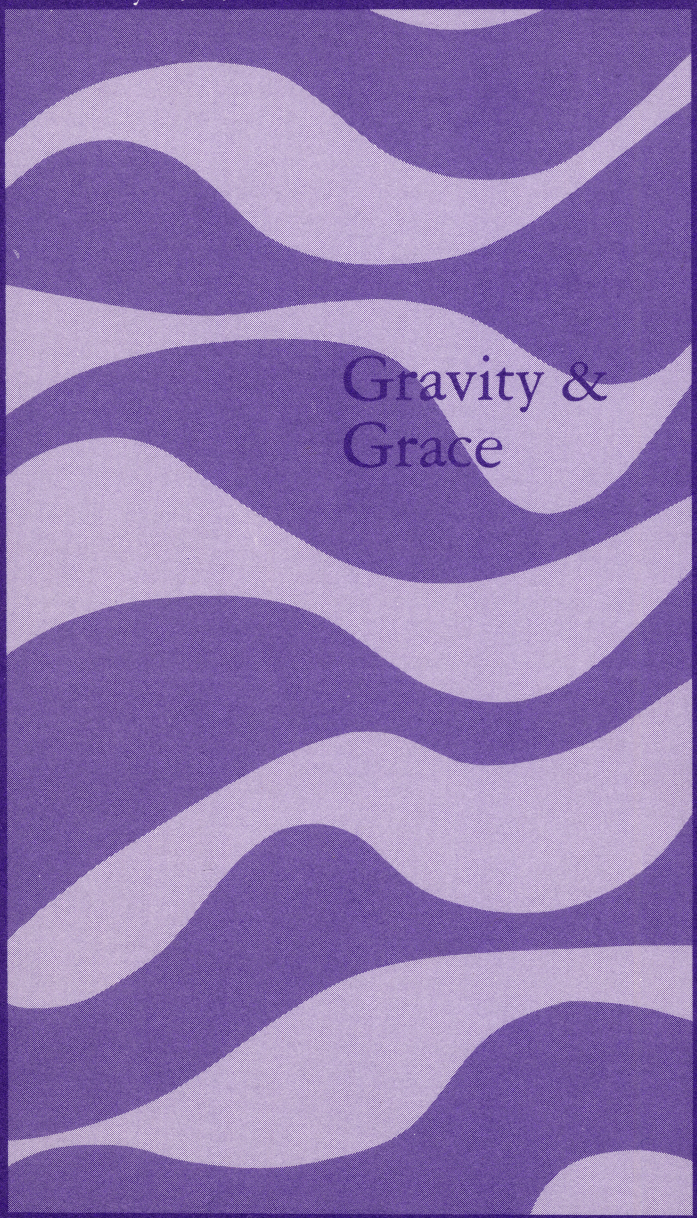
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in Theology and Mission

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in Theology and Mission

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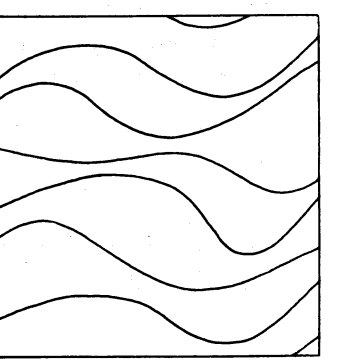
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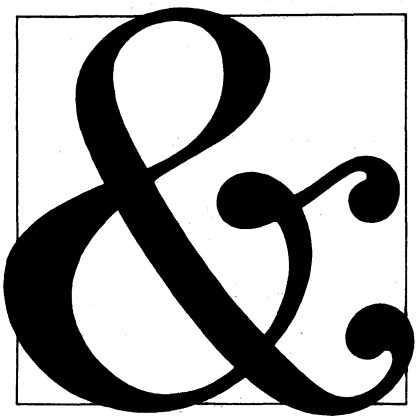
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Gravity & Grace



Two words joined by an ampersand—that was the title of Joseph Sittler's last book. Gravity—deep and heavy stuff, broodings, prophetic alarms. Grace—God's boundless love through Christ, poetry and other exalted language, speaking and writing long after eyes had dimmed and grown blind. The ampersand made the difference for Joe: Gravity *and* Grace, paradoxical twins, calling the church and world to grieve and to laugh, full of vision to the end. When LSTC has its Professional Leaders Conference in late January, 1989, it will focus on the future of Sittler's legacy. In the meantime, this issue of *Currents* looks at some of the past of that legacy.

In 1961, **Joseph Sittler** addressed the World Council of Churches in New Delhi and pointed his audience to the cosmic dimensions of christology. Reprinted here, a generation later, that speech has lost none of its power or relevance. Unless the redemptive act includes the whole of human experience and our environment, he wrote, redemption is incomplete. Nature, as well as history, is the theater of grace and the scope of redemption. Or again: The way forward is from Christology expanded to its cosmic dimensions, made passionate by the pathos of this threatened earth, and made ethical by the love and the wrath of God. Ever since creation the term light has had meanings glorious; ever since Bethlehem it has meanings concrete and beckoning.

At Sittler's memorial service **Philip Hefner** noted that Joe proclaimed the Word of God on the exposed flank of Christian preaching where two general universes of discourse, one waning and the other gaining in precision and power, confront one another across a widening sea of incomprehension. We are doomed if we mistake the port for the reality of God. Hence the church is an agency for outfitting ships to head for the open sea. Sittler was himself the one on Mt. Nebo, about whom he had spoken when he said of Moses: "He had sight without actuality; he had knowledge without possession. He knew more about what Israel meant than most people in Israel. But he died outside Israel." For Sittler our lives need no other legitimation than that they came from God in the first place, made through that Word without which nothing was made.

Other reflections at that memorial service are also worth savoring. From **Christine Kouhi Hallemeier**, a former student: He was not only interested in our responsiveness to Scripture and theology, but also in our engagement with the many vitalities of life. From **William E. Lesher**, President of LSTC: He broadened the scope of the Christian message, flung open the whole gamut of human experience for us. From **Nathan Scott**, a colleague at the University of Chicago: To talk to him for an hour was to be struck by his extraordinary gift for fitting facts together in just the right proportionality, and his gift for then expressing the relation between the given facts in a wonderfully immaculate kind of language. From **Linda-Marie Deloff**, his last editor: a moving comparison of Sittler with a luxuriant, dying tree. From **Herbert Chilstrom**, Bishop of the ELCA: memories of Joe's parting peace; from **Martin E. Marty**, another U. of C. colleague: Sittler's Lutheran stance was not a narrowing or a cramping, but a means of access to other languages and other communities.

But the beat goes on, beyond Sittler. **Thomas W. Strieter** defends the thesis that one can be a faithful heir of the Lutheran ethical tradition and at the same time be equipped with the most effective tool to struggle against the demonic force of our time. He writes with enthusiasm about two kingdoms theology, present in some version in every major Christian tradition. Luther united the notion of the two kingdoms with God's two governances by which God rules the world in order to protect it until the

kingdom of God reaches full fruition. We are called to be the eschatological people of God in an alienated world filled with errant and demonic features.

Edwin A. Schick writes appreciatively about another giant of our times: Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). Schweitzer lived in a web of theology, colonialism, and wars and was himself expert in theology, philosophy, music, and medicine. He stood in awe before that which is alive and always around us in the concrete; he was hailed by some as a prophet warning against the atomic threat, and dismissed by others as politically naive. He won the admiration of the world, but was accused also of paternalistic colonialism. "One does not have to be an angel to be a saint."

Robert H. Fischer, whose own scholarship was hailed in the December, 1988 issue of *Currents,* preached the funeral sermon in October for another of God's great luminaries: **Arthur Vööbus**. I remember talking with Arthur in the bowels of the library, where he was working on an article for a Festschrift marking the 1800th birthday of Origen, or again, welcoming him back from the Vatican from which he had brought back "real treasures." This sermon praises God for Arthur's pioneering scholarship that collected tens of thousands of pages of Syriac manuscripts on microfilm, as well as for his undying patriotism that would not let go of the hope for freedom for all fellow Estonians.

Giants stalk these pages. Writes Philip Hefner: Joseph Sittler was a kind of one man scouting party sent ahead to meet, speak with, listen to, and interpret those on the social frontiers where the claims of the Word had never penetrated or had been lost or surrendered. He struggled to discover traces of meaning and order in our common predicament.

Joseph and Albert and Arthur struggled each in his own way.

With gravity and grace,

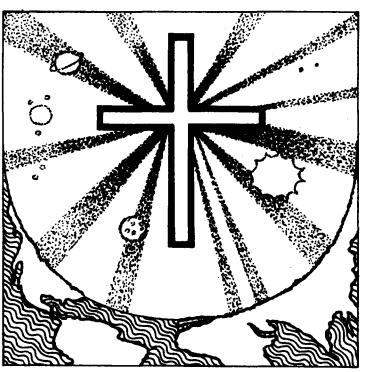
Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Called to Unity

Joseph Sittler †

When this address was given to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi, Joseph Sittler was Professor of Theology at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. At the time of his death in 1987, Sittler was Distinguished Professor in Residence at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The address was first printed in Ecumenical Review *14 (1962) 177-87, and it is here reprinted with the kind permission of the editor of that journal.*

> He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1, 15-20)



There are two reasons for placing these five verses from the Colossian letter at the beginning of what I wish to say about the unity of Christ's church. 1) These verses say clearly *that* we are called to unity, and 2) they

The Colossian error was to assume that the real world was a dualism.

suggest *how* the gift of that unity may be waiting for our obedience.

That we are called to unity, that the One who calls us is God, that this relentless calling persists over and through all discouragements, false starts, and sometimes apparently fruitless efforts is what engendered the ecumenical movement among the churches, and steadily sustains them in it.

These verses sing out their triumphant and alluring music between two huge and steady poles—"Christ" and "all things." Even the Ephesian letter, rich and large as it is in its vision of the church, moves not within so massive an orbit as this astounding statement of the purpose of God. For it is here declared that the sweep of God's restorative action in Christ is no smaller than the six-times repeated *Ta panta*. Redemption is the name for this will, this action, and this concrete Man who is God with us and God for us—and all things are permeable to his cosmic redemption because all things subsist in him. He comes to all things, not as a stranger, for he is the first-born of all creation, and in him all things were created. He is not only the matrix and *prius* of all things; he is the intention, the fullness, and the integrity of all things: for all things were created through him and for him. Nor are all things a tumbled multitude of facts in an unrelated mass, for in him all things hold together.

Why does St. Paul, in this letter, as in the letter to the Ephesians, expand his vocabulary so radically far beyond his usual terms? Why do the terms guilt, sin, the law, and the entire Judaic catalogue of demonic powers here suddenly become transposed into another vocabulary, general in its character, cosmic in its scope, so vastly referential as to fill with Christic energy and substance the farthest outreach of metaphysical speculation?

The apostle does that out of the same practical pastoral ardor as caused him, when he wrote to his Philippian community, to enclose a deceptive petty problem of human recalcitrance within the overwhelming therapy of grace. Just as selfishness and conceit in Philippi are drowned in the sea of the divine charity "found in human form... humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"—so here. The Colossian error was to assume that there were "thrones, dominions, principalities, and authorities" which have a life and power apart from Christ, that the real world was a dualism, one part of which (and that part ensconcing the power of evil) was not subject to the Lordship of the Creator in his Christ.

Against that error which, had it persisted, would have trapped Christ within terms of purely moral and spiritual power and hope, Paul sets off a kind of chain-reaction from the central atom, and the staccato ring of *ta panta* is the sounding of its reverberations into the farthest reaches of human fact, event, and thought. All is claimed for God, and all is Christic. The fugual voices of the separate claims—of him, in him, through him, for him—are gathered up in the quiet coda—"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."

We must not fail to see the nature and the size of the issue that Paul confronts and encloses in this vast Christology. In proposi-

tional form it is simply this: a doctrine of redemption is meaningful only when it swings within the larger orbit of a doctrine of creation. For God's creation of earth cannot be redeemed in any intelligible sense of the word apart from a doctrine of the cosmos which is his home, his definite place, the theater of his selfhood under God, in corporation with his neighbor, and in caring-relationship with nature, his sister.

> Unless one is prepared to accept a dualism which condemns the whole physical order as being not of God and interprets redemption simply as release from the physical order, then one is forced to raise the question of cosmic redemption, not in contrast with but as an implicate of personal redemption. Physical nature cannot be treated as an indifferent factor—as the mere stage and setting of the drama of personal redemption. It must either be condemned as in itself evil, or else it must be brought within the scope of God's redemptive act.[1]

Unless the reference and the power of the redemptive act includes the whole of human experience and environment, straight out to its farthest horizon, then the redemption is incomplete. There is and will always remain something of evil to be overcome. And more. Men and women in their existence will be tempted to reduce human redemption to what purgation, transformation, forgiveness, and blessedness is available by an "angelic" escape from the cosmos of natural and historical fact—and in that option accept some sort of dualism which is as offensive to biblical theology as it is beloved of all Gnosticism, then as now.

The Christic vision of the Eastern Fathers

In our understanding of the vast Christic vision that informs the passage from Colossians it is Irenaeus, and not the western and vastly more influential Augustine, who must be our mentor. The problem forced upon us by the events of the present decade is not soluble by the covert dualism of nature and grace. At a certain period in Christian thought and practical life, this dualism worked itself out in the dualism of church and world, of spiritual and temporal. But the time when Christian theology and Christian life could operate with such a view of things is long past. The view was never appropriate to the organic character of biblical speech; in the present state of human knowledge in all areas it has become unintelligible.

But before that cleavage occurred, and strong with the vitalities of a Christology as splendid as our case is desperate, a unitary Christology prevailed in the church: Colossians and Ephesians are echoes of it. I recollect it here, and in connection with the theme Christ the Light of the World, because it is now excruciatingly clear that Christ cannot be a light that lighteth every one coming into the world, if he is not also the light that falls upon the world into which everyone comes. He enlightens this darkling world because the world was made through him. He can be the light of men and women because they subsist in him. He can be interpretive power because he is the power of the word in creation.

