her personal and pastoral experience.

The Rev. Don Prange, Director of Appalachian Ministries in Economic Justice, centered in Nora, Virginia, once again authors "Prophetic Voice." At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus announced the Jubilee (Luke 4:18-19). Now the Spirit is Guide and Instructor (John 16:13) in the process by which that Jubilee is incarnated within messianic community.

These three colleagues and friends, by the sharing of their gifts, should help keep Pentecost green!

Spiritedly,

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor

The Day of Pentecost
May 14, 1989

Psalm 104:25-34
or *Veni, Creator Spiritus*
Genesis 11:1-9
Acts 2:1-21
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-11

A FIRST READING

Veni, Creator Spiritus—Come, Holy Spirit, Creative Spirit. Why do we ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit? Is he/she/it not present with us anyway? Certainly, we confess that we believe in the Holy Spirit; we repeat this confession whenever we speak the Creed. Do we really desire his presence? What good is it for us?

I find it interesting to consult the New Testament about the many actions ascribed to the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to list them all here. But look them up sometime; you will be overwhelmed by the many activities the Holy Spirit performs. They are already hinted at by the many names for the Holy Spirit: Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of Christ, Counselor (or Comforter, if you prefer), Spirit of Truth. I am sure you can find even more of these terms.

In our Gospel, the activities of the Holy Spirit are the following: comes, proceeds from the Father, bears witness to Jesus, convinces the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. That's a full day's work—at least. And that is only one passage.

In the Acts text, the Spirit fills the believers (so that they speak in tongues or languages). This is really all that is ascribed here to the Holy Spirit, but what is interesting is that behind all the events of that great day in the church's life (some would call it its birthday) stands the activity of God. This is important whenever we speak of the Spirit: he does not act independently; he always acts with God's authority and on God's command. Or, as we see in the Gospel of John, the Spirit completes the work of Christ.

And yet, with all this important activity of the Holy Spirit, even on highest authority, most of us Christians don't know very much about the Holy Spirit or are even embarrassed about the Spirit's role. We connect the Holy Spirit usually with extraordinary events, such as speaking in tongues, miracles, prophecy. Yet the most common activities of the Christian church are the work of the Holy Spirit. Realizing this, we can really pray: *Veni, Creator Spiritus.* We would not be believers if it were not for the Holy Spirit. We would not be faithful to our Lord if the Holy Spirit would not preserve us. We would not truly live if we were without the Holy Spirit. Like the wind or breath (the same word in Greek), the Holy Spirit is around us and in us. All we need to do is let him be active. Try it and see what change it can mean for your life. *Veni, Creator Spiritus.* WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

For a year the congregation of which I am a member has been preparing for Pentecost Sunday. It is on Pentecost that we will celebrate the 35th anniversary of the congregation. The preparation is in spurts, but preparations are being made.

Throughout the 1988 Pentecost season people brought old clothes and fabrics containing the color red. These were cut into strips and woven into paraments. As a weaver, I had in my mind a beautiful array of pattern and color ranging in oranges and reds. I had not anticipated how many hues of red there are, nor was I prepared for a red and white checked table cloth (no subtle blending of colors there) or the pink, yellow, green, and purple scarf.

And yet, who were those people gathered on that first Pentecost? They were a polyester crowd, not the folks of *Gentleman's Quarterly* or *Harpers Bazaar*. A people whose lives were not all together, but wanting and needing to hear and experience God's presence. A people whose hearts and minds were open to the Holy Spirit.

In John's Gospel, Jesus says, "I will send the Counselor to you. And having come, the Counselor will convince the world concerning

sin and righteousness and judgment." As a Christian and as a pastor I hear these words and my thoughts become cynical. Where is this "convinced" world? We experience anger and hate in our own lives. We read of the starving, and wars continue to proliferate on the globe. The Counselor has convinced the world of a loving God?

Again I reflect upon the weaving and the congregation to which I belong. There is Marian, an elderly woman who works weekly in the food pantry and brings the food and money donated by the congregation. There is the Bible study group which welcomed Fidel, a homeless person struggling with an alcohol addiction, into their midst and provided ongoing care until his death. There are the many single parents who are welcomed and supported. There is a union leader who is always present in worship and witnesses to his faith in his daily work through acts and words. The list continues. The Counselor has convinced these people of sin, righteousness, and judgment. They are a sign to me and to the world that God's love and grace prevail.

The weaving? As it progresses, it reflects the people who do the weaving. There are those who are methodical and careful. Their edges are straight. One person concentrates on the blending of colors, creating stripes of richness. And there are those who weave quickly and do not mind the rough and uneven edges.

Like the weaving, the church created by God's Spirit is open and receiving of all regardless of gender, economic status, or ethnic background. It is open to the cries of forsakenness, loneliness, and despair. The people of God celebrate with joy and love God's presence in their lives. The going away of Jesus enabled the Counselor to come. From death there is life. From old garments something new is created. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

The extraordinary events of Pentecost are the "witness" of the "Spirit of truth" (Jn 15:26) to the liberation spirituality of Jesus (cf. Lk 4:18-19). A liberating wind has been set loose, cutting through confusion and competition (Gen 11:4-9), leading to a world of communication (Acts 2:5-13) and cooperation. Nationalism and Babel's need to establish a "name" (Gen 11:4) are converted by God's creative "breath" (Ps 104:30) to reflect a spirit of internationalism and the common good.

To "vision" and "dream" (Acts 2:17) in such a manner is to join with the Spirit of truth as "witnesses" (Jn 15:27) to the good news of Jubilee and "the forgiveness of debts." It means to cry out, "Let the celebration begin!"

But just as Pentecost was no shallow, mood-adjusting "happy hour" (Acts 2:16), this visionary spirit suggests a reality sobered by the need for cultivating a critical analysis of what is "wrong" (Jn 16:8) with the structures and systems of this world, and "who" it is who offers a liberating spirit to make things "right" (Jn 16:8). So Pentecost is the birthing of a *process*—and the process grows toward maturity in a spirituality of liberation. In this process the Spirit of truth (Jn 15:26) is the Processor (Jn 16:13), the Leader and Guide on *the way*.