"Christ the light of the world" has not had a career in the Christianity of the west comparable to the rich career of this doctrine of eastern Christendom. Nor has this image been expanded to address with lordly power the multiple energies of other images of light as these live and shape spiritual life in the

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[1]Allan D. Galloway, *The Cosmic Christ* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951), 205.

religions of millions of people in whose midst we now meet. God is light. We have in nature the bent light of God. Therefore Christ the Lord, who in our confession is named "Light of Light," must not be reduced to Light against light.

The church takes a large risk when she pulls into the center of her reflections the New Testament image of Christ as the Light of the world. For the holy meaning of light cannot be restricted to Christ, and cannot be separated from him. Creation is a work of God, who is light. And the light of the Creator-God falls upon and inheres within his creation. The world of nature can be the place of this light that "came" by Jesus Christ because, despite the world's hostility to that light, it was never without the light of God. Nature and grace are categories necessary to do justice to Christ the Savior of the world. But if they are absolute and contradictory categories they distort and reduce the doctrine of creation.

As we seek for a vision of Christ ample enough to draw us toward unity in his church we would do well to turn back the pages of western theological reflection and attend to a Father in the church whose understanding of Christ the Light was not able to settle for statements less majestic than the apostrophe to him in the first chapter of Colossians. From a recent and careful summary of the thought of Irenaeus, I quote the following paragraph:

> In Irenaeus... there are not two orders of goodness, but only one. All goodness, whether it belongs to this world or to the final consummation, is a manifestation of the grace of God. It is the same grace of God which sustains nature even in its fallen state and which confers salvation in Jesus Christ. The residual goodness in nature can even be regarded as an anticipation or foretaste of that salvation. The same... appears also in Irenaeus' attitude toward the sacraments as compared with that of the church of the Middle Ages. For Irenaeus the union of spiritual and material benefit in the Eucharist symbolizes the ultimate unity of nature and grace implied in Christian salvation. But for Aquinas the fact that the sacraments are administered in a material element is merely God's gracious concession to [our] regrettably sensuous nature."
> (P. II. QI, A.8)

For Irenaeus, the Incarnation and saving work of Jesus Christ meant that the promise of grace was held out to the whole of nature, and that henceforth nothing could be called common or unclean. For the church of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, nature was essentially common, and, if not positively unclean, at least seriously deficient in that shining whiteness of the saints in the empyrean heaven, and essentially incapable of sharing in such glory."[2]

The split between Grace and Nature in Western thought

The doctrinal cleavage, particularly fateful in western Christendom, has been an element in the inability of the church to relate the powers of grace to the vitalities and processes of nature. At the very time, and in that very part of the world where human minds were being deepeningly determined by their understanding and widened control of the powers of nature they were so identifying the realm of history and the moral as the sole realm of grace as to shrink to no effect the biblical Christology of nature. In the midst of vast changes in human relation to nature the sovereignty and scope of grace was, indeed, attested and liberated by the

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[2]Galloway, *The Cosmic Christ*, 128f.

A bit of God died with each new natural conquest.

Reformers. But post-Reformation consolidations of their teaching permitted their Christic recovery of all of nature as a realm of grace to slip back into a minor theme.

In the Enlightenment the process was completed. Rationalism, on the one hand, restricted redemption by grace to the mortal soul, and Pietism, on the other hand, turned down the blaze of the Colossian vision so radically that its *ta panta* was effective only as a moral or mystical incandescence. Enlightenment thinkers could move in on the realm of nature and virtually take it over because grace had either ignored or repudiated it. A bit of God died with each new natural conquest; the realm of grace retreated as more of the structure and process of nature was claimed by now autonomous humanity. The rood-screen in the church, apart from its original meaning, has become a symbol of humanity's devout but frightened thought permitting to fall asunder what God joined together.

It is not necessary or proper on this occasion to specify more fully the factors that have caused that unhappy divorcement. It is sufficient only to affirm that it has occurred, and to listen to the voices that lament its effects and to some that, longing for a lost wholeness, celebrate the glimmerings of its recovery. A representative voice of the lament is Matthew Arnold:

The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round
earth's shores
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle
furl'd;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges
drear
And naked shingles of the world.

And a seldom heard voice that celebrates the world as a God-haunted house is Gerald Manley Hopkins:

The world is charged with the grandeur
of God.
It will flame out, like shining from
shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the
ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not
reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod,
have trod;
And all is seared with trade;
bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares
man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel,
being shod,
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness
deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black
West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink
eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast
and with ah! bright wings.

Claiming nature for Christ

Is it again possible to fashion a theology catholic enough to affirm redemption's force enfolding nature, as we have affirmed redemption's force enfolding history? That we should make that effort is, in my understanding, the commanding task of this moment in our common history, and by common history I refer to that which is common to all of the blessed obediences of the household of faith: Antioch and Aldersgate, Constantinople and Canterbury, Geneva and Augsburg, Westminster and Plymouth.

For the problem which first drove the church, as our text reminds us, to utter a Christology of such amplitude is a problem that has persisted and presses upon us today with absolute urgency. We are being driven to claim the world of nature for God's Christ just as in the time of Augustus, the church was driven to claim the world of history as the city of God, for his Lordship and purpose. For fifteen centuries the church has declared the power of grace to conquer egocentricity, to expose idolatry, to inform the drama of history with holy meaning. But in our time we have beheld the vision and promises of the Enlightenment come to strange and awesome maturity. The cleavage between grace and nature is complete. Human identity has been shrunken to the dimensions of privatude within social determinism. The doctrine of the creation has been made a devout datum of past time. The mathematization of meaning in technology and its reduction to operational terms in phi-losophy has left no mental space wherein to declare that nature, as well as history, is the theater of grace and the scope of redemption.

When millions of the world's people, inside the church and outside of it, know that damnation now threatens nature as absolutely as it has always threatened people and societies in history, it is not likely that witness to a light that does not enfold and illumine the world-as-nature will be even comprehensible. For the root-pathos of our time is the struggle by the peoples of the world in many and various ways to find some principle, order, or power which shall be strong enough to contain the raging "...thrones, dominions, principalities" which restrict and ravage human life.

> Doctrines are evoked, clarified, refined, given force and precision within the challenge of exact circumstances.

If, to this longing of all people everywhere we are to propose "Him of whom, and through whom, and in whom are all things," then that proposal must be made in redemptive terms that are forged in the furnace of human crucial engagement with nature as both potential to blessedness and potential to hell.

The matter might be put another way: the address of Christian thought is most weak precisely where human ache is most strong. We have had, and have, a christology of the moral soul, a christology of history, and, if not a christology of the ontic, affirmations so huge as to fill the space marked out by ontological questions. But we do not

have, at least not in such effective force as to have engaged the thought of the common life, a daring, penetrating, life-affirming christology of nature. The theological magnificence of cosmic christology lies, for the most part, still tightly folded in the church's innermost heart and memory. Its power is nascent among us all in our several styles of teaching, preaching, worship; its waiting potency is available for release in kerygmatic theology, in moral theology, in liturgical theology, in sacramental theology. And the fact that our separate traditions incline us to one or another of these as central does not diminish either the fact, or our responsibility. For it is true of us all that the imperial vision of Christ as coherent in *ta panta* has not broken open the powers of grace to diagnose, judge, and heal the ways of people as they blasphemously strut about this hurt and threatened world as if they owned it. Our vocabulary of praise has become personal, pastoral, too purely spiritual, static. We have not affirmed as inherent in Christ—God's proper person for humanity's proper selfhood and society—the world political, the world economical, the world aesthetic, and all other commanded orderings of actuality which flow from the ancient summons to tend this garden of the Lord. When atoms are disposable to the ultimate hurt, then the very atoms must be reclaimed for God and his will.

The setting for the study of church unity

If, now we put together the threat to nature and a christology whose scope is as endless as that threat is absolute, do we, perhaps, gain a fresh and urgent vision of the call of God to the unity of the church, and some help toward its definition and obedience? Nothing that is here affirmed questions or slights the ways we have gone, or suggests that their continuation is not necessary and good. Incessant biblical study, penetrating theological analysis, the expansion of the scope and the deepening of our various traditions, and mutual acknowledgement in thanksgiving of the blessings God has bestowed upon us all in our several ways and works—all of this must go on.

Just as Faith and Order acknowledged at Lund that cooperative ecclesiological studies are a prolegomenon to unity but no guarantee of our willingness to receive it or even to continue to long for it—so we must here acknowledge the profound studies of Christ and the church, while they show us clearly where our life and our center is, do not automatically furnish forth a common faith, or draw us toward a faithful ordering of the life of the church in history.

The alembic in which the dynamics of unity stir with life, fuse, give new forms to Godly vitalities, and have the power to generate new obediences amidst old recalcitrancies—is history. That is why there is such a discipline as history of doctrine. For this study discloses that doctrinal statement and development is confession-thinking to the glory of God amidst historical denials or pretensions which would usurp the glory. It has always been within the clutch of a definite historical threat, or necessity, or a sheer intolerable malaise that the church has found her teaching voice. Doctrines are not born out of doctrines in an unchanging vacuum. Doctrines are evoked, clarified, refined, given force and precision within the challenge of exact circumstances. The facts of history are the exciters of insight; the nature of the moment's need engenders the doctrine to serve and bless it.

This dynamism that characterizes the church's stance and movement throughout her history, this momentum and promise inherent in the church by the Spirit, furnishes

us with hope as we try to construct a fresh doctrinal counterpoint between the *ta panta* of the claims of Christ and the facts of nature's pathetic openness to glorious use as to brutal rapacity.

But how does doctrine, addressing the necessities of history with its own interpretive unfolding of the life of God in the life of the mind of the church, bear upon the calling of God to the unity of the church? Just as the gracious gifts of God constitute and endow the church and sustain her toward fulfillment in history, so right doctrine drives toward unity in two ways: it constantly clarifies in intellectual terms what it is that sustains the church, and it calls the church to celebrate in deed what it points to as alone adequate to the world's need. This is but to say that the *telos* of doctrine is action, the fulfillment of right teaching is not right teaching but decision and deed. Clarity without the love of the sister or brother who is luminously before us precisely as the sister or brother is the clarity of damnation. "He that loveth his brother or sister abideth in the light." The church must think; but she cannot think herself into unity. The church must seek order appropriate to her nature; but she cannot order herself unto unity. But the unity of the church may be given her when she thinks and when she worships, and when she reflects upon order—all in order to ethicality.

By ethicality is meant that actualization in the decisions of the common life of those commands, calls, gifts of God which are affirmed and celebrated in theology and worship. Clarity, obedience, unity—that is the interior sequence of the light. The church knows the light in deepening ethicality under the incandescence and guidance and judgment of that light. This it must do as a witness to the unity it now has and as the condition of the fuller unity it seeks.

It is the thesis of this address that our moment in history is heavy with the imperative that faith proposes for the madly malleable and grandly possible potencies of nature, that holiest, vastest, confession: that by him, for him, and through him all things subsist in God, and therefore are to be used in joy and sanity for his human family.

The fulfillment of right teaching is not right teaching but decision and deed.

The church is both thrust and lured toward unity. The thrust is from behind and within: it is grounded in God's will and promise. The lure is God's same will and power operating upon the church from the needs of history within which she lives her life. The thrust of the will and the promise is a steady force in the church's memory: the lure is clamant in the convulsions that twist our times in the church's present. The way forward is from Christology expanded to its cosmic dimensions, made passionate by the pathos of this threatened earth, and made ethical by the love and the wrath of God. For as it was said in the beginning that God beheld all things and declared them good, so it was uttered by an angel in the apocalypse of St. John, "...ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth neither the sea, nor the trees...." The care of the earth, the realm of nature as a theater of grace, the ordering of the thick, material

procedures that make available to or deprive us of bread and peace—these are christological obediences before they are practical necessities.

We live in a *kairos* where Christ and chaos intersect, a moment in which the fullest Christology is marvelously congruent with humanity's power-founded anxiety and need. Contemporary people express their hurt in terms of their broken or uncertain relationship to society and nature. We cannot, indeed, extrude from these the substance of their God-relationship. But it might be possible so to say to them that they entertain the possibility of its truth, that the problems that appear in this earthy and societal relationship are not soluble in terms of it. For created life is a triad of God, and people, and nature. If we meet people where they hurt, they may be given new ears and eyes for that triadic Word from which the church lives in confessed acknowledgement, and under which all people live by creation.

The grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and which were celebrated in the Colossian hymn because "...it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell..." is alone a source and power and interpretive principle for a meaning adequate to the longings and needs of this cloven and embittered world. There are perceptive people in the world who glimpse this, even outside the Christian confession, and in the dark language of nature's pathos as it groans and travails in pain they set it forth. From many voices I chose one. His utterance is called, Advice to a Prophet. The poet speaks of human nature as it is formed in nature's net; of how the deer, and the sky, and the sun, and the patient, mute life of the animals accompany and enrich us as we live out our days. And then, reflecting upon the possible event by which all of these should be stunned, silenced, or obliterated he cries of himself and his human fellows—

What should we be without
The dolphin's arc, the dove's return

These things in which we have seen
ourselves and spoken
Ask us, prophet, how shall we call
Our natures forth when that live tongue
is all
Dispelled, that glass obscured or
broken

In which we have said the rose of our
love and the clean
Horse of our courage, in which beheld
The singing locust of the soul unshelled,
And all we mean or wish to mean.

Ask us, whether with the wordless rose
Our hearts shall fail us, come
demanding
Whether there shall be, lofty or
longstanding
When the bronze annals of the oak tree
close.