The first Christians found new things in Scripture in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus. So today the Spirit invites us to reflect in new ways on what it means to be messianic community in our current contexts of global oppression and injustice. *Veni, Creator Spiritus!* DP

The Holy Trinity
First Sunday After Pentecost
May 21, 1989

Psalm 8
Proverbs 8:22-31
Romans 5:1-5
John 16:12-15

A FIRST READING

Here it is Trinity Sunday, and not one of these texts mentions the Trinity! Proverbs speaks of Wisdom as the first creation of God; Romans speaks of our peace with God and the possibility of suffering; and John speaks of the sending of the Holy Spirit which, at least, reminds us of Pentecost. Of course, we know that the Trinity as such is not mentioned in the New Testament, but there are certainly texts that are more Trinitarian than these. It would not be right to read the Trinity into a text when it is not there. However, at least in Romans, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned in a neat arrangement. In the Johannine text, Jesus himself is reported as speaking of the Father and the Spirit of truth so that here also all three are together, provided we correctly identify the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of truth. And "together" is the decisive word. The three do their work together and in this way are one.

What does the Spirit of truth do? It (or he/she?) speaks whatever he hears, on Christ's authority and declares that which is "mine" to you. Furthermore, what is "mine" comes from the Father. This is the reason that the church today can preach and declare the word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is present, the Holy Spirit guides us so that we can speak with authority. Sometimes pastors are afraid of their authority, speak doubtfully, and thus water down the word of the Lord. But we have this promise that the Holy Spirit will declare Christ's word to us. This does not mean that we do not have to work and prepare our sermons; someone said that the Holy Spirit only helps the diligent. But it does mean that we can authoritatively and joyfully declare the word of God to our congregation. We will be guided into all the truth. And all this takes place for the glorification of Christ. We sometimes ask whether the New Testament is God-centered or Christ-centered; there are some people who emphasize the God-centeredness, but it is definitely so that the Gospel writers sometimes tend to replace God with Christ or, at least, show him as equal to God.

Melanchthon is reported to have said that it is more important to worship the mystery than to understand it. And perhaps we are left with this ambiguity or embarrassment. But we must make the most of it and use it for the glorification of Christ and, at the same time, God. This is the effect of the doctrine of the Trinity. WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Dorothy Sayers in *The Mind of the Maker* has a chapter entitled "Scalene Trinities." She uses the image of the three uneven-sided triangle along with the three natures of God to critique novelists and poets. The goal, she states, is for a writer's work to have the balance of an equilateral triangle with attention given to the idea (Creator), lover, and life-giver.

These two triangles can serve as a tool in evaluating how we communicate the fullness of God in our preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. If we emphasize one of the natures of the Trinity to the exclusion of the others, we contribute to a lopsided view of God. If we use only gender and cultural specific characteristics for one or more of the persons of the Trinity, we again skew the vision of the completeness of God.

The Trinity texts through their expansive and deliberate language open up for the preacher the all-encompassing work of God through the delight of the Creator in creation (Proverbs), the love of God as shown in redemption (Romans), and the continuing guidance and care by God through the Spirit (John).

These texts offer a multitude of biblical metaphors for God and God's activity, and they can enrich our thinking as we communicate the nature of God.

How we think about and imagine God has a great deal to do with how we think about ourselves, created in God's image. Through the use of art, poetry, and music we are able to expand our imagining of the unimaginable. In *Gutnius Bilong Jisas Kraist*, the Gospels in Pidgin for the New Guineans, the Bible Society's pictures show a kinky-haired Jesus and kinky-haired followers. Other illustrations reflect the New Guinean culture through the use of native clothing and villages. These pictures contribute to the New Guinean's ability to identify with the Christ and to say, "Yes, this is my God." The pictures also speak to those who view these pictures from other cultures of the specificity and universality of God's creating, redeeming, and sanctifying work.

In our proclamation of the Triune God we may never obtain the balance of the equilateral triangle, but in the remembering of the Scalene Trinity we may push ourselves to discover and communicate more facets of our God who desires to be known. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

The "complete truth" (Jn 16:13) does indeed seem to be "too much" (Jn 16:12) at times. It is certainly too much for those for whom truth means some systematic definition rather than the liberating process of the Spirit. The lexicon (BAGD) suggests that in this context "complete truth" means "truth in all its outreach." That's what God gives: truth in all its wholeness. And God's truth always has to do with the care of all creation (cf. Ps 8:1, 5-8).

Jesus did not live out or proclaim truth to be doctrinalized, captured in a formula, written in a book. God is no set of syllables but is our Creator, our Liberator, the giver of the Spirit of truth.

Doctrines have relevance if they put us in touch with the grace and mercy of God and help us to live out the purposes for which we are created. When we are open to the process of the Spirit for that kind of urgent truth, we might discover the completely delightful, free-spirited, creative wisdom (Prov 8:30, 31) which can carry us through the "sufferings" (Rom 5:3, 4) sometimes experienced in messianic community. That kind of truth will bring us to patience, perseverance, and hope (Rom 5:4, 5). What else is it that sustains our sisters and brothers struggling for liberation in South Africa, Central America, and other contexts of oppression and injustice in the world today? Is it that their doctrines are orthodox? Or is it "because the love of God" in all its outreach "has been poured into [their] hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5)? DP

Second Sunday After Pentecost
May 28, 1989

Psalm 117
1 Kings 8: (22-23, 27-30) 41-43
Galatians 1:1-10
Luke 7:1-10

A FIRST READING

It is fitting that the Epistle to the Galatians accompanies the following three pericopes from the Gospel of Luke. Galatians is the letter of Paul which most clearly depicts the freedom of the Christian—freedom from all powers of sin, law, and restrictions—due to the cross of Christ. Paul becomes passionate in his conviction that the gospel as he first preached it to the Galatians is the true message and the only gospel worth the name. In today's opening of the letter, he is even willing to curse any one (angel or himself included) who would preach a different gospel. It is dangerous to speak against Paul! (However, I

would suggest that we should see here more Paul's conviction of the correctness of his gospel than his desire of evil fortune for opponents.)

The Lukan pericopes, at least for the next three Sundays, illustrate this liberation in various ways. For our lesson today, interpreters usually emphasize how Jesus breaks the barriers of the Jewish nation of the time so as to fulfill the desire and prayer of a Gentile—the (Roman) centurion who asks for his help. It is interesting that the centurion does not even come to Jesus personally but communicates with him only through two groups of emissaries. He respects Jesus' religion so much that he considers himself unworthy of Jesus' personal visit. According to our text, Jesus performs teletherapy; the slave is healed without direct contact. Thus, Christ's ministry really is carried out on behalf of a Gentile, and we see the freedom with which he acts and the freedom from illness that he grants this sick slave.