The church has found a melancholy number of ways to express her variety. She has found fewer ways to express her unity. But if we are indeed called to unity, and if we can obey that call in terms of a contemporary christology expanded to the dimensions of the New Testament vision, we shall perhaps, obey into fuller unity. For in such obedience we have the promise of the Divine blessing. This radio-active earth, so fecund and so fragile, is his creation, our sister, and the material place where we meet the brother or sister in Christ's light. Ever since Hiroshima the very term *light* has ghastly meanings. But ever since creation it has had meanings glorious; and ever since Bethlehem meanings concrete and beckoning.

Joseph Sittler: In Memoriam

Philip Hefner
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Texts: Isaiah 61:10–62:3; Romans 14:1-10; John 1:1-14

Joseph Sittler discerned the shape of human life, we might say, within the boundaries provided by two of his favorite pieces of literature: Herman Melville's description of the "Lee Shore" on the one hand and Gerard Manley Hopkins' sense of "God's Grandeur" on the other. And if we rightly understand this, we may get a clue as to why he considered the text from Romans, which we have just heard, to be so important an affirmation about what he called "Eternal Life in God."

Melville is describing the character of the man Bulkington:

> Let me only say that it fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably drives along the leeward land. The port would fain give succor; the port is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land, is that ship's direst jeopardy; she must fly all hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make her shudder through and through. With all her might she crowds all sail off shore; in so doing, fights 'gainst the very winds that fain would blow her homeward; seeks all the lash'ed sea's landlessness again; for refuge's sake forlornly rushing into peril; her only friend her bitterest foe! . . . Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth: that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?
>
> *But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!*

We may reflect for a moment on what life is like in a gale on the "lash'ed sea's landlessness." The terrain is the boundless water, wildly thrashing. Joe once described

the situation of the preacher in words that are reminiscent of the sea in a gale: "our lives have gone hurtling through these events, struck, refashioned, constantly seeking for what word of God to speak and how to speak it to these rocking times." When we face the madly surging landlessness of the sea, we are aware that measurements and calculations do not often work very well. All around us is constantly changing, taking on new shapes. Puny, insubstantial patterns of order and control are illusion on that sea—and yet, they are all that we really have to guide us.

The point, nevertheless, that Melville makes is that the landlessness of the lash'ed sea is where one wants to be! Or at least ought to want to be. "All deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea." It is in the midst of the always-breaking waves of landlessness, where things are always new, that the most real life is to be found. The comforts of the port may seem safe, but they beckon us away from the real. Joe once described the safety of nailed-down ethical concepts this way: "The desire to extrude principles from the Christ-life may be a form of our hidden longing to cool into palpable ingots of duty the living stuff of love, and so dismiss the Holy One with whom we have to do." Only where the realities of life defy the cooling into ingots have we got the possibilities for an encounter with the Holy One.

Joe Sittler described himself as a teacher of theology who is "exposed to and participates in the huge demolition and the tentative reconstruction of this twentieth century," and as a university preacher who "is obliged to declare the thus mauled but persistent message at the very place where the forces which make it difficult to communicate, to hear, and to apprehend" rule the field. He also spoke of himself as one who is charged to proclaim the Word of God on "the exposed flank of Christian preaching," where two "general universes of discourse, one waning and the other gaining in precision and power, confront one another across a widening sea of incomprehension." The universe of discourse that is waning is the religious culture of images and figures which the Bible presupposes; that which is gaining is the tentatively reconstructed twentieth century. One cannot address people who live and work surrounded by glass and steel in ways that have taken shape in older time. No one was more aware of that fact than Joseph Sittler.

It is true that these images from Melville are identified with Sittler himself, first of all; he, the figure of Bulkington, whose earnest thinking kept his soul always seeking the open independence of her sea. It is further the case that these images are also meant specifically for the preacher of the Christian gospel. Without question, however, both Melville and Sittler believed that they were situated where Everyman and Everywoman are also situated, out on the exposed flank of human existence, where universes of meaning and non-meaning collide. Joe knew that he happened to be a Christian on that flank, and he challenged Christians to join him there, while he invited others to meet him there. To both groups he stood as a ready helper, a sort of midwife, who would give confidence to those who sought to negotiate the passage, if they would but accept his aid.

Melville and Sittler suggest one way to get inside the text from Romans. The point that is brought to the fore by their perspectives is that the issue here is not first of all death, but life, and not the consolations of some life after death, but the consolations of life and what will happen to them in death. Paul's words are, "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." These words occur in a passage that reflects on the strategies of

living, specifically, the strategies of eating meat or being a vegetarian, observing certain days as holy or not observing them. Paul's conclusion is that these are all relative matters, and that all of the relativities honor the Lord. All of them take place within the reality of God, just as all of life transpires within that reality.

> For we do not, not a single one of us, live to ourselves, nor do we die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again.

The nub of the concern is life, and the conclusion is that Christ died and rose again precisely so that we might know that all life is God's. For Joe, this meant that life is in God, and God does not die. In one of his last public lectures, last year, he put it in these terms: "In the mind of God, we shall never not have been. That's enough."

The challenge of St. Paul, of Melville's "Lee Shore," and of Joseph Sittler is that of living, of affirming life as the Lord's, of affirming that life in all its forms can be lived in the faith that it is the Lord's.

I said at the outset that the other boundary condition for understanding Sittler and this text is the sonnet from Hopkins.

The world is charged with the grandeur
of God.
It will flame out, like shining from
shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the
ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not
reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod,
have trod;
And all is seared with trade;
bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares
man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel,
being shod.

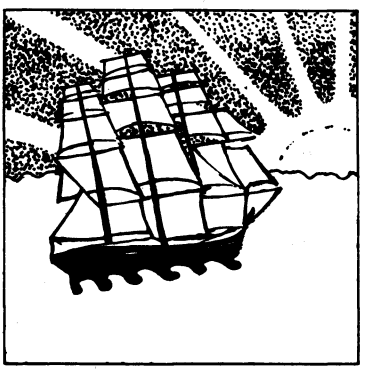
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness
deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black
West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink
eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and
with ah! bright wings.

Why does life surge out into the lash'ed sea's landlessness? Why the effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea? How can it be said that in landlessness alone resides the highest truth? Because it is there, in the midst of the relativities through which our lives go hurtling, that the grandeur of God is to be found. There, deep-down things, where the dearest freshness lives. It is there, where the world is bent, that the Holy Ghost "broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."

It is not that eating meat or abstaining is superior, the one over the other, but that *in the deciding* (St. Paul writes, "Let everyone be fully convinced in their own minds"), and *in the living out of that deciding*, we honor God, we encounter God, and come to grips with what God is in fact doing in the created world. Our fabricated rules for eating and drinking and celebrating festival days offer the safety of the port, their accoutrements constitute the hearthstone, the blankets, and the hot chicken soup that only port can provide. But they will be our doom if we mistake them for the reality of God. The grace of God is to be found in the knowledge that wherever we are, and whether we have

warmth and food or not, whether we are close to home or far from it, we are the Lord's. Here amid the uncertainties is where the chain reaction occurs which is triggered by the Word of God, here is where the new possibilities take place which God has in store for us. Here, plainly and simply, is where grace is to be found.

Precisely because this is where grace is to be found, the shapes of the sea's landlessness and the voices of those who have reported their journeys through it are recognized as important resources. Those shapes and those reports are counterpoint to the principal theme, the gospel of grace. Not enemy, not fundamentally to be feared, but rather to be understood as the context for the themes of grace. The ecology of the themes of grace. Even when we find that we must negate some of the voices that report to us from the reaches of the sea, we allow them to



penetrate us and we participate with them. If the freshness resides in deep down things, then we will find refreshment in the deep, not at the shallow pools.

This gospel is not a message that we will go somewhere, somewhere better than this world after we die. Joe confessed that such a view was depressing to him, and he insisted that it was not what St. Paul had in mind. The Christian doctrine of redemption, he wrote, is that

> God who created us in the garden of history and nature does not will to redeem us in any other garden—or in some angelic removal from all gardens. When the presence and gift of the Holy Spirit "filled all the house where they were sitting," the same Spirit made clear that God does not empower a holy balloon-ascension out of nature and history, but rather empowers a new heaven and a new earth to be constituted for persons for whom "all things become new."

The life in God's grace is life with that which does not die. And that's enough.

All of living in the lash'ed sea's landlessness is therefore by faith; eye cannot see, ear cannot hear, but faith persists. The style of living by faith is the only style that is appropriate if life is lived on the exposed flank. Faith pronounces the power and integrity of grace and then trusts those realities to accomplish their own work. To claim certainty as if it can replace faith is simply inappropriate. Such certainty amounts to confusing the amenities of home port with the grace and power of God. Since religion and the church are so often more focused on fabricated certainties than on God, they must be continually chastened. After all, the church is more an agency for outfitting ships to head for the open sea than it is a port luring the ships to tie up at the dock. Rather than a call to leave the world, the gospel is a message that ours is not a misguided confidence that God's grace within the swirling world is never spent.

These are alternative ways of talking about life and faith on Mt. Nebo, which was also a primordial image for Joe. Those on Nebo have not yet crossed the Jordan, but they nevertheless know that they have

glimpsed the Promised Land. They live and die outside Israel, and yet they know more about Israel than most men and women who live there. The Nebo-esque approach to life knows that since both sides of the Jordan are the Lord's, it does not really matter whether one's burial-plot is on this side or the other. This sense of life and death knows that just to hunger and thirst without being filled is itself a kind of "negative benediction," because "to want to have may become a strange kind of having." Joe devoted so much of his life to assisting others across the Jordan that he forgot to get himself across. But there was really no need to get across the river. Getting somewhere is one of those illusions we nurture, because they are essential to our existence. The God who is present with us when we finally get there is the God who was with us all the time, whether we ever got there or not.

though the last lights off the black
West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink
eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods . . . .

What is this but to say that the Logos, the Word which was at the beginning and through which all things were made, who has always existed with God, has never absented itself and its grace from all that which would not even be, apart from that Word?

Let me close with a memorable Sittler statement about the status of music from 1962, when he keynoted a workshop on jazz at the Village Gate in New York. We know he believed this about music, but I would suggest that what he said there is basically an affirmation about his life and about our lives, about all the world and its culture, about those who live on Mt. Nebo, and about those whose souls require that they live and work in the open independence of the sea.

> Music is of the body, it's of the world, it's of the world of nature; because that is so, it needs no apologia, it needs no attachment to other things, no legitimation by decent marriage to something else to make an honest woman out of her; with the interior forces and passion of every natural thing, music must at the risk of her life resist reduction to some purpose or end anterior to herself or supposedly superior to herself; it is what it is; its being has its own integrity; it does not have to mean but be, and whatever it means must spring with a kind of lubricated naturalness out of what it is.

When Joseph Sittler asked that the Romans lesson be the text for his service, he set the stage for this gospel to be proclaimed to us: Our lives, like music, need no other legitimation than that they came from God in the first place, that they were made through that Word without which nothing was made. Not just our lives, but all life, everywhere and in every form. This God is the power within whose ambience our lives are spun out. To live in this power is to live with that which never dies. And that's enough.

A Call to Christian Reflection . . .

"Lord, Have Mercy on Us"—1961

It was all so long ago, and far away—
And the cumulative devotion of the remembering church
Each Lent reminds us in word, and hymn, and sermon
By imagining forth each bitter detail, among them
This: "And they that passed by reviled him . . .
others mocked him . . . and he bowed his head."

And we are reminded, too, that the point of the remembering
Is not simply in pity to remember.
The point in remembering and prayer and work is
To bring together the past and the present,—
Our predicament and an everlasting Passion;
To bring together the passion of our God
And the torments of our fellows:
To bring together the Eternal bowing of one Holy head
And all the little bowings of hurt heads from that time until now.

It was neither long ago nor far away
But in a place as specific as my town,
And on a campus as here and actual as
The one I look out upon from the window of my room,
That a reviling face, and another face that approved of the reviling
Tore a heart, and bowed a head
And weighted with rejection a hurt and haunting face.

On Good Friday at the time of communion
In hundreds of churches, dim in vesper light,
Our people gathered, thinking holy thoughts,
Had guilty remembrances, and looked
Upon the white-gleaming altar where
The Presence was ensconced rich with God's
Understanding, and adequate with absolving Love.

But His blessing to our screeching world
Waits upon something more than piety,
And duty done, and devotions ticked off from Septuagesima to Easter.
The connection must be made between
The big Cross and all the little crosses:
Between this girl, in her pretty go-away-to-college coat
Clutching the promise-papers of her blasted dreams,—
And the solemn words, "heartily sorry for these my offenses . . . ."

The connection must be made because
He made it by revilings accepted, and his own head
Bowed with the weight of all bowed heads
And thus became God for us and God with us,
Grace for life—but also Judgment to death.

—Joseph Sittler
The Lutheran, 5 April 1961
Vol. XLIII, 27, p. 17

This poem was published next to a photograph of students shouting "Nigger, go home" at a Black student who had enrolled at the university they attended.

Reflections on the Life of Joseph Sittler

Christine Kouhi Hallemeier
William E. Lesher
Nathan Scott
Linda-Marie Delloff
Herbert Chilstrom
Martin E. Marty

Reflection I

I find it necessary on this occasion to separate Joe Sittler the man from his legacy. The man was a very complex one: capable of astonishing insight (more than I could ever appreciate) and, in some areas of his life, almost willful blindness; sometimes gracious in the face of great suffering, and sometimes downright cranky. I cared for a wonderful and flawed man, and I have no desire to prettify his memory and make him posthumously into someone he was not.

At the same time, I consider it a great privilege (and, I cannot help but feel, an undeserved one) to be a part of this service of thanksgiving to God for that unquestionable gift in our lives that was Joe Sittler. I have been asked especially to reflect on his legacy to those of us who are parish pastors. And there are hundreds of us who have been touched by him.

Joe was deeply concerned about the pastors of his church. He himself was captivated by the power of God's Word and recognized in the parish pastor a primary means by which the living Word empowers the community of the faithful. And for the Word to bring forth life, it needs lively servants.

Because of this, I sometimes felt when I visited Joe that my spiritual liveliness was being ascertained. A conversation with him could be a spiritual physical of sorts! What had I read lately? What had excited, moved me? I fear my report last September was not the best (diagnosis: a certain softening of the mind), and I was given the gentle but firm prescription to read Schubert Ogden's latest book, *On Theology*.

But Joe was not only interested in the pastor's responsiveness to Scripture and theology, but also in his or her engagement with the many vitalities of life and thought.

He was interested in whatever interested me at the moment: the decline in the status of women in the western world from the late 18th to early 19th centuries; why this Canadian cannot understand the necessity of the American civil war; the possibilities of the Myers–Briggs personality theory; the state of fishing in Southern Illinois; the insights and limitations of my mentally handicapped brother; the advantages and disadvantages of the parliamentary system. So many of us treasure in our memories these far-ranging conversations with Joe Sittler.

Joe's genuine interest and understanding and concern enriched the lives of so many of us immeasurably. It was as if he saw within us riches of the Spirit which we ourselves had not yet recognized. Joe's presence enlivened us, and it is for this that we give thanks to God.

Christine Kouhi Hallemeier
Assistant to the Bishop
Missouri-Kansas Synod, ELCA

Reflection II

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago is the seminary where Joe Sittler taught for 13 years at a former campus in Maywood, Illinois, and the place to which he returned after his retirement from the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

We gave Joe the honorary title of Distinguished Professor in Residence, but when he heard it, he simply winced and said with a characteristic smile, "Why don't you call me what they call retired faculty at Oxford—let me be the Senior Wrangler of LSTC."

Today, I am here at this service of family members and their closest friends to, in a sense, stand for the thousands of pastors and teachers of the church who have been students or followers of Joe and to represent the hundreds of us in that number who consider him our spiritual father.

> A conversation with him could be a spiritual physical of sorts!

To the students in the classrooms and the parishes and positions they have served across the country and around the world, Joe Sittler has been, without question, a revolutionary life force. Among other things,

—he broadened the scope of the Christian menage, especially for Lutherans, from an almost exclusive fixation on Jesus as Saviour to a comprehensive understanding of the glory of God at work in every part of the cosmic creation;

—he taught us to read, to penetrate, to absorb texts—using, but not wholly relying on, historical and theological lenses which can cloud or, worse, reduce the grandeur of the message to human form—a type of disobedience or even apostasy against which Joe protested vehemently;

—and he flung open the whole gamut of human experience for us, especially the creative arts—music, poetry, painting, literature, sculpture, and design. As he put it so often, "These are the theaters of the Divine activity."

These notions and many others have been seeded in his students over the decades, and their fruits can be traced in parishes, in

Joe Sittler had the remarkable gift of an insatiable curiosity.

position statements of the global Church, in institutions (most notably our own LSTC), and most importantly in pastors and in people in and outside the Church all across the land. It would not have been so, if Joe had not been among us.

But seminaries and divinity schools are full of professors with fascinating, bold, and expansive ideas. Joe's took root—not only because he had a clarity of insight that is unsurpassed in the experience of most of us, or because of his unique gift of languaging concepts and ideas in a way that made them soar with majestic beauty and at the same time, grounded them in the most common experiences of our everyday lives. The thing that has made his seeds stick and grow and flourish is the way he nurtured them in us.

Joe Sittler had the remarkable gift—to the end—of an insatiable curiosity. In this sense, he seemed never to grow beyond a genuine fascination with searching sophomoric questions. Share an insight from scripture, or an observation about life in the world—ground that Joe had surely covered a thousand times in his own reflections and with former students—and he would receive it, manage it, polish it, expand it, and relate it until it became our own discovery, approved and improved by his mastery.

Once I thought I had a special kind of relationship with Joe Sittler. In seminary days, I had more or less open access to his book-strewn office and occasionally to his living room and kitchen. At the slightest provocation, he would say, "Stop by and we'll smoke a pipeful on it." In these latter years, he seemed to keep meticulous track of my activities and travels. He expected regular reports and freely gave insightful advice, albeit in a more direct manner as the years went by.

But it was during the time I was on the West Coast, serving as president of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and spending great amounts of time visiting pastors and parishes to relate this relatively new school to the Western constituency, that I realized I was just one among many spiritual sons and daughters of Joe Sittler. Time and again, in living rooms, pastors' studies, and parish halls, I heard someone describe how Joe had changed their lives, radically altering their thoughts and their direction in life.

At first, this discovery was painful. It seemed almost like a betrayal. But now, it has all become part of the complex mystery of this wise and gifted and very human man.

Joe has left us much to grow on! His written legacy, some of the richest parts of which have been compiled by people here today, is a treasure accessible to all of us. And we also have each other to grow on as we mingle together and embody in our company a fuller sense of Joe Sittler's many-sided life.

He belongs to no one of us or group of us wholly. But a part of him belongs to all of us.

In a more essential sense, however, Joe would surely want us to put it differently. I expect he would want to belong to that company about whom St. Paul wrote when he said, "All things are yours, whether you belong to Paul or Apollos or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all things are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's."

Today our gratitude is for a person whose life, in all its complexities and varied relationships, was essentially in Christ and belongs now wholly to God.

William E. Lesher
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Reflection III

The man whose life we are assembled here this afternoon affectionately to celebrate was indeed a most remarkable man—remarkable for his genius as a theologian, for his eloquence in the pulpit and the classroom, for the diligence of his service not only to the Lutheran communion but also to the larger ecumenical movement of our time. Nor will we forget how remarkable was his compassionateness as pastor and counselor, or his unshakable fidelity as husband and as father to a family of six children. And, had I a sufficient allotment of time, it would give me great pleasure to speak about these various facets of his life as I came to know them in the course of a friendship of more than thirty years. But, having just a few moments in this service, I want to lift up the one quality which I suspect we all feel to have been that which most transcendently defined his character, and this is a quality which we can only speak of as wisdom.

To talk to him for an hour about anything under the sun was to be struck by his extraordinary gift for fitting facts together in just the right proportionality and his gift for then expressing the relation between the given facts in a wonderfully immaculate kind of language. Nowhere, I think, in all the things he published is his characteristic wisdom more in evidence than in the fine anthology of his reflections that Linda-Marie Delloff edited year before last under the title *Gravity & Grace.*[1] And I want now just to read a few passages from this little book: the voice is unmistakably Joe's....

"My son, then a teenager, and I were watching the first moon shot together. I was all worked up about this really uncanny event back then in the 1960s. Knowing as I did something about cosmology, I was simply stunned by the magnificence of this accomplishment—landing a man on the moon! My kid sat there; he didn't even take his feet off the table. He noticed that I had my jaw hanging out, and he said, 'Don't worry, Pop, they'll make it.'

"That response was almost parabolic. He took for granted a world that I have striven for a long time to understand at all. Your children, and your children's children, are already growing up in a world in which the doctrine of God has got to swing in the same orbits with the sun, the moon, and the farthest stars. A generation that learns about modern physics in the fifth grade and lives with complete aplomb in an electronic world is not likely to find its Sunday school picture of God adequate to its everyday experience" (p. 98).

"My job at the University of Chicago was called *constructive theology.* My responsibility required that I, as both an individual and a representative of the community of faith, put that tradition on the battle line where theological affirmations meet general human affirmations: to reason and construct forward into a new situation the old statements of the church and the believing community.

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[1]Joseph Sittler, *Gravity & Grace: Reflections and Provocations*, ed. Linda-Marie Delloff (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986).

"For instance, I can say for myself and within my own community, 'I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,' and people nod their heads in a corporeal and corporate affirmation. They too affirm that. But in the university, the moment I say, 'I believe in God,' somebody says, 'Why? By what right? By what reasonable ground do you dare say a thing like that?' So I have to take the whole tradition of accumulated Christian thought and put it forward as a public event in the face of those who don't believe it or who don't know whether they believe it. Theologians or preachers cannot make people believe. They can only explicate what it might mean to believe, in such a way as to lead others to entertain the possibility of believing.

"I can offer an illustration. I was teaching in a typical class made up of all sorts of men and women, some of them believers and some nonbelievers. (Not everyone who comes to a theological school in a university is headed for ordination; most of them are going to be teachers.) I was lecturing on the magnificent statement in the Nicene Creed about the relationship of Jesus the Son to the Father. A student sat there watching me with gimlet eyes. When I came near the conclusion, he raised his hand.

"I said, 'OK, what is it?'

"He said, 'You know, if it were true, it would do.'

"Now that is as far as a teacher can go. I can't transmit my sense of the truth of that statement to him, like writing out a prescription and letting him follow it. I can only teach in such a way as to engender in him the questions, as if he were saying to himself, 'If it were true, it's a big enough truth that it would pull me together.' In a sense, that's what a sermon is for: to hang the holy possible in front of the mind of the listeners and lead them to that wonderful moment when they say, 'If it were true, it would do.' To pass from that to belief is the work of the Holy Spirit, not of the preacher or the teacher" (pp. 62-3).

"Old age is a time of gathering diminishments. The maturation of hope and expectation into experience reverses in aging. There is literally no future. All the little filaments of personal relations that constitute your world snap loose, one after another.

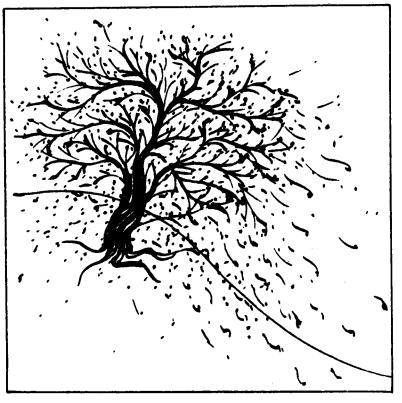
"I think of the world in which I was an active teacher and churchman and worker. Ted Tappert, Franklin Fry, Paul Krauss, Willem Visser 't Hooft—all that company of world theologians of which I was not a peer, but a little guy among the greats—Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr, Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth, and Emil Brunner—I knew the whole bunch! We were on the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission together. For 30 years of my life I was a member of the group I now sardonically remember called itself 'the younger theologians.' We met twice a year in the House of Preachers at Washington Cathedral, because it was offered to us and it was cheap. Other members of the group were Henry Pitney Van Deusen, James Luther Adams, Wilhelm Pauck, and Paul Tillich. Now Jim Adams and I are the only two left.

"We respond with a combination of rejoicing and melancholy. One would think that to talk of aging in true and realistic terms of diminishment, of passingness, would be depressing to the aged. Take it from me, the very opposite is the case. When I appear among my peers—old people who ask me sometimes to come because they know my special interest in them—when I come and give them bits of the literature on aging, which I know by heart now and can recite to them, I find that they both weep and are consoled, because they know they are not alone. This is the human condition; this is

the company toward membership in which we are all moving" (pp. 124-25).

"Heaven is a metaphor for the fulfillment of life in God. I remember once I was interim pastor in a congregation and a lady came to me, a nice lady who had experienced a very fulfilling and wonderful marriage. Her husband had died the autumn before, and she was in deep grief. She said, 'You know, it's particularly hard late in the afternoon sitting at the window watching where he used to come around the corner in summertime, his coat over his arm, slapping his leg with the evening paper. He always stopped just when he thought I couldn't see him and knocked out his pipe. He knew I didn't want him to smoke so much, although I kept sewing up the burnt holes in his coat pockets. That time of day is a terrible one for me to get through, because I know he won't come around the corner any more. In heaven do you suppose he and I will live together in a cottage with a white fence?'

"This was pathetic. I appreciate the woman's grief and affection, but I can't say, 'Yes, yes, in heaven that's the way it's going to be.' That would be a lie. Who would manufacture the old shag tobacco in heaven? There would have to be a pipe-making shop and a tweed jacket to carry the pipe in. That is simply not true to the Christian faith" (pp. 125-26).



Well, there, there is the voice of the man whom we so greatly loved. And I would simply say to you, his friends, and most especially to his children, that in the years to come, as you find yourselves from time to time wishing that you could hear his voice again, you should do nothing other than turn to this wonderful little anthology of his wisdom, *Gravity &Grace*, for the reading of it will immediately bring that voice back.

Nathan A. Scott, Jr.
University of Virginia

Reflection IV

Having Joe as a friend, in my case since 1968 or so, was like knowing of a special tree, not in one's own yard but in a public park through which others passed frequently—in fact, meeting and becoming friends in the shade of this tree.

Joe sheltered and shaded; enriched the earth; brought forth many fruits; and gave them all away. He inspired—not as a beautiful tree does, by its loveliness; in fact, Joe looked something like a tree, but a tall and thin one, knobby in many places. Joe inspired more like a tree whose constant growth and expansion amazes by lasting throughout the whole of its long life. He challenged, indeed pushed, others toward similar growth.

As my relationship with Joe changed—first, as he became increasingly blind, and hard of hearing, and then ill—I, as did others, attempted to reciprocate by nourishing the tree, feeding it at its roots, which in Joe's case were intellectual and spiritual. As I became his unofficial, then his official, editor, I tried to flutter his thinning leaves and

branches by suggesting, by arguing, by adding, eliminating. A branch grew; I pruned, and helped him to shape it.

Even so, who was the ultimate beneficiary of these efforts? It was Joe in only an intermediate way. It was, in the end, myself again—along with all the readers of his words. Somehow, even as I worked to nurture, the branches bent gracefully and fell into my own arms.

And then they became thinner, and their leaves became the thin white snowflakes of his hair. And then they fell—and it was winter.