But it is often overlooked that there was already friendship between the Gentile centurion and other Jews. "Elders of the Jews" are the first emissaries and commend the Gentile centurion highly, and the centurion himself is very favorably disposed toward the Jewish community since he built their synagogue. It is a picture of perfect harmony: the elders of the Jews, the Gentile centurion, the slave, and Jesus. Oh, that this harmony could have persisted. But we are reminded of the later shift: Jesus is condemned by Jews and Romans; Jews and Gentiles have separated, even within the Christian Church; Jews and Christians became such enemies that even the holocaust was possible! Let us go back to Capernaum and restore its peace! WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The religious leaders and government officials had the same difficulty recognizing Jesus' authority as did the followers of Jesus. They questioned where his power came from and from whom he received his authority. And so, Jesus was astounded at the centurion's faith and at his willingness to send messengers asking Jesus to heal his dear slave.

As we read the text we cannot help but be amazed at the human compassion the centurion has for his slave. Because of Jesus' love and care for the outsider, the sick, the poor, we expect these groups to have compassion for one another and to seek healing for one another. Where else do they have to turn? We assume the rich and powerful have other resources. And yet the message of Pentecost is that Christ's authority goes beyond all boundaries, and the Counselor comes that all might know. It is the government official, an authority figure, one with other means of help, who discovers that his hope is found in the same place as the dispossessed of the earth. The faith of a foreigner, who seeks the welfare of his slave, thus witnesses to Jesus, to the disciples, and to us.

This text is a reminder to us that Jesus came for the sake of all the world, the rich as well as the poor, the powerful as well as the powerless. Our surprise may be as great as Jesus' surprise when we find faith and compassion shown by one with authority and not only by those without power. Our ears and eyes are to be open to the experiences of God from those who represent a culture, gender, or economic status different from our own. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

We may deny that we want to "make a name for ourselves" when we get caught up in "church growth." And we may say with Solomon that our building programs are aimed at promoting God's "name" (1 Kgs 8:43). But then why is all this activity happening only where people are prosperous? And why is it that we abandon "houses of God" in areas where people are really hurting? Can "gospel" ever be isolated from the qualifier, good news "to the poor"?

Too much religion marketed in the name of the Christ seems to be a "different version" of the good news (Gal 1:6), even no good news at all.

How much ecclesiastical activity is nothing but institutional maintenance? How much of it never challenges oppressive social, economic, and political realities? In fact, how much church "success" is based on maintaining rather than

removing distinctions of class, race, and sex? That kind of activity is far removed from the good news of Jesus.

Is it just an accident that the celebrative, life-giving activities of Jesus in Luke 7 follow the question, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" And John's question, "Are you the one?" (7:19) is answered by Jesus' pointing to life-giving deeds. The name of God means nothing apart from the deeds of God. And the context for a ministry of doing the deeds of God is where needs are, not in "houses of God" planted in the midst of prosperity. DP

Third Sunday After Pentecost
June 4, 1989

Psalm 30
1 Kings 17:17-24
Galatians 1:11-24
Luke 7:11-17

A FIRST READING

This is the second pericope in this series, in which Jesus breaks another barrier, the barrier of death. Two processions are meeting: a procession of death on the way to the cemetery with a young man who has died, and a procession of life, Jesus and his disciples. In this conflict, life wins out: the young man is revived. It is clear that this reprieve does not mean the final elimination of death; the young man dies later, and everybody else also dies. It can only be a sign that in Jesus, death is overcome. But Elijah performed the same miracle, according to the First Lesson. So what is different?

The main point of the story has to do with Luke's christology. Several observations are appropriate: (1) For the first time in this Gospel, Jesus is called simply *the Lord*. (2) The people call him a great prophet. (3) They also say that in him God himself has visited his people. (4) The raising of the dead young man becomes important for the answer that Jesus sends to John the Baptist in 7:22: the dead are raised. Therefore, Luke wants us to see the person of Jesus in the light of Jesus' own resurrection which is foreshadowed in this raising. (It is interesting that Luke uses the same word for the command to the young man to "arise" as he does in the statement that a great prophet has "arisen" among us: Jesus is the one who arose, in his power over death here and in his own resurrection.)

The question of historicity, which perhaps bothers many readers of the Gospel of Luke in our time, cannot be answered. Fitzmyer in his *Anchor Bible* commentary writes, "Whether one will ever solve the problem of historicity or not, the episode proclaims to human beings the power of God working through Jesus and accosts them with a challenge of faith in that power" (I:657).

Notice here that the miracle is performed without any request and without any sign of faith in either the dead young man (how could he have faith?) or his mother or the other people. In showing that Jesus himself takes the initiative, the miracle points mainly to Jesus' compassion and power. The compassion is underscored by the characterization of the dead person: the only son of a widow (who would have no other support for her life), therefore also: he gave him to his mother. How often have we said to somebody, "Do not weep." Those are usually empty words. But when Christ uses these words, his perfect power stands behind them, so that the weeping really can stop. What a wonderful Lord! WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

As I walk to my office in Berkeley I am daily confronted by the "zombie"-like appearances of many people. They are in People's Park, on Telegraph Avenue, and sitting in doorways. They go about talking to themselves or shouting incoherent messages for all to hear.

Whether their condition is due to drug use or a mental condition, they are there, day after day after day—alone, homeless, and hungry.

All of us are forced at times to interact with persons whom we do not understand. They are the sisters, brothers, and only children of weeping mothers and fathers. They are the children of the widower, the single parent, the elderly. They all await the holy visitation of the Christ announcing life and light in the face of the death and darkness daily experienced.

The difficult task of the preacher is to make real the life-giving compassionate God to those who cry at the gates. How can we feel the pain, the hurt, and the sorrow as Jesus felt? How do we lend our strength and healing and resurrection reality to those who are in need? How do we become God's messengers of light and life for those who see only death?

The Gospel text states that Jesus had compassion on the widow. She had lost her only means of physical and emotional support. It was for her that life was given back to her son. Jesus' authority from God provided a startling witness to what God can and does do.

I teach a 3- and 4-year-old Sunday School class, and some days, due to my travel, there is a substitute. Recently when I returned from a trip the children inquired about my absence. I told them I had been in Chicago. Their next question was, "Did you fly?" "Yes," I said. To which a little girl named Stephie replied, "I'm glad you didn't crash. If you crashed you'd die, and then I would cry." "Why would you cry?" I inquired. "Because then I wouldn't have a Sunday School teacher." Her needs are not all that different from the widow's need for love and support.