Says the tree, in the words of the Shakespeare sonnet Joe wished me to read on this occasion:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
when yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
upon these boughs which shake against the cold,
bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou seest the twilight of such day as after sunset fadeth in the west,
which by and by black night doth take away,
death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou seest the glowing of such fire that on the ashes of his youth doth lie
as the death-bed whereon it must expire,
consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
to love that well which thou must leave ere long.

The tree is gone now, and will soon enrich the earth literally. Where the tree was, there is a space, an emptiness. For Joe, love God—love one another—love the earth. In that space, plant another tree.

Linda-Marie Delloff
Saddle River, New Jersey

Reflection V

The adage "Better Late Than Never" fits well my acquaintance with Joe Sittler. Our paths did not cross until very late in his life and very recently in mine. But the moment we met the chemistry was right. I wondered, "Was it that way with every one he met? Did others feel so totally drawn to him? Am I selfish to hope it wasn't that way with very many others?"

I will never forget my last visit with him. It was at his home in Hyde Park. He wanted me to come. I felt so very honored. We sat in his simple day room. A cursory glance about that room told you that his world was the universe of the mind. Material things mattered little.

Our conversation roved over the whole world: The Iran/Contra Affair, the inability of the Lutheran Church to speak to contemporary issues, his hopes for the ELCA, apostolic succession, our nonagenarian friend Conrad Bergendoff ("I understand," he said, "that that rascal has just bought a new car"), his health (which, he said, reminded him of the time he traded cars. The salesman took one look at it and said, "It's a total wreck, but in very good condition!"), his fear that he would lose his mental faculties before he died.

As I left him that day he insisted that I come to Jeanne's bedside. He stroked her

forehead tenderly and spoke of "my beautiful Jeanne."

As I turned to him at the door he strained at me through his thick glasses and said, "Good bye." Then he raised his hand and made the sign of the cross toward me. "God bless you, Bishop."

His last words to me....

Herbert W. Chilstrom
Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Reflection VI

To be a church theologian, I suppose, is a limiting definition, in that if one is a church theologian, she or he is then not something else. I doubt whether reviewers of modern theology would call Joseph Sittler a *theologian*'s theologian. He was not the philosophically neat polisher of the craft within the academy, but a mediator who connects the language of the believing community and the academy, and then again is the mediator of the language of the academy back to that believing community. He liked to say he wanted to break the cycle of which Simone Weil spoke when she said that culture to her often looked like professors training professors to become professors, who in turn again produced professors. At the heart of his Christian theology, there had to be the people of God who made up the church. We all saw him emphasizing this in at least three dimensions.

First, he had a microscopically close interest in the local community, not just in what, for example, the preacher says to that community but in what the pastor takes from them. His old congregation back in Ohio was a constant presence in his theology. He was always interested, he said, in the fact that theologians did so well at writing on the phenomenology of evil; couldn't someone write on the phenomenology of grace, as it is needed and seen in such places? Professor Sittler liked to claim that he got both an awareness of his vices and his virtues on that local scene. Vices? He once told us that he no longer went to hear the renderings of the *Messiah* (having heard them too often back in Springfield, Ohio, as a child) because he knew that when the topic of lust would come up at God's judgment, it would have been first born or recognized when he stared into the limpid, black eyes of the alto during the *Messiah*. The virtues of humility and modesty also stayed with him from Ohio. He told of the aged woman of the parish who kept him honest by saying very little after any sermon, but who tugged at his sleeve at the church door one week and said, "Pastor, you've been very busy this week, haven't you?" On the virtue of clarity and effectiveness: when asked what he would do if he had one sentence to tell the church how to reform, he said, "Watch your language." This was a very consistent theme, and language, for this rhetorician, had to be tested in the local community.

He had a microscopically close interest in the local community.

Secondly, he was a *Lutheran* church person. This is the point where once upon a

time the door of influence would have narrowed or closed for most theologians. But thanks to the expansiveness of people like Joseph Sittler—and maybe to more than anyone else in America, thanks to Sittler—his Lutheran stance did not represent a narrowing or a cramping, but was a means of access to other languages and other communities. He could relativize—oh, how he would hate the word—the structures of the church. He would relativize them, while taking them seriously. Thirty-five years ago, I was first drawn into ecumenical confessionalism while seeing him, the world's worst committee person, devote endless hours in committee time, toward Lutheran union. And yet I heard him tell large gatherings of Lutherans in recent years that the new movement toward the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America should be undertaken and completed with dispatch, not because Lutheran union was so very, very important, but because it was so unimportant. He didn't *mean* it was unimportant; it was merely something to be absorbed along the way, toward the third phase of his understanding of the life of the church.

Sittler, third, was an *ecumenical* theologian. He expanded the concepts of the world church, sometimes in dazzling ways, as in his speech while keynoting the World Council of Churches meeting in New Delhi in 1961.[1] Teacups in Geneva still rattle from that speech, in which he brought world as nature and disgraced-and-then-graced world together. He was also always looking for books on "Christ and Cosmos," and the "Cosmic Christ," and "Cosmology and Christ," so when he addressed the whole church of a mere billion people it looked small.

It is impossible to speak of Sittler, the church person, without quoting him. See what he learned from his years on "Faith and Order":

> One's mind becomes aware of a triple process at work. Confidence in the comprehensiveness of all theological formulation is relativized. Motivation toward fresh forms of theological discourse, in recognition of powerful cultural changes, is energized, and conviction about the enduring and incomparable realities of the Christian faith is solidified.

Martin E. Marty
The University of Chicago

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[1]Reprinted in this issue. See pages 5-13.

Two Kingdoms and Governances Thinking for Today's World

Thomas W. Strieter
Chicago, Illinois

Thesis: *One can be a faithful heir of the Lutheran ethical tradition, and at the same time be equipped with the most effective tool to struggle against the demonic forces of our time.*

This thesis may seem to be obvious to many Lutherans, but, in fact, such is not the case. To address this issue in an informed manner requires a reexamination of the ethical dynamics in our Reformation tradition, a recognition of ethical failures within Lutheranism, and the offering of sound alternatives to these past failures by reappropriating and revising the Reformation tradition for our time.

Many critics, both within and outside Lutheranism, have attacked what is termed Lutheran dualistic thinking, demanding that we jettison the baggage of Lutheran quietism and acquiescence to the secular realm, which culminated in Lutheran ethical bankruptcy in the Nazi debacle. The blame for this Lutheran capitulation has been laid time and time again at the feet of Martin Luther and his doctrine of the two kingdoms.

That charge, however, simply does not wash. Lutherans must certainly wince in shame at the Lutheran ethical sellout in the 19th and 20th centuries by those who created a gulf between the sacred and the secular in the name of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. Lutheran conservatives did so in order to hold on to old political-social-economic structures in the midst of mid-nineteenth century revolutionary ferment. Liberals wanted a great gulf fixed between the secular and the sacred so science, the problems of the industrialization of society, the colonialization of third world countries, and other such issues would not be impeded by, nor be answerable to, religion.

What goes by the name of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms in this context

is not Luther's thinking at all, but is, in fact, diametrically opposed to Luther's ethical constructions, and rightly must be termed a 19th and 20th century new-Lutheran heresy.

Luther's "two kingdoms" theology was forged in an age of struggle, and, properly understood, delineated, and revised for our time, it can be a rich resource in revitalizing ethical thinking within Lutheranism and ecumenically, and can promote significant Christian action in our contemporary world.

I will, first of all, show a few of the abuses of Luther's ethical thinking in 19th and 20th century Lutheranism; then offer a sketch of what shaped Luther's ethical thinking; and finally address the matter of applying the Reformation ethical tradition to our own times.

The neo-Lutheran heresy

According to 19th and 20th century neo-Lutherans, the secular government and the entire secular enterprise were autonomous from the will of God, and were a law unto themselves (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*). For Luther, however, Christians are subject to government along with non-Christians, but always there is a point beyond which a Christian cannot go. Luther insisted that a Christian must disobey when called to go against the principles of reason, justice, and natural law. Thus, for Luther, one's Christian insights have a great deal to do with conduct in society and criticism of its structures.

With the passage of time, elements of Luther's insights were used out of context and in opposition to Luther's intentions. Often lost was Luther's insight that we are operating in the arena of the eschatological struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, and that the Christian participates in the struggle between good and evil as a cooperator with God.

19th century theologians, both conservative and liberal, played an important, if often disastrous, role in the shaping of Lutheran social ethics, and this had a negative effect on Lutheran communities far beyond the borders of Germany. They used Luther's political statements, often quite out of context, to give legitimation to their own agendas, but they lacked Luther's unifying vision.

For these theologians, the *social* order was God's order, and the "spiritual realm" was played off against the political realm in a dualistic fashion. A sundering was achieved, the state being the realm of the law—its own law—and the church being the realm of a gospel which speaks only to the individual Christian heart. The conservative theologian A. F. C. Vilmar stated, "Christianity, which is not of this world... ought not to burden itself with the petty problems of the world.... The servants of the Church not only should not take a political stand, but they really cannot do so, and least of all can they interfere or impose themselves on secular government."[1]

The doctrine of the "orders of creation" gave legitimation to political institutions, and benediction to the *status quo*. The theologian Ernst Luthardt wrote, "The gospel has nothing to do with outward existence, but only with eternal life."[2] Thus Jesus has nothing to do with secular life, but only addresses the spirituality of the individual person.

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[1]A. F. C. Vilmar, *Zur neuesten Kulturgeschichte Deutschlands*, vol. 2, quoted in Karl Hertz, ed., *Two Kingdoms and One World: A Sourcebook in Christian Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), 77-8.

[2]Ernst Christian Luthardt, *Die Ethik Luthers in ihren Gründzugen*, cited by Hertz, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, 83.

Autonomy (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*) was granted to the world of politics, industry, commerce, science, and technology. This world simply did not have to be responsible to God's will in Jesus Christ. Jesus saves souls; all other spheres of reality are on their own. Now the dualism is between the sacred and the secular, whereas the dualism in Luther's thought lay in the power struggle between the forces of God and the Evil One.

Luther scholar Ulrich Duchrow comments on this: "The notion [of *Eigengesetzlichkeit* had] far reaching consequences. Exploitation in industry, the idea of racial superiority, imperialist wars, and iron measures in government were accepted and defended as though they were predetermined laws or human destiny in a Social Darwinist sense."[3]

The liberal theologian Rudolph Sohm had said, "The gospel frees us from this world, frees us from all questions of public life, also from the social question. Christianity has no answers to these questions."[4] Thus the secular is separated from the spiritual. Religion is solely a private affair. The power of the sword, the marketplace, and the pursuits of science are not morally accountable. The result was the acceptance of the *status quo*, with no struggle against erring and demonic elements in society.

All this ended in ethical bankruptcy under Adolf Hitler and Nazism in the 20th century. Many Lutherans went along with Nazism, arguing from Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. Courageous theologians such as Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer attacked this capitulation and believed that National Socialism had brought the neo-Lutheran catastrophe out into the open. The *Barmen Declaration*, the confessional document of the *Confessing Church*, stated that the crucial issue was a distorted understanding of law in its relationship to gospel. In opposition to the neo-Lutheran two kingdoms doctrine, the Confessing Church affirmed the "lordship of Christ" over every area of life. The *Barmen Declaration* was a minority voice against the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christians), who were willing to follow Hitler's dictates for church and society. *Barmen* insisted that every area of life belongs to Jesus Christ, and the church cannot abandon its message by embracing prevailing ideological and political convictions. Thesis II of the *Barmen Declaration* utterly rejects *Eigengesetzlichkeit*. "We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords—areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him."[5]

In spite of this protest of the Confessing Church, many Lutherans accepted Nazism in the belief that to obey authority, even distorted authority, was the will of God. Great, lonely voices spoke against this, but could not prevail.

Interestingly enough, the leader of the Lutheran Church of Norway, Archbishop Eivind Berggrav, argued for Christian resistance against the Nazis precisely on the basis of Luther's teaching on the two kingdoms and governances. Nevertheless, the German neo-Lutheran view on governmental autonomy has been deeply embedded in the Lutheran mentality, also in our own country.

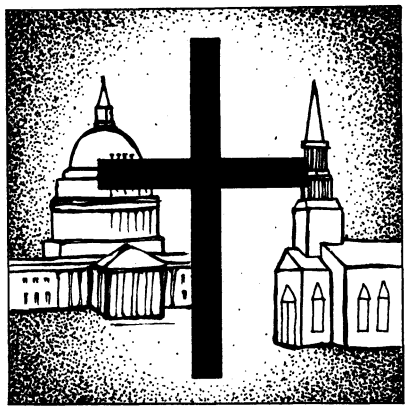
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[3]Ulrich Duchrow, ed., *Lutheran Churches —Salt or Mirror of Society? Case Studies on the Theory and Practice of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine*, Lutheran World Federation, Department of Studies (Geneva, 1977), 113.

[4]Rudolph Sohm, "Der Christ im öffentlichem Leben," quoted in Hertz, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, 87.

[5]"Barmen Declaration," quoted in Hertz, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, 187-89.

Luther's teaching of two kingdoms and two-fold governances



In spite of this tragic neo-Lutheran abuse, something akin to a "two kingdoms" model is necessary for Christian thinking, because its basic distinctions are essential for the defense and proclamation of the gospel. Every major Christian tradition operates with some version of the two kingdoms, although proponents of these traditions may be defensive about this assertion, use different terms for it, and apply it in decidedly different ways.

With this in mind, let us briefly review the factors that shaped Luther's two kingdoms and governances thinking, and draw a few conclusions as to how it addresses us today.

The biblical context of Luther's concept of the two kingdoms and governances are the biblical proclamation of the eschatological reign of God which is locked in struggle with the present reign of Satan and sin, and the role of political institutions in this field of tension.