As Jesus healed, he also had the power and wisdom to move people beyond their own individual needs and to seek the welfare of their neighbors. This text is also a witness to what God chooses not to do. Every widow's son who dies is not given life, nor is each sickness healed. This story is a reminder to each Christian to seek the welfare of the widow, the sick, and the hungry so as to proclaim the witness of life in the midst of death. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

Perhaps the most amazing quality of the "complete truth," the good news of the Christ *in all its outreach*, is its connection to mercy and compassion. These gifts are certainly important to the theology of Luke. "God's mercy reaches from age to age" (Lk 1:50), and yet how easily God's mercy is stifled by anxiety over doctrinal purity and ecclesiastical traditions. Paul's deepest remorse is related to "how merciless" (Gal 1:13) he was in persecuting messianic communities, and "how enthusiastic" he was "for the tradition of his ancestors" (Gal 1:14). It is in contrast to that mercilessness of the religious establishment's leadership that Jesus' compassion for those whose situations are entirely hopeless is played out (Lk 7:11-17), and he turns "mourning into dancing" (Ps 30:11).

But the good news *in all its outreach* and in all its mercy and compassion goes far beyond the exclusiveness of traditions which don't seem to know how to join in on its celebrations. And it goes far beyond acts of charity for widows and orphans in the world. God's good news means mercy which completely reverses conditions in the world. It means compassion which brings genuine liberation not merely from the symptoms of oppression and injustice but from their structural and systemic causes. The revolutionary dimension of mercy and compassion "is truth itself" (1 Kgs 17:24). DP

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost
June 11, 1989

Psalm 32
2 Samuel 11:26–12:10,13-15
Galatians 2:11-21
Luke 7:36-50

A FIRST READING

This is the third of the pericopes in which Jesus conquers a boundary, this time the boundary of sin.

One of the main exegetical problems in this narrative is the incongruity between the action of the woman in the Pharisee's house and the parable. In the narrative itself, the woman's action seems to be the condition for the forgiveness of sins, not only because of vs. 47, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much," but also because of vs. 48, in which the forgiveness of sins is declared to her after her action of love. In the parable, however, the love definitely follows the forgiveness of the debt. This may indicate a secondary combination of these two elements of the pericope. However, the sequence of events in the parable is the one that is consistent with the Gospel of Luke as a whole. Vs. 47, then, has to be explained as follows: "The fact that her sins are forgiven can be discerned by the action of her love." Vs. 48 is then a reassurance of what has happened before, although we do not know in what way she became aware of her forgiveness.

Another problem (for the exegete, not necessarily the preacher) is the different emphasis given the story in the other Gospels, where it is related clearly to the death of Jesus. Here, in Luke, according to Fitzmyer, "Repentance, forgiveness of sins, and salvation have come to one of the despised persons of Israel; she has shown this by an act of kindness manifesting a more basic love and faith, love shown to Jesus and faith in God himself" (Anchor Bible I:686).

Can people see by our love how much we have been forgiven? Or, vice-versa, do we appreciate our forgiveness so much that we love much? If there is disharmony between the forgiveness we have received and the love we practice, then it is due to our neglect.

Because of the forgiveness we have received, Christ lives in us, so we can live by faith in the Son of God (Gal 2:20). Even great sins can be forgiven (2 Sam 11:26-12:15).

The words of Jesus lead again to the question of christology: Who is this? Forgiveness of sins is the prerogative of God. If a human being claims this right, he is either a charlatan or—what? You have to draw your own conclusion. Luke gave his by writing his Gospel and including this story. WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Recently I was in a congregation in which the prayers went on longer than the sermon. The prayers were autobiographical. They spoke of a brother on drugs, the sickness of a mother, and coming back into the community after being in prison. They were prayers of repentance, forgiveness, and joy. These people spoke of their sin and of God's mercy.

About the same time I was told of the experience of a pastor doing pulpit supply. She was approached by a deacon immediately following the service reproaching her for praying for a member. After all, she was in worship that day, and he was sure that she would be very embarrassed by the prayer.

In the Gospel, when Simon mumbles to himself and those around him regarding Jesus' apparent inability to recognize this sinful woman, Jesus does not whisper his reply in fear of embarrassing the woman or those gathered. He gives a straight-forward response to the nature of forgiveness and the love response that it generates in the one forgiven.

How do we receive one another's confessions of sin and respond to the forgiveness as a community? The story of Nathan confronting David with his sin in the privacy of his room is

much more to our liking than that of a woman bursting in to a dinner party jubilant and free because she was forgiven. (Whether the forgiveness took place prior to her coming into the house or after is of some discussion among exegetes.) Tears, washing, and kissing of feet is a bit much for most of us.

Whether the discomfort of those gathered was due to the woman's demonstrative actions of thankfulness or was because of her sinfulness is of no consequence. How we as a community celebrate the forgiveness of sins of those sitting next to us is important. Is our need to worship rightly and in good order so structured that we cannot be interrupted by the joy, sorrow, or pain of one in the community?

This text can be a grace-filled vehicle to open our communities to the unpredictability of the expressions of thankfulness resulting from the awesome gift of the forgiveness of sins. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

Is it just coincidence that Nathan uses a story of the rich exploiting the poor (2 Sam 12:1-4) to help David understand his sin? Maybe a story of murder and seduction, the essence of David's sin, can help us to realize the full impact of injustice and oppression as *economic sin.* To think only of "the poor" empties the condition of its ideological reality; so it is more truthful to speak of the *oppressed,* because that makes it clear that the poor are *victims,* and that there are victimizers—and that means oppressors.

The "life of Christ" (Gal 2:20) in messianic community identifies with the oppressed, the victims of economic sin. But so often, because economic oppressors aren't even aware of their guilt, their victims are judged "guilty" for not being productive, for not accumulating wealth, even when they lack any economic opportunity. And when the poor survive by begging or by theft, then they are condemned as immoral, and the victims of exploitation become debtors to society.

Jubilee offers neither judgment nor punishment but the good news that "your debts are forgiven" (Lk 7:48,49). Debts are cancelled! A celebration of life replaces oppression!

So what justifies? What makes for justice and just relationships in society? The Law only controls or punishes; its absurdity (Gal 2:17) is that it doesn't change the oppressive realities by which weak and poor sinners are judged while rich and powerful sinners remain free to exploit. David's experience, and the episode of Luke 7:36-50, suggest that pardon can actually change behavior. But that doesn't happen without admitting guilt. Without admitting the reality of economic sin and oppressive economic systems and confessing our own participation, we can't know the good news of forgiveness and the reality of a Spirit-filled community seeking only to "live for God" (Gal 2:19).