Biblical apocalyptic deals with the struggle between the powers of God and the Evil One, with the assurance that God will ultimately overcome. Apocalyptic literature is a way of dealing with oppression, a survival model for people who are vulnerable to the onslaughts of the oppressor, but who cling to the conviction that God—and his people—will be vindicated.

These two powers represent two kingdoms. The issue of the two kingdoms begins with the promise of the advent of the Messiah and the coming of the reign of God. The gospel announces that this is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, who ushers in the reign of God. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God in the context of Jewish Apocalypticism, which held that the cosmic struggles between the powers of good and evil would soon result in God's total victory and cosmic redemption. Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God is imminent, and that he, Jesus, was ushering it in.

Jesus did not preach withdrawal from society, but rather that those who repent and believe the gospel of the kingdom should stand out in front of the world as a light, a city on a hill, an alternative community reflecting the ethics of the coming kingdom. Though vulnerable to oppressors, they are sure to overcome. This kind of kingdom-living in the face of eschatological struggle deeply influenced Luther's thought. He valued the words of Jesus: "You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Matt 20:25-26).

Integral to Luther's theological understanding, therefore, were an apocalyptic understanding of a cosmic divine-demonic struggle and the imminence of the final consummation (*eschaton*), as well as Jesus' person and message and work, and the implications of the risen Lord for the shape and

conduct of the church as his end-time community.

Luther was also deeply influenced by St. Paul, who stresses Christians' work in the world for the good of God's creation. Believers, whose minds are transformed in Christ Jesus, obey government in a qualified way insofar as worldly rulers serve as ministers of God for good (Rom 12-13). This, however, is not blind obedience. Government can become a great beast when it imposes injustice and idolatry, and it must then be resisted (cf. Rev 13).

Luther unites the notion of the two kingdoms (the cosmic struggle between the powers of Satan and the inbreaking kingdom of God) with God's two governances, that is, the two ways that God rules in the world to protect it until the kingdom of God reaches full fruition. Luther says that God rules sinful society through law. Such governance also applies to Christians and the structure of the church insofar as we are sinners. This law is not just coercive, but is shaped by reason and the Golden Rule (natural law) which expresses itself in justice. People who believe the gospel and live as God's eschatological community live under God's rule of gospel—the defenseless word. The gospel informs Christians even as they live in a world of law. These, then, are the two governances, the ways that God rules in the world.

God's two governances are dialectical complementarities. They are to be distinguished, but not separated; they are dimensions, not separate spheres, and must be seen in the context of this spiritual warfare. If this biblical picture of spiritual warfare is not clearly in focus, then we sever the two-fold governance by which God protects and preserves creation until the end-time.

The ethical kernel of Luther's theology is that there is a conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, in which the Christian, as cooperator with God, participates in the struggle within the two governances. This world-view speaks directly to our own times. In the words of Ulrich Duchrow,

> Summarized briefly: Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms and two-fold governances describes the two-fold strategy employed by God in his struggle in history against the powers of evil, as well as the receiving and active cooperation of human beings in their institutions in healing the world with justice."[6]

One would be mistaken to assume that Luther composed a systematic "doctrine of the two kingdoms." Rather, it is "a net of distinctions applied in various fronts very forcefully to safeguard the eschatological tension of our history and to invite people to cooperate with God's various ways to communicate love in his creation."[7]

Luther developed his thought as he addressed various areas of conflict, specifically: clericalism, monasticism, totalitarianism, enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*), and antinomianism.

Clericalism

The medieval church defined itself as God's "spiritual power" (*potestas spiritualis*), claiming that God vested the church

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[6]Ulrich Duchrow, *Lutheran Churches—Salt or Mirror?* 318.

[7]Ulrich Duchrow, "The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms as Resource for Our Time: Help or Hindrance?" Paper presented at the convocation on "Luther and the Modern World," Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Oct. 19-24, 1980.

with authority over all secular powers. Luther insisted that the church's only power was that of the gospel and servanthood and that the priesthood ought to be dedicated to ministry, that is, service to the priesthood of all believers.

Monasticism

Luther saw that monasticism led to a false dichotomy between God's spiritual governance and the common life, exalting the spiritual contemplation of monastic life above the calling (*Beruf*) of the Christian in secular life. Luther insisted that we do God's sacred work precisely in the profane concerns of our vocation, and that all service done lovingly and justly is spiritual. Thus, Luther's understanding of *Beruf* constitutes the bridge between the governances, and our public life is servanthood in the kingdom, both spiritual and profane.

Totalitarianism

Luther addressed the Christian's response to totalitarianism in his essay, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed.* Here Luther dealt with two concerns. Baron Schwartzenberg, as prominent jurist of his time, had raised the question of whether the Sermon on the Mount did not demand pacifism. Luther responded to this in light of the crisis raised by the Duke of Saxony's edict to confiscate the New Testament from his citizens. At this point Luther advocated civil disobedience, arguing that temporal authority must not interfere with spiritual authority in the realm of conscience. Faith is based on freedom, while secular authority is based on law and coercion. Christians are to live out the convictions of conscience in both realms, and if necessary to resist on behalf of those convictions. It is true that Luther denied the right of violent resistance in the Peasants' Revolt. He did, however, later (in 1539) support insurrection against the papal invasion. I believe the fact that Luther was inconsistent here does not invalidate the principle of last-resort armed resistance. Luther stresses, however, that the church's specific weapon of resistance is *non vi, sed verbo*, "Not with violence, but the Word."

Enthusiasm

Luther understood very clearly that the world *must* be ruled, because it is under God's governance. Utopian ideas, however, were endorsed by many within the radical wing of the Reformation, whom Luther called *Schwärmer* (translated as enthusiasts). Because of their judgment that the world was inherently evil, one wing of the Radical Reformation shunned all public involvement in secular politics. Luther criticized this non-participatory approach because of his conviction that the secular order as God's governance had practical implications for Christian participation. Indeed, Luther's guarded acceptance of the "just war" theory was based on his conviction that minimal violence may be appropriate to counteract a greater violence. Secular power is God's means of preservation and justice for humanity. Thus both Christians and non-Christians are of necessity involved in the public realm.

Antinomianism

Finally, Luther further developed his two kingdoms and governances position against the antinomians. People such as John Agricola read "cheap grace" into Luther's earlier statements on the freedom of a

Christian, by holding that the moral standards of God's law need not be proclaimed as applicable to the Christian life. Luther's response was that this makes great mischievousness out of sweet grace. Luther denounced moral quietism, insisting that the whole life of the Christian is to be one of daily repentance and renewal. The diabolical element in both Christians and non-Christians alike must be curbed by God's law which takes codified form in the civil arena. Thus, God's kingdom exercises itself in a two-fold governance, curbing our inhumanity and fostering justice in the realm of the secular, and nurturing and sustaining faith and love in the realm of the spirit. Luther's dialectical thinking on all these fronts results from his struggle to deal with the mystery of good and evil in the paradoxical workings of God in relation to his world.

Luther's two kingdoms and two-fold governances model is a proactive resistance model, by which we, as cooperators with God through grace, are called to be the eschatological people of God in an alienated world filled with errant and demonic features. There is nothing in Luther's conception which offers a way of Christian escape from responsibility in the social order. Christians are called by God to be active in the secular task in dialectically responsive ways. The church and individual Christians respond in different ways to the multiplicity of conditions with which we are confronted in society.

The paradigm which I draw from Luther's dialectical responses to given situations is basically this: *a critical-constructive stance* is appropriate when the "powers that be" are attempting to achieve justice; *a critical-transformative stance* is appropriate when authority errs, but can be realistically moved to salutary change; and *a critically-resistive stance* is necessary when such powers are responsible for demonic injustice or idolatry and refuse to be responsive to the necessity of change. Only such a dialectically responsive stance takes seriously the action of God as both Creator and Redeemer, and our cooperation with him.

The resistance factor expressed in the two kingdoms and two-fold governances teaching is particularly and appropriately the Lutheran way of doing things! It is consummately Lutheran to resist structures both in church and society when they do not operate according to God's governances. This is not to suggest that the church should take up the sword. In this matter, Luther's position is crucial for the strategy of the church when he says that the weapon of the church under the cross is *non vi, sed verbo*, not with violence, but the Word.

But, until we stop our past quiescent acceptance of whatever is going on in society—without questioning how, under the lordship of Christ, society is operating with the principles of reason and the Golden Rule, which expresses itself in justice—and until we accept that it is not only right to struggle, but that we *must* struggle against "principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world," we are being neither Lutheran nor Christian. It is not whether struggle is acceptable, but what form such struggle will take.

Luther can address us in these times of struggle and create a radical rebirth of Lutheranism's self-understanding and ethics. I am convinced that such rebirth is necessary if we Lutherans will have anything meaningful to contribute to ecumenical dialogue and to the activity of the people of God in our world of oppressors and oppressed.

Schweitzer's Mission Remembered

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A momentous missionary journey began on Good Friday afternoon, 1913, as Albert and Helene Schweitzer boarded the train in Günsbach, Alsace, on their way to French Equatorial Africa, now Gabon. In Albert's words, the mission station at Lambarene on the Ogooue River was "an outpost of the kingdom of God." To his already awesome doctoral credentials in philosophy, theology, and music he had just added a Doctor of Medicine in fulfillment of a promise made some years earlier for a life of "direct service to humanity."

Though Albert was the dominant and domineering figure, Helene his wife had the confidence to call it "our" hospital they had come to build in Lambarene. A scholar in her own right, she had prepared herself as a nurse for their work in Africa. The seventy-fifth anniversary of that journey from Günsbach to Lambarene in 1988 becomes the occasion for honored remembrance of one of Lutheranism's greatest world-personalities.

1. Schweitzer in Context

Schweitzer's time was a time for theology. The big four—Albert Schweitzer, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, and Rudolf Bultmann—made an incomparable century in Western theology. This was the century from the birth of Schweitzer in 1875 to the death of Bultmann in 1976. Schweitzer (1875-1965), Tillich (1886-1965), Barth (1886-1968), and Bultmann (1884-1976)—has the church ever had another such era of theological giants?

Schweitzer's birth also marks the beginning of another century, the century of colonialism in Africa. In 1875 the British traveler and military officer Verney Cameron became the first European to cross the continent of Africa from east to west. Cameron's travels were part of the famous Livingstone-Stanley explorations, which had begun to capture the imagination of many in the West. King Leopold II of Belgium soon took the first steps of a European power toward the colonization of Africa.

The century of the four great theologians and of colonialism which began in 1875 turned out to be also the time of two world wars. World War I swept up the Schweitzers after less than a year and a half at Lambarene, when they were interned as prisoners of war. In reference to World War II we remind ourselves that when Hitler was born in 1889, Schweitzer was fourteen years old, Bultmann was five, and Barth and Tillich were three. Four of the greatest Christian minds, so closely contemporary, could not stem the forces of destruction unleashed by their fifth contemporary. One can indeed be caught up in circumstances beyond control.

The century of theology, colonialism, and wars was also the remarkable century of missions. Schweitzer had a hand in it, and to some of the high points of his personal career we now turn.

2. Schweitzer—an incomparably gifted person

Albert Schweitzer not only had superb gifts, but also had the stubborn determination and huge resources of health and energy to use them, no matter what. Organ recitals, teaching at the University of Strassburg, serving as pastor of St. Nicholas Church and principal of the Protestant Theological Seminary in Strassburg—all this and more he resigned for the sake of the Lambarene Christian mission. We will focus on Schweitzer's achievements in the areas of theology and medicine, and only mention in passing his work in philosophy and music.

The first of Schweitzer's doctorates was in philosophy. At age twenty-four he had become competent enough as a research scholar in philosophy to have a prominent publisher put his sizable thesis on Immanuel Kant into immediate print. At age thirty-four Schweitzer had become the foremost authority on organs, organ-building, and the music of J. S. Bach.

Theology

Schweitzer grew up in the Lutheran Church and had the highest regard for preaching, public worship, and theology. In his New Testament studies, he concentrated on the Kingdom of God, the ethics and eschatology of Jesus, and the theology of Paul.

For our present purposes, we confine ourselves to two major works.

During the early stages of his medical studies, in 1906, Schweitzer's theological classic, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, appeared in its German original.[1] If he had done nothing more, this work alone would keep his memory alive. As late as 1985 a "final assessment" of this book had not been made,[2] and since Schweitzer left the quest open-ended it appears doubtful that such a final assessment can ever be made. In the captivating closing paragraph of the book Jesus comes "as One unknown," the same way he came originally. He reveals himself to those who obey his words to follow him, and "as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is." Thus the quest can not end. It must go on, if not in the strict sense of the Jesus of history, then in the sense of faithful experience.

Schweitzer's second classic, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, finally appeared in 1931 after many years of work with numerous interruptions.[3] Schweitzer was fully aware of the Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith, but he was less than satisfied with an impersonal courtroom presentation

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[1]London: Adam and Charles Black, 1945.

[2]Jackson L. Ice, "What Albert Schweitzer Believed About Jesus," *The Christian Century* (January 2-9, 1985), 11.

[3]London: Adam and Charles Black, 1931.

of the great Pauline truth. He understood Paul in the more dynamic, living context of union with Christ. Life in Christ means ethical will. Paul's "mystical doctrine of being redeemed into the Kingdom of God, through union with Christ"—this is where Schweitzer puts the emphasis. His book has been described as "by far the greatest study of the Apostle's thought that has ever been produced, or that in all likelihood ever can be."[4] This is high praise indeed, and needless to say not everybody shares this enthusiastic endorsement.

Medicine

All the other achievements notwithstanding, it was as the self-sacrificing medical Doctor of Lambarene that Albert Schweitzer won the affection of the world. When, at age twenty-one, he made his decision for "direct service to humanity," he did not know what that service would be, or where. At age thirty, the date he had set to keep his promise, he knew it would have to be medical missions at Lambarene. To the astonishment and disappointment—if not downright opposition—of friends and admirers, he enrolled in the school of medicine of the University of Strassburg in late October, 1905. Six grueling years later he completed his final examinations. Thesis and internship brought him to 1913, departure time for his chosen outpost of the kingdom.