Without an ethic of Jubilee, think of how much happiness (Ps 32:1,2) is just "wasting away" (Ps 32:3). Why not let the celebration begin?! DP

Fifth Sunday After Pentecost
June 18, 1989

Psalm 63:1-8
Zechariah 12:7-10
Galatians 3:23-29
Luke 9:18-24

A FIRST READING

The Gospel for this Sunday is one of the most dramatic combinations in the NT, appearing first in Mark. As we saw on the preceding Sundays, the pericopes lead up to the question of christology. And in this text, we have one of the christological high points of Luke. It has three parts: the confession of Peter, the announcement of the passion, and an admonition to discipleship.

Luke has some special features: The confession designates Jesus as the Christ of God, thus emphasizing especially the sending by God.

Luke omits Peter's objection and reprimand, most likely in order to show Peter in a better light. This omission couples the reference to suffering even more closely with the concept of messiahship: Jesus is a messiah, but a suffering one. This assertion corrects a wrong conception: a theology of glory is replaced by the theology of the cross. Usually we see this emphasis in the Gospel of Mark, but it can be noticed also in Luke's Gospel. The resurrection victory also is included, but the resurrection can only take place because Jesus is to be crucified.

Are these predictions *vaticinia ex eventu*, predictions which are based on the event? This interpretation is frequently maintained by scholars. It must be admitted that the details may have been filled in after the crucifixion and resurrection, but should not Jesus have realized that his teaching and his conduct would cause him trouble with the religious authorities?

Discipleship means "following, coming after me," even to death. Luke changes the tense of the verb here to indicate continuous following. He also adds "each day" because he sees a longer period of discipleship, not a once-for-all decision. These changes adapt the saying more closely to our own situation. The cross saying makes sense only after Jesus' death. Let me make a suggestion here which is difficult to substantiate exegetically but came to my mind as I deliberated on this text: Instead of carrying the yoke of the law, the Christian is to carry the cross of Christ. What the cross of Christ has accomplished is transferred to the believer. The Galatians text is completely in harmony with this alteration.

Self-denial is a word which we find hard to accept; we are more inclined to speak of self-acceptance and self-affirmation, judging by the media today. But Jesus is saying to us that life counts only if it is lived for him, that the self-sacrifice of taking up the cross actually leads to a fuller—a genuine—self-realization. WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

As a confirmation teacher it is frustrating to read over and over again the name Jesus or God placed in a blank when the answer is not known. In a 3 and 4 year old Sunday School class, I am amazed at how quickly a child learns that when all else fails, Jesus is bound to be the answer. As a campus pastor at Purdue University I was delighted when a student came in and said, "I was raised a Lutheran, I think I am a Christian, can you help me figure out what I believe in and why?" In a new way he was asking the question that Jesus put to the disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" This young man could no longer answer this question in the words of his parents, pastor, or community. What he had learned was no longer adequate for his new life experiences. Their faith was no longer his faith.

Throughout our lives we all need to keep answering the question, "Who do you say that I am?" Leaving home, the death of a friend, studying molecular physics, confronted by an ethical dilemma in business, admitting to an addiction, all are causes for us to answer the question again and to discover anew who the Christ is for us.

One of the opportunities we have as congregations through our preaching, teaching, and ministry programs is to provide a safe place for one another to ask the unaskable questions and explore who this Jesus is, in ways and places that we may not have imagined. In communities of grace we can expose our brokenness and alienation and express our rebellious natures. As our experiences of God and community grow and change we are able to grow in our ability to answer "Who do you say that I am?" And in doing so we are strengthened in our ability to bear the cross that takes us into the world witnessing to the Christ who loves unconditionally. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

As messianic community struggles with what it means to be a confessing community in following the Christ, it is clear that serious strategic questions must be resolved from time to time. That was obviously true for Jesus and the disciples in terms of how public they might be in actually speaking of Jesus as "the Christ" (Lk 9:20,21). That's why the *processing* of

community decisions is a task that must be undertaken with the leadership of "the Spirit of truth" (cf. Jn 16:13). "The Law" (Gal 3:23) and legalistic approaches to community don't make for good processing. There's a big difference between a "guardian" (Gal 3:24,25) and a spirit of mutuality. There are no hierarchies within messianic community, "no distinctions" (Gal 3:28).

One of the reasons why the transition from church to messianic community is so difficult is that we haven't learned how to trust the Spirit's processing deeply enough. We are still protective of hierarchies and divisions of labor within the church which makes for class distinctions.

So however we might be going through processes of democratization and concerns for wholeness and oneness in the church—and some parts of it are doing very well—that lingering hierarchical (if not imperialistic) syndrome still prevails in far too many situations, especially in terms of male dominance and clergy dominance. But there is a breath of fresh air, a very liberating processing spirit coming, especially out of some feminist theology. It reminds us in many ways that God created us female/male—and that we have both in our being—and it's the feminine side that is more open to wholeness and inclusiveness. The masculine side is still more inclined to dominance and exclusiveness. So it just seems spiritual that the more this feminine quality is present, the more fully human and the more Christ-like we all become in dealing with strategic questions. DP

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost
June 25, 1989

Psalm 16
1 Kings 19:14-21
Galatians 5:1,13-25
Luke 9:51-62

A FIRST READING

This is the beginning of the section where Luke for nine chapters (until 18:14) departs from the Markan order and goes his own way, incorporating materials of his own with some which he has in common with Matthew (from the so-called Q source). Therefore, we can see here how the author of Luke works independently, not employing the Markan source. Verse 51 is a strong statement about the deliberate decision and determination of Jesus to go to Jerusalem, which is for Luke, in both the Gospel and the Book of Acts, "the city of destiny" (Fitzmyer). From the earlier predictions of the passion, the reader or hearer knows that this course will lead to Jesus' death. Even if Luke lets Jesus make geographical detours, he does not detract from this goal.

To make this course even clearer, Luke puts at the beginning of this section, as at the beginning of other sections (see 4:16-30, 19:47-48), a narrative of a rejection of Jesus. In this instance, the Samaritan villagers reject him. And yet, just a little later (10:25-37) Luke tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, as if he wanted to illustrate 6:35 in Jesus' own behavior: "Love your enemies, and do good," or as if he wanted to say that not all Samaritans are like the villagers.