For the Schweitzers, their "jungle hospital" and all it stood for was a participation in "the fellowship of those who bear the mark of pain." For the rest of their lives they remained in this fellowship and extended the invitation to others to join. The invitation still stands. Except for Helene's years away for health reasons and Albert's years of furlough (fourteen out of a total of fifty-two), they stayed at their isolated post. There they worked, and there they died and are buried side by side.

This part of the Schweitzer story borders on the incredible. Ostensibly sponsored by the Paris Missionary Society, the Schweitzers had to start from scratch and at their own expense. With only the land to build on given by the society, Schweitzer



had to be organizer, architect, builder, administrator, and doctor—and he paid for it all with his earnings from lectures, publications, and organ recitals and with funds solicited from friends. In addition, though he dearly loved to preach, the society found his theology suspect and restricted him to the practice of medicine only—no teaching or preaching. Fortunately the local staff lifted the demeaning restriction in short order.

Why, then, this particular fellowship of pain for Schweitzer? The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:17-31 had much to do with it. In his usual direct and specific

[4]George Seaver, *Albert Schweitzer: The Man and His Mind* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1947), 230.

ethical application, Schweitzer saw the rich man in the parable as the white European (himself included, of course) and poor Lazarus as the black African. In terms of his sensitive conscience, Schweitzer thus knew what he had to do, and he did it with a determination and commitment as total and exemplary as any the world has ever known.

The underside of Schweitzer's interpretation of Luke's parable is the unfortunate stereotype of the African as "poor Lazarus." This, together with Schweitzer's perception of himself as the "elder brother" to his younger African brother, has prompted the charge of an overbearing paternalism, with Schweitzer appearing as less than exemplary in retrospect. A prominent figure in contemporary African literature, Chinua Achebe, for example, has characterized Schweitzer's paradigm of the older brother as "the immortal dictum" of colonialism.[5]

The topside of Schweitzer's interpretation is that the harsh and undeniable reality of the health and wealth of the Europeans and the pain and poverty of the Africans of the Ogooue River in Gabon hit Schweitzer with the force of an authoritative word of Jesus. He dared to make himself a doctor-brother to the African. Any talk about being a brother (albeit the older one) already puts Schweitzer ahead of his time, and he deserves to be judged accordingly. In the closing sentence of a perceptive book on Schweitzer, Norman Cousins summarizes the lesson he learned on a visit with the Schweitzers at Lambarene: that one "does not have to be an angel to be a saint."[6] That's fair enough.

The conclusion stands. The Doctor of Lambarene belongs in any select list of truly gifted and dedicated people. "Reverence for life" was a key idea for Schweitzer, and nuclear developments caused him no little concern over the future of life. To these we now turn.

"Reverence for life" was a key idea for Schweitzer.

3. "Reverence for Life"

Picture language is sometimes the only way of expressing the inexpressible. That's the way it was for Albert Schweitzer in one of the memorable moments of his life. "There flashed in my mind... the phrase Reverence for Life." The flash had come in the course of Schweitzer's long and arduous struggle for some answers to life's perplexities, and yet he could say that it came "unforeseen and unsought." To describe the joy of these experiences, picture language served him best. "The iron door yielded" and "the path in the thicket has become visible." These are not analyses of what happened, but they are pictures of what it felt like.[7]

"Reverence for life" is Schweitzer's expression in English, and something has been lost in translation. *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* or *veneratio vitae*—this is the real

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[5]Oladele Taiwo, *Social Experience in African Literature* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., Ltd., 1986), 5.

[6]Norman Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene* (New York: Harper, 1960), 222.

[7]Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought* (New York: A Mentor Book, 1953), 124-7.

Schweitzer. *Ehrfurcht* is more awesome than "reverence," and *vor dem Leben* is more direct than "for life." Standing in awe not of life in the abstract but *before* that which is alive and always around us in the concrete,

The upsetting dimension of *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* is that it enfolds *all* life.

being deeply respectful of life and fearful of showing disrespect for any form of it, and feeling the inexpressible mystery of it all—this gets one closer to Schweitzer than "reverence."

We can easily show reverence for life so long as we can choose which life or whose life we should respect. This is not what Schweitzer meant. In the abstract, reverence for life is about as revolutionary as saying we ought to love, so long as we can choose what to love and what not to love. The upsetting dimension of *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* is that it enfolds *all* life. The enfolding and ever-growing circle expands from one's smallest center of family and extended family to clan and tribe, to nation and world, and to all humanity. The circle grows even bigger to enfold all life, not merely humanity but animals and plants, even insects and the smallest of entities under the magnifying glass and microscope. Not least, the circle includes oneself. Among the many honors bestowed upon Schweitzer (and they are far too many to be enumerated) was his election to *L'Academie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*. At his official installation on October 10, 1952, he addressed the Academy on "The Problem of Ethics in the Evolution of Human Thought." Said Schweitzer (in translation): "Reverence for one's own life should compel one, whatever the circumstances may be, to avoid all dissimulation and, in general, to become *oneself* in the deepest and noblest sense."[8]

We return to the dramatic hour in Schweitzer's life. It was wartime. As German citizens working for a French mission at Lambarene, Helene and Albert Schweitzer were interned as prisoners-of-war on August 5, 1914, less than a year and a half after their first arrival. For the medical doctor, some restrictions were soon lifted, and he could resume limited practice.

On September 15, 1915, Schweitzer was on a boat on the Ogooue River moving upstream from Cape Lopez to N'Gomo to minister to the sick wife of a missionary. Preoccupied with the tragedy of war and the convulsions of civilization, in the midst of poverty and disease, and on a personal mission to save a particular life from the destruction of disease, Schweitzer had his meeting with holiness. *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* flashed into his mind, and Schweitzer was never again the same. The immediate setting, sunset on the river, was about as peaceful as anything on earth could be.

But Schweitzer was no fool. The setting was most peaceful, yet thousands of miles away a world war was being fought, and all around him there were diseases and pains to be relieved. He knew as clearly as anyone

[8]Jacques Feschotte, *Albert Schweitzer: An Introduction* (London: Comet Books, 1956), 127f.

could know it that life had to maintain itself in constant conflict and that to reverence life meant far more than to become sentimental about it. Speaking in the first person for more than himself, he said: "I am life which wills to life, in the midst of life which wills to live." And later, "The world however offers us the horrible drama of Will-to-live divided against itself. Our existence holds its own at the cost of another: one destroys another."[9] This is true of the minutest of entities, under scrutiny only by the scientist in the laboratory. It is true also of highly sophisticated civilizations in competition with one another and often at war with destructive forces to be observed by all and suffered through by many. In Schweitzer's later years he was urged into political expression on the issue of peace and atomic developments.

4. Peace or Atomic War?

"Peace or Atomic War?" was Schweitzer's wording of the question. There was nothing new or extraordinary in his statement. Many others were as concerned as he was. Schweitzer hoped, however, that his age (early 80s) and personal world-recognition would add to the chances for the appeal to be heard. We quote the closing sentence of a statement he issued in 1957 and three sentences from an addition prepared in 1958.[10]

> • The end of further experiments with atomic bombs could be like the early sunrays for hope which suffering humanity is longing for.
>
> • The idea of limited nuclear war is a contradiction in terms.
>
> • A nuclear war is therefore the most senseless and lunatic act that could ever take place.
>
> • Such are the heights of our civilization that a cold electronic brain rather than the moral conscience of man may decide human destiny.

In the face of atomic threat, Schweitzer sounded warnings to the world, taken seriously as a prophetic word by some and dismissed by others as politically naive. In the face of mystery he found an ethic of reverence for all life, the profoundest of ideas to some and ludicrous to others. In the face of suffering, the medical doctor joined the fellowship of pain and did his utmost to relieve the suffering of his younger African brothers and sisters, thereby winning the admiration of the world but also being charged with his own form of paternalistic colonialism. His talents were almost too many for any one person, and the way he expended his energies in service was truly amazing. There was a saint, not an angel, in our midst. We hold him in honored remembrance.

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[9]Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, 125f.

[10]Norman Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene*, 227-54.

Arthur Vööbus: In Memoriam

Robert H. Fischer
Professor of Church History Emeritus
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Arthur Vööbus, Professor of New Testament and Early Church History at Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary (Maywood) and at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1948-1977, died at his home in Oak Park, Illinois, on September 26, 1988. Professor Fischer preached this funeral sermon on October 1, 1988.

We celebrate today the completion of the earthly life of our brother in Christ, Arthur Vööbus. He has fought the good fight, he has kept the faith.

To have had Arthur Vööbus among us for many years has made us unmistakably aware that we have stood in the presence of human greatness. With a keen mind intensely disciplined, and with prodigious energies relentlessly focussed, he devoted his scholarly life to explore grand, spacious realms of learning, and he labored diligently and creatively to share with the world the insights of this study. He knew well that these realms were ampler and nobler than he could ever master completely; that is why they were worth exploring. Here, indeed, is a formula for greatness.

Today, however, we also celebrate something more important and more potent than scholarly greatness in our midst. We have not only had Arthur Vööbus among us. Many of us have had him also in our hearts. There he will remain as an epistle from an ambassador for Christ, to be known and read by all people. I shall speak today out of the epistle which my colleague and dear friend has written in my heart. As I speak, many of you no doubt will hear again the epistles which he has written in your hearts.

The two dimensions of Arthur Vööbus' life which surely are most clearly visible to his friends are his scholarship and his Estonian patriotism. Let us begin with his scholarly work. It elicits our awe, but it also does something more: it communicates the scholar's mind and his heart. Dr. Vööbus' persevering labors and his remarkable achievements in scholarship have helped to

shape my own standards, and surely those of many others as well. They have expanded the horizons of my mind. They have stood stalwartly as one of my models of academic integrity, and a rebuke of any tendency I may have to laziness, superficiality, corner-cutting, or careless workmanship.

But even this is not all that speaks to me from the epistle in my heart. Anyone acquainted with the academic world knows that scholarship can become an end in itself, a sterile pursuit, or an egotistical venture. With Dr. Vööbus it was none of these. His more-than-half-a-century-long exploration of the history of Eastern Christendom had a strong conviction as its motive power. When we Westerners try to comprehend the profound story of the ongoing march of Christian faith, we tend almost without exception to ignore or block out the huge wing of Eastern Christendom. Arthur Vööbus was convinced that our histories of Christianity thereby become provincial, astigmatic, partisan, and self-serving. Vööbus' prolific studies in this field are the work of an ambassador for Christ, pleading for a more profound capacity to listen, a broader empathy, a greater wholeness in Christian historiography and in churchmanship.

His New Testament teaching in our seminary likewise has had a powerful dynamic to communicate. One might easily imagine that it would require little effort for him to prepare edifying lectures to undergraduate students. But he was never willing to settle for perfunctory performance in his classes. Even the slowest students could sense how persistently and painstakingly he wrestled to penetrate the sacred text in order to discern its intention.

His special passion was to learn as accurately as possible what our Lord meant by his words and deeds, and not just what generations of interpreters have thought he meant. So relentlessly critical were his efforts that some listeners have suspected he was being cavalier both with the biblical text and with the Christian tradition. I am far from claiming that he was perfect in his insights. I am convinced, nevertheless, that his effort to discern the mind of Christ in the Scriptures not only was more honest than that of his critics; it also offered us an enduring model for the church's task of proclaiming the gospel. Here again I listen to him as an ambassador for Christ.

Dr. Vööbus' ardent patriotism for his native Estonia and his passionate anti-Communism were strikingly visible, but I would say not generally well understood by Americans. I do not claim to understand them intimately myself, but I find myself obliged to try to understand sympathetically. I have not had to live through the seizure of my country by a Russian juggernaut, which has attempted to crush the Estonians' spirit of independence and has subjected the people to repression, imprisonment, and death. I have not had to flee for my life as Arthur and Ilse did, not once but twice, losing not only possessions and freedom but also family members and friends. Out of the dozen men in the theological faculty of Tartu only Arthur and one colleague survived the terror. Arthur never told me so, but I have long imagined that he lived from that time forward with a compulsion to try to make up, at least in part, for the scholarly productivity which the Tartu theological faculty would otherwise have achieved.

His loyalty to his people, meanwhile, both in his homeland and among the diaspora to the ends of the world, was much broader than simply academic. It has been actively political and humanitarian as well. From America, to which he has been profoundly grateful for the opportunity of a fresh start and a base of operations, he became for forty years a kind of ambassador, preaching the Christian faith, rallying the

scattered people, and speaking out vigorously for justice and for hope.

It remains for me to speak about one more aspect of Arthur Vööbus' life, not nearly so apparent to people who did not meet him at close range. I refer to his profound and profoundly simple humanity. Arthur Vööbus' deportment was so dignified, formal, and grave, that it was easy for students and acquaintances to imagine him to be a distant, unsociable, puritanical, saturnine person.

It is true that ordinary small talk did not come easily for Dr. Vööbus. That he had a stoical streak in his makeup is undeniable. But insensitive and distant he was not. To the end of his life he carried on a lively ministry of preaching and pastoral care to the scattered Estonian communities near and far, consuming whole weekends which one would imagine he might have preferred to save for work in his study or rest. He took initiative in promoting ministerial and scholarly conferences to stimulate the minds and skills and collegial relations of the Estonian ministers in the United States and Canada. To seminary students having difficulties in his classes, whether beginners' Greek or advanced New Testament exegesis, if they indicated that they wanted help, he cheerfully devoted hours in tutoring.