The second part of our pericope is often referred to as "Three Would-be Followers of Jesus." It is interesting that all three incidents are left open-ended; we do not know what the three people decided to do after the words of Jesus. Put yourself in their place: How would you react? However, the emphasis in the three incidents is on the sayings of Jesus, which demand immediate and unconditional obedience. Par-

ticularly the second saying is almost unduly harsh and demanding. It suggests that service to the kingdom is more important than even the important duty of filial piety. The third saying is to be contrasted with the OT lesson, where Elisha was permitted to say good-bye to his parents. One may bring all three sayings together under the heading of sacrifice: sacrifice of security (I), of filial duty (II), and of family affection (III), as Fitzmyer does. I like to say: count the cost (I), choose life (II), look forward (III). They demand sacrifice, determination, and abrogation of prior bonds. The decisiveness of Jesus (going to Jerusalem) is demanded of his followers likewise. WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

During the late 60s and early 70s I was part of a community involved in the political and social struggles taking place in our country. We would discuss at length what causes we were willing to die for. Pulled and called into a variety of professional ministries the realization has set in that finally one does not make that choice. In the Gospel there is not the luxury of debate; Jesus simply states, "Follow me."

Jesus turned his face toward Jerusalem with intentionality and commitment. He was to fulfill God's love for humanity, and as he set out on the journey he invited his followers to go along. It was a journey that in the end they could not complete, and yet it was a journey they must take.

To follow Christ means to go the way of the cross, and the cross means answering the call to death. It is to set oneself up for one's own pain, and it is to share in the pain, suffering, and death of the poor, the sick, and the disenfranchised.

On this difficult road the gospel is found in Paul's words to the Galatians: "Christ has set us free... Through love be servants of one another." As we go the way of the cross we are free to go where the world says we should not. We are free to no longer debate whether a position on disarmament will cost us our job. We are free to live lives of compassion and healing without fear of the consequences.

March 24, Good Friday this year, is the anniversary date of Oscar Romero's death. He made the commitment to follow Christ. He was not by temperament a radical; he was a pastor who felt a deep compassion for the common people and their misery. Without regard for those in power he said, "The church enters the fields of technology and politics only from the position of a Gospel competency to denounce sin wherever it may be. For that reason I criticize the sin and injustice in the world against which oppressed people are crying out." The oppression did not stop. And on the day Archbishop Romero finally said, "In the name of God, in the name of the suffering people whose cries go to heaven, I urge you, I beg you, I order you, stop the repression," he was shot by four assassins while conducting yet another funeral mass.

Jesus' words to the disciples regarding the Samaritans was in effect, "Do not retaliate. Follow me as I go before you." Through our lives the Spirit is at work that all may know the loving and suffering God. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

Elitism and exclusivism are rooted in thinking that "I am the only one" (1 Kgs 19:14) committed to the risks and dangers implied in taking "the road for Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51). It also suggests an attitude marked by "self-indulgence" (Gal 5:13). Paul seems to have dealt with a lot of this self-indulgent spirit and suggests it leads to negative conflicts which can "destroy the whole community" (Gal 5:15).

Messianic community is, therefore, warned of the dangers of a dogmatic elitism and an exclusivism which doesn't accept where others might be in their ultimate commitment to following the Christ. But if our participation in community processing is "guided by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16), it brings expressions of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22). "Once the hand is laid on the plow" (Lk 9:62), it's the only way to cultivate and maintain community. DP

Seventh Sunday After Pentecost
July 2, 1989

Psalm 66:1-11,14-18
Isaiah 66:10-14
Galatians 6:1-10,14-16
Luke 10:1-12,16 (17-20)

A FIRST READING

This is the second sending out of disciples (the first one is in chapter 9). It is possible that the number seventy stands for the Gentile nations to whom the gospel is to be preached. The major question about the passage is whether the mission applies only to the period during Jesus' own lifetime or to the ministry of the apostles in the time of Luke. If we assume the latter, we are also authorized to use it for ministry and mission today.

Wonderful experiences are described and predicted. The authority of the messengers is that of Christ himself, not because of some inherent quality of their own but because of Christ's authorization and the message which is to be conveyed. This message—"The kingdom of God has drawn near to you"—does not have to be limited to the sick, as we might conclude from vs. 9; see vs. 11. It is still the important message of the Christian church: the kingdom comes with Jesus Christ himself whom we proclaim to the world. This authority and the content of the message impose on the proclaimer, on us, a tremendous responsibility. We proclaim, not some wisdom, not a theology, not ideas, not ourselves, but Christ, the crucified (cf. Gal 6:14).

When Christ is preached with authority, Satan falls from heaven. Don't we wish that we could see this happen! But wherever Christ is preached and believed, Satan is driven out, and instead the names of the believers are written in heaven. The preaching is so real that peace can be given to the hearers or taken back if it is not accepted.

There are certain admonitions and expectations for the preachers: they ought to be mobile and unhindered by ballast and baggage (no purse, no bag, no sandals); they ought to be inclusive of all people (not worrying about clean and unclean); they should serve together, perhaps in a team ministry (two by two); and they ought to go strictly about their business of preaching (salute no one on the road). Yet above all, not pride in the success of the ministry counts, but the inclusion in the believing community (names written in heaven). WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Super marketing strategy, video cameras, and budgets were no part of Jesus' evangelism program. He sent out seventy people who embodied the Gospel as bearers of God's peace and proclaimers of God's presence in their lives.

In his book *The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death*, Douglas John Hall writes, "The sending out of the seventy contains an implicit criticism of power tactics of every sort. Those who are sent out take nothing with them. Nothing. Their only power is the power of the message itself, and it is not their message..... The message has power only because...persons, who have already been moved by God's pervasive Spirit, are already in some sense participants in the kingdom. The children of peace are already there" (p.14).

Are we as bearers of the word so convinced by this word in our own lives that we are able to communicate it and encourage and instruct those within our communities to also be bearers of the word? If we know and understand our stories and the source of our stories, we are ready to be sent out.

Flannery O'Conner in *Mystery and Manners* writes, "There is a certain embarrassment about being a storyteller in these times when stories are not quite considered as satisfying as statistics; but in the long run, a people is known, not by its statements or its statistics, but by the stories it tells."

As God's people we often back away from being God's proclaimers for fear that we do not

know what the good news is, for the one suffering pain or facing death. What we discover is that the gospel is there already before us and that it takes on life in each situation through words, touch, and presence. The story of one person enables the other's story to be told. And in the stories we tell we witness to the God already present and at work in the life of the world. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

Messianic community's primary processing concern is always related to "what matters" (Gal 6:16). In terms of ultimate concern, "what matters" is becoming "altogether new creatures" (6:16) in the process of bringing about an altogether new creation. And when that is kept in mind, "what matters" is always going to mean what is best and most strategic in achieving that ultimate concern. In a process guided by the Spirit there is no room for a dogmatic elitism which thinks in terms of correctness; there are only principles to help the community discover what is best. But mistakes can be made, and members of the community can forget their ultimate concern in moments of self-indulgent misbehaving (Gal 6:1). And "what matters" then is a "spirit of gentleness" (6:1) to set things right again.

It does not matter to what degree one becomes involved in institutionalized religion, or even how loyal or orthodox one might be to some institution (Gal 6:15).

It does not matter whether or not we are able to show statistical success within the life of the church (Lk 10:11).

It does not matter if you can claim victories over the most imposing of enemies so that "the spirits submit to you" (Lk 10:20).

What matters is that "your names are written in heaven" (Lk 10:20).

And what matters for that is that we are guided by the Spirit and "never get tired of doing good" (Gal 6:9). DP

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost
July 9, 1989

Psalm 25:1-9
Deuteronomy 30:9-14
Colossians 1:1-14
Luke 10:25-37

A FIRST READING

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is so well known that it is difficult to say anything that might be new. There are some exegetical problems.

(1) The question about the greatest commandment most likely did not originally belong to the parable; the two sections were originally separate stories. But the question can serve quite well as an introduction to the parable.

(2) To the question "Who is my neighbor?" the answer is that the neighbor is the recipient of the love, the neighbor whom the lawyer is supposed to love. But in the parable, especially vs. 36, the neighbor is the giver of love. This may be a formal inconsistency, but it may also be intentional: Put yourself in the place of the one who needs help; then you will see who is the neighbor.

Augustine and Luther interpreted the parable allegorically, seeing the Good Samaritan as Christ himself and giving all the other persons and things in the parable some other meaning. While this approach is interesting and creative, it does not convey the original meaning of the parable.

Both sections (the greatest commandment and the parable) end with a call to action—vs. 28: "Do this, and you will live," and vs. 37: "Go and do likewise." These admonitions lend themselves easily to ethical teaching. Even when we preach the gospel of God's gracious action, we can and must include a call to action on the part of the hearer. Because we have received God's gift, we are enabled to share God's love with

others. God's action never excludes, but rather includes, our behavior. Our action may be direct (the immediate help the Samaritan gives) or indirect (the giving of money for further help).

We, like the lawyer, are easily able to find excuses: I don't know whom to give to; I don't know what to do; the problem (e.g., of poverty, or homelessness) is so great that my little gift would not be of any effect. But no excuse is acceptable. The duty of love is unlimited and absolute; there must be no distinction between insiders and outsiders.

For the minister, this story is especially embarrassing; even religious duties are no excuse for not acting as a loving neighbor to the person in need. WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Ready to embark on a trip, we were waiting at the train station in Oakland. The train was late, and we talked to a woman awaiting her friend's arrival. She had recently moved to the area from New York City and was living temporarily in one of the suburbs until she found a job. She was amazed at how reluctant people from her suburb were to go into the city. She told of one couple who hadn't been in the city for eight years. "You would think they'd been raped and pillaged," she said. "Why did you move across the country?" we inquired. She responded with, "I was tired of being mugged, not looking people in the eye for fear of owing them something, and of always walking tough."

Each of her comments made sense separately, but putting them together made us aware of the ambiguities and paradoxes that invade and surround our lives. How do we discover and share life in the midst of a society that is full of fear and death? How is it that this woman can leave the harshness of New York City and find a life-giving environment in Oakland, a city with a similar reputation?

The Samaritan, who was not the neighbor, cared for the person near death and was able to be life giving. And yet the priest and the Levite, who were the neighbors, were unable to be neighbors in this particular circumstance.

Could it be that when we are at "home" we know the rules and expectations of our place and that we are not able to see the unexpected needs of those around us, and when we are in new surroundings the human pathos of a given situation enables us to act in life giving ways?

Our lives are full of surprises and unpredictability. When we believe we know what we are to do and how to act, we are unable to come through. And those we may least expect to come to another's aid are able. This story shows us that we are a fumbling, doubting, struggling people. We think we know ourselves and others and what can be expected and where our limits are. It points to the grace of God which comes to the world in ways we would least expect it. There is no limit to how God's grace will be made known or the lengths to which God will go to make it so.

Like the Samaritan we are on a sojourn, not at home but strangers in this land. And as strangers we are called to be open to the cries from the side of the road. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

Nationalist/religionist prejudice of Jews toward Samaritans prompted the story of Luke 10:31-37, because Jesus' own faith and orthodoxy were being put to the test (Lk 10:25). He was suspected of being soft on Samaritanism. To understand how the average orthodox Jew felt about Samaritans at that time, we could probably substitute "communist" or "Marxist" for "Samaritan." Stirring up images by labeling someone "communist" provides an easy way out to avoid the truth about neighborliness and its deeper concerns for justice and compassion. "Anti-Samaritanism" and "anti-communism" are the same piece of cloth.

Two things surface in the dialogue of Luke 10:25-37: 1) *Perspective is everything* in struggles for liberation; 2) Neighborliness outweighs religious orthodoxy.

From the perspective of the man in the ditch, from the perspective of the oppressed (and the religionist supports this), it is the one who "took pity" (10:37), the one who showed mercy

and compassion, who demonstrated neighborliness and a genuine love of God. To be an heir of "eternal life" (Lk 10:25), a life of lasting and ultimate quality, is to practice mercy and compassion. Without that, one can never understand the ultimate celebration. DP

Ninth Sunday After Pentecost
July 16, 1989

Psalm 15
Genesis 18:10a (10b-14)
Colossians 1:21-28
Luke 10:38-42

A FIRST READING

It seems strange that right after a parable that encourages action (the Parable of the Good Samaritan, last Sunday) follows a story that encourages contemplation (Mary and Martha). The Gospel of Luke has these persons in common with the Gospel of John, even if not within the same stories. While John locates them in Bethany, Luke does not mention a locality, since Jesus is still on his way to Jerusalem.

The two sisters are characterized masterfully, even if only briefly. Martha, like Mary, was sincere in her dedication to Jesus; vs. 40 could even be interpreted to indicate that Martha wanted more time to listen to Jesus.

Jesus acknowledges Martha's industry but implies that her energies are wrongly directed. It is regrettable that Jesus does not identify clearly the one thing needful; it must have to do with a spiritual relationship with him that is eternal. Jesus does not rebuke Martha for her activity until she starts complaining. Even then, her activity is not reprimanded, but Mary's listening to Jesus is approved. Jesus is speaking very gently, even in correcting Martha's busyness.

It is entirely in line with the Gospel of Luke as a whole that here two women are interacting with Jesus. In Luke's Gospel, women have a high place. Among the Jews of Jesus' time, women were not included in learning the law, and so Jesus' commendation of Mary is revolutionary. However, this new development does not prevent Luke from showing another woman (Martha) who did not choose the best "thing."

There is a place for the active life of service exemplified by Martha, whether it be directed to the Lord or to other people; there is also a place for the contemplative life signified by Mary—one of listening to Christ and thinking about his message. The active life, the life of service, has to proceed out of communion with Christ and must constantly be fed by contemplation of Christ and his deed of love for us. The story illustrates Mark 10:45, which is missing in Luke although Luke 22:25-27 comes close to it. We must realize that it is essential for us to accept Christ's service before we can be of service. WCL

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Martha stands in the corner of the bedroom. Martha is a dress form I made during college. She wears a long blue dress and has a ball of yarn for a head. Martha was named after the Martha in the Gospel text and served as a symbol of one who would do the menial tasks so that I, Mary, could be about the call to study and learning. The presence of Martha in my life enabled me to be the Mary. The Mary-Martha story served as a story of liberation and affirmation of women to be students of God's word and proclaimers of the word.

Often as a pastor I used the Mary and Martha story in Bible studies with women to show the need for liberation and theological growth. The women would listen and discuss, and finally the response was a "yes, but..." These women wanted to provide a nurturing and warm family environment—and they were committed to doing the same within the congregation through the fellowship suppers and community events. They attended Bible studies and women's groups.

My interpretation of the text produced guilt in these women, for the vocation of hospitality seemed to be opposed to the call of hearing and studying the word.

Today I am no longer comfortable with my earlier interpretation of the text. In placing Martha against Mary there was the tendency to put one in bondage at the expense of the other's freedom. For me, this text can no longer be particularly a "woman's" or a "feminist" text which gives women permission to sit at Jesus' feet. The text is speaking of the importance of being aware of Jesus' presence and being available to Jesus at that moment.

When I was a university student, my high school drama teacher invited me to have lunch with him and the great British director, Tyrone Guthrie. I thanked him very much, but said I had a one o'clock class. I have no idea what class I attended that summer afternoon or if I learned anything, but I never had another opportunity to meet the renowned Guthrie, for whom the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis is named.

Jesus did not want Martha or Mary to miss the opportunity to be with him. He did not want to miss the opportunity of being with Mary and Martha. Another time may not come. The Christ comes to us in unexpected places, at unexpected times and through unexpected people and events. These *kairos* moments we do not want to miss. MHR

PROPHETIC VOICE

What is essential to the development of messianic community is a process in which there is an openness to critical analysis and dialogue, a process in which both unlearning and learning can take place, a process in which we can lay aside misperceptions and open up to new insights. Sometimes people feel they're not ready for that. It's only natural for fears and anxieties to surface. Or people just don't know how to go about it. Or people have been isolated by traditions and the experience of false community.

Martha seems to typify those caught up in insecurities stemming from reliance on the Law as guardian instead of growing to spiritual adulthood. They "worry and fret about so many things" (Lk 10:41) that they can't join in on the joy and celebration of a way of life processed by the Spirit. Mary, on the other hand, typifies those who are open to "the better part" (Lk 10:42) of a freedom and security rooted in the "hope promised by the good news." And the good news embraces "the whole human race" (Col 1:23). Mary typifies all who have ever been excluded by religious systems.

The process of the Spirit involves a thorough training and instruction in "the wisdom" of the Christ (Col 1:28). That wisdom is experiential. It builds relationships in human community and bursts out in the practice of Jubilee. DP

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If you are moving, please attach your mailing label and send it to *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615.

PASTE MAILING LABEL HERE

Seminaries and Lay Education

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

We Lutherans have a rich heritage which takes satisfaction in the fact that all of us, laity and clergy, are called through our baptism to do ministry in the world. The seminaries of the church can be valuable resources for enabling our laity to carry out that mandate of our confessions and the scriptures.

On the campuses of our seminaries across the United States are a wealth of faculty who can use their teaching skills and theological knowledge to inspire and enlighten the laity of the church to take seriously the call to do ministry where they work, live, and play.

Certainly a seminary of the church ought to be a place of spiritual instruction and inspiration to the synods and regions it serves.

One of the exciting movements of our day in Lutheranism is the increasingly large number of lay people who want to be responsible in their ministries. They want to be able to identify the gifts which God has given them in order to use them to the benefit of the folks they come close to in their lives. A seminary can be the place where that gift identification happens and where the equipping to do ministry becomes real.

Synods and regions have a right to expect this kind of leadership and adult lay education opportunities to be happening year round at the seminary they support. This concept carried out to its fullest would mean that each of our seminaries have an extensive continuing education program for lay people. The retreats, courses of study taught by faculty and adjunct faculty, and other educational programs would need to be scheduled for the convenience of the laity. Saturday, Sunday, and night courses would need to be scheduled on a regular basis.

In addition, the faculties and administrative staff of our seminaries and supporting synods must see to it that students preparing for ordained ministry be continually presented a broader view of ministry than being ordained only to word and sacrament. It would mean that those preparing to be parish pastors be well equipped in what our more fundamentalist sisters and brothers call "discipling." It would mean that students of our seminaries preparing to be parish pastors be well grounded in carrying

out confirmation ministry and equipped to do adult membership classes with a heavy emphasis on the discipling concept. A pastor, in this age, must know how to equip others for lay ministry in this world.

Certainly we have the technological know-how and hardware capability to make it possible for each of the seminaries of the church, throughout the synods they serve, to have theological learning centers where laity (and clergy) could gather to see and hear professors teaching at the seminary, disseminated by satellite with feedback through conference calling.

This exciting concept also means that the church's seminaries could provide places for instruction and faculty to equip the theological teachers in the local parishes, namely, the Sunday School and catechism teachers.

In addition to these important enterprises, our seminaries must see one of their roles as providing the location and faculty to teach lay people to be full-time employees or volunteers on local parish staffs. This could include such lay associates as parish stewards, evangelists, musicians, teachers, nurses, and youth workers.

Being responsible centers of theological education for the regions that our seminaries serve means that we must break out of the traditional mindset. It means people who feel called to do word and sacrament ministry are only one part of our seminaries' responsibility to the synods, congregations, and individuals who support us. Our heritage of call to ministry through our baptism mandates a creative and aggressive seminary curriculum and program.

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

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