Arthur and Ilse's warm friendship with Edna Mae and me is an eloquent part of the epistle in my heart. We cherish the memory of paying an unannounced visit to the Vööbuses one evening in the Christmas season. Arthur and Ilse cordially invited us in; Arthur lit the candles on their large tree, we chatted over a glass of wine, and then Arthur suggested that we sing a carol. My epistle also recalls several holiday or anniversary parties in the Vööbus home, at which Arthur characteristically would select a time when he would gather the guests and read a passage of Scripture and offer a thoughtful prayer.

To my mind, however, the most moving indication of Arthur's personal sensitivity remains the tender tribute which he paid to his beloved wife, Ilse, in the dedication of one of his writings. Paying tribute to her courage in sharing personal hardship and loss, and referring to the obligations which the anguish of suffering people had imposed upon him and his work, he wrote, "It is with self-sacrifice that my wife has shared in all the distresses and frustrations as well as in the fulfillment of the demands involved in those obligations. Her inner luster of cheerfulness and spirit has had a deep bearing upon me." Ilse, in honoring Arthur we also salute you affectionately, for the two of you belong eternally together. We fervently pray God's continued care upon you and upon your family.

Arthur Vööbus, then, was not simply a man who carried enormous burdens. God's Son had made him free indeed. Because Arthur knew profoundly the glorious liberty of the children of God, he possessed the inner peace and spirit to shoulder great burdens—in his scholarship and in his passionate advocacy for human justice. Like Paul, free from all, he made himself a servant to all.

He has fought the good fight, he has kept the faith. Let us thank God that we have had some share in his life and work, whether intimately or remotely, and that the epistle of his witness still lives in us. As far as mortal breath is concerned, Arthur Vööbus' life is finished, but as the author of Hebrews says about Abel, "He died, but through his faith he is still speaking." Indeed, better yet: we take to heart our Lord's own promise, "Whoever believes in me shall never die." Glory be to God!

Holy Mountains

The mound that to an ant looks huge,
A bear would cross unknowingly.
The range that challenged settlers' might
Is topped by planes while trav'lers sleep.

My pain, intense, claims all my thought,
While you, with yours, sense naught of mine.
Preoccupied, I'm blind to yours.
Thus split, we struggle on alone.

A better way was shown upon a mount
Not high, but monumental shown
Across the years. A cross, its sign;
A skull, its name. A Christ, its fame.

That central figure had his pain
(Not known for ease is crucifixion!)
But agony of bone and heart
Excluded none of Jesus' empathy.

He prayed for those who put him there.
"They know not what they do," his plea.
The yearning from that other cross
Escaped him not. Acceptance flowed.

His mother's grief was also felt.
Disciple John the one assigned
To be a son, a surrogate.
So Mary is not left alone.

If Jesus saw the pain around him well
Despite his own approaching death,
Is not my way to sense your pain,
Though mountainous my own appears?

By seeing yours, I sense your cross,
And in my ministry to you
I feel my mountain shrink, as Christ,
Our common Lord, relieves us both.

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Robert Drewes
Wrangell, Alaska

Book Reviews

IN SEARCH OF FAITHFULNESS: Lessons from the Christian Community. By William E. Diehl. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. 127 pages. Paper. $5.95.

For forty years William Diehl has built bridges between his Lutheran religious upbringing and his work. In his third major publication, his tool is Peters' and Waterman's best seller, *In Search of Excellence*. Diehl borrows from their approach, but with a different agenda. Peters and Waterman search for excellence; Diehl looks for faithfulness. They learn their lessons from America's best-run companies; Diehl turns to the Christian community.

Diehl's search for faithfulness demands first a definition of terms. What is faithfulness? It is to this question that Diehl devotes the first few chapters. He then dedicates successive chapters to seven attributes of faithfulness: having a sense of identity, growth, prayer/meditation, life in community, giving, sense of justice, and simplicity of life style. He concludes with a look at barriers to faithfulness, in the context of his own personal experience. He points the finger at the established church for a lack of affirmation of lay professions and a focus on belief rather than practice.

For a cleric's definition of faithfulness, go elsewhere. For lessons from Christians outside the Lutheran tradition, there are better resources. But for the search, for the quest which brings together work and faith, Diehl is still one of the best—and unfortunately one of the only—guides.

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THE DEVIL AND DR. CHURCH. By F. Forrester Church. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. xii and 87 pages. Cloth. $12.95.

Author Church is pastor of a Unitarian Church in New York City and son of a U.S. Senator from Idaho. He presents a witty and whimsical look at hell and evil, but actually provides a serious commentary on the nature of evil.

Church lets the reader share his own struggle with the power of evil in his heart and the world around him. "The devil's trademark," he says, "is not evil dressed as evil, but evil dressed as good."

The chapters on the "cunning Livery of Hell" and the "Idolatries of Good" form the heart of this book. The gems within these sections can be insightful in one's own struggle and enriching for one's homiletic struggle as well.

Were it not so tragic, the humor of his words would make the reader laugh. Unfortunately, the reality of evil's influence in the lives of God's people makes the reader pause to reflect on the insights of this capable, young author.

A good place to start contextualizing next Sunday's sermon.

Kenneth M. Ruppar
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SYNOD EXTRAORDINARY. By Peter Hebblethwaite. Garden City: Doubleday, 1986. 141 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

The author, Vatican Affairs Writer for the National Catholic Reporter, looks behind the scenes of the November/December 1985 Extraordinary Synod. The Synod was called by Pope John Paul II to celebrate and continue the spirit of Vatican II.

The Synod's announced threefold purpose was to revive the atmosphere of the Council, exchange information about its implementation, and apply the positions of the Council to the new needs that had arisen.

Hebblethwaite probes the background of the issues addressed and the Who's Who of the Vati-

can. His look at Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla's role at Vatican II sets the stage for later actions. The author provides an intriguing look at Vatican personalities such as Cardinals Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; John J. O'Connor of New York; Basil Hume of England, and others.

It struck me that Hebblethwaite went looking less for the positive, pastoral hopes of the Synod and more for the sensational and intriguing political maneuvering of agenda and speeches.

"The Church as Mystery" was a favored theme of influential Cardinal Ratzinger. According to Hebblethwaite, "the only mystery here was who was controlling the Synod."

Overall, I love saving books. This one I'll give away.

Kenneth M. Ruppar

REDISCOVERING THE LORD'S SUPPER. By Markus Barth. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988. 113 pages. Paper. $11.95.

Barth's latest work is reduced from the German text: no footnotes, references, bibliography, or index—a fact the author laments in the preface. The material is mostly from lectures in the U.S., chiefly the 1986 Schaff Lectures at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Barth contends that we've complicated the Lord's Supper more than it either need be or should be. He strips off theological jargon in an attempt to rediscover the biblical witness about the Lord's Supper.

Four chapters discuss this witness. Barth turns to Passover for clues about how Christians might learn to serve God, and he supports the Passover-motif in the Lord's Supper, stressing that the meal is a remembrance of the one sacrifice of Christ. His liturgical conclusions are of interest; among things, he calls for the acceptance of children at the table, the setting of the Lord's Supper within a common meal, and the elimination of all clerical domination in the supper.

The second chapter invites us to communion with the risen Christ in which we proclaim that his death is the basis for our reconciliation with God. In this meal we are still pilgrims, and the church must remember that the *parousia* has not yet come. In the actions of the meal itself, the disciples proclaim and remember Christ's death; the meal is a public demonstration of communion with Christ.

The third chapter calls us to hospitality. Here Barth argues that the Lord's Supper not only has ethical implications but *is* an ethical act done by the church to demonstrate the new humanity in Christ. The point of eucharist is to capture all that is supposedly secular (both things and actions) and render them into the means of praise of God and service of the neighbor; the Lord's Supper is model and paradigm for this rendering.

The fourth chapter, using the Johannine witness (especially ch. 6), speaks of Christ as the one sacrament of God. In agreement with Schillebeeckx and Jüngel, Barth energetically pushes this concept as a focus for reconciliation among churches.

The Epilogue is Barth's response to BEM (*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*) in four theses. He charges, first, that the framers of BEM equate scripture and tradition; secondly, that they give the impression that the Christ-event depends upon sacraments for its effectiveness; thirdly, that BEM forces an hierarchical model of ministry upon us; and finally, that in an effort to compromise and collate traditions, BEM simply took for granted many past positions based on wrong questions. Barth concludes that the document has little use for inter-church or missionary purposes because it repristinates past errors, especially with regard to the doctrine of the ministry. He concludes that we should "receive" BEM, and then "with expressions of thanks for services rendered, it should be packed away behind glass and concrete and carefully preserved in a safe place."

Barth brings to biblical study a lifelong concern for Christian–Jewish relations, and he always raises remarkable questions on the basis of a deep exploration of the text. This book will offer new angles to all of us who struggle for church renewal.

Jay C. Rochelle
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

MELANIE KLEIN: Her Work and Her World. By Phyllis Grosskurth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986. 462 pages and Appendices. Cloth. $25.00.

PSYCHOANALYTIC OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION: On Faith and the Imaging of God. By John McDargh. New York: University Press of America, 1983. 249 pages. Cloth. $30.00. Paper. $13.50.

Early in the psychoanalytic movement, the only rightful place for female psychotherapists was working with children. European psychology, psychoanalysis specifically, was not above its sexist perceptions. Freud even relegated his own daughter, Anna, to that work. But even before Anna entered the scene, Melanie Klein had established herself in England and begun to conceptualize human development differently than the father Freud. Loved or hated, very seldom neutral, this judgmental and unforgiving woman lived her life and did her work believing that she was the true spiritual daughter of psychoanalysis' founder.

The story Phyllis Grosskurth tells is rich and filled with the stuff of real life. It is not for those who need to romanticize or idealize their heroes. The pathology and unresolved issues of the characters, often manifested in meanness, pettiness, and a general absence of civility, is not hidden or explained away (they act and react not unlike some theologians in this regard). No attempts to justify the actions of the participants is made. In a manner consistent with the best of psychoanalytic thinking, there is no myth or magic here. There is only what is and the creativity that is most possible with the "what is" and not the "what ought to be."

The book is for those who can find genius and creativity in those who are clearly less than perfect. Melanie Klein made object relations (the roots of our ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, including the distortions of our perceptions in those relationships) central to an understanding of human development. The later work of Margaret Mahler, Otto Kernberg, and Heinz Kohut refined the concepts and have radically altered the understanding of a self in relationship to others. Beginning with Klein, the way was cleared for the establishing of empathy (the presence or absence of) as key to human life and development.

What McDargh does with object relations concepts is another story. He writes, "It is a major thesis of this book that one of the most significant object representations with which an individual is in lifelong relationship is the object representation of God." That sounds good enough, and I am certain it will appeal to many in the church who wish to assert their contemporaneity by being able to talk about God in psychological terms and concepts. However, this is contrary to research in both communications and psychology. The more commonly held psychological understanding and the one which "rubs" Christians the wrong way is that God is conceptualized from that mixture of unconscious, preconscious, and other environmental material that constitutes the personality structure of the individual.

McDargh's primary goal for the writing was achieved: he was awarded a doctorate. Whether his work adds significantly to the stuff of object relations study, psychoanalytic thinking, or the study of religion is another issue. Seldom should dissertations be published as books for professional or more general consumption. It is a denial of their primary purpose, which is to establish credentials for a researcher as one who is able to take a specific question and propose answers or directions.

Hence another difficulty with McDargh's work: as a summary of thinking about object relations, religion, and the concept of God, it is successful; as an individual attempt to point us in new directions, it is not.

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ANABAPTISM IN OUTLINE. Edited by Walter Klaassen. Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1981. Vol. 3 in Classics of the Radical Reformation. 356 pages. Paper. $12.95.

THE THEOLOGY OF ANABAPTISM: AN INTERPRETATION. By Robert Friedmann. Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1973. Vol. 15 in Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History. 184 pages. Cloth. $12.95.

Tell me, what is the cultural significance when Notre Dame, the premier heartland Roman Catholic University, calls John Howard Yoder, the premier Anabaptist theologian, to teach in its department of theology? Might this mean that Roman Catholics now see that we are in the era of post-Christendom even in the Midwest, and that a theology for the future must re-locate the church's place and involvement with the culture? What is the significance when a premier ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, grounds his ethics in a theological stance Yoder elucidated, which takes church as a separate community within culture? These reviews in *Currents* reflect this significance as we share books from the Anabaptist tradition for background and resources to rethink faith and life in this age. Both of the books here listed are in series of which only a few would be of general interest to our readership. Others will be reviewed in future issues.

Anabaptism in Outline is a compendium of source materials from the tradition which gives an overview of the positions taken in the early years by figures of the Radical Reformation who led new churches into being. Included are Jakob Hutter, organizer of communes now bearing his name and found in New York, Connecticut, and the plains of Western Canada and South Dakota; Menno Simons, after whom Mennonites follow; martyr-leaders like Michael Sattler and Balthasar Hubmaier; and the formulators like Hans Denck and Conrad Grebel. Klaassen has organized the material through the inclusion of generous portions of text from each writer under seventeen headings beginning with Jesus Christ and ending with eschatology. The writings stress the Anabaptist focus on discipleship as the appropriate response to Jesus as Lord, the central agreement on matters of trinitarian faith shared in common with Protestants, and the peculiar teachings on the community of faith and on excommunication and the ban which were held by the radical reformers as sacramental ordinances of the church.

The Theology of Anabaptism is subtitled "an interpretation" because the author begins by indicating that, strictly speaking, Anabaptism is not a theology but a life. Early Anabaptist leaders were often not reflective, were never systematic (with the sole exception of Balthasar Hubmaier, who is a swing figure between the Reformed and the radicals), and were not verbose. Friedmann takes the thesis of G. H. Williams that the reformation may be understood under three heads ("magisterial," radical, and counter-reform) and pushes further by insisting that Anabaptists are a truly distinct third option set off from Calvinism or Lutheranism. Most Anabaptists never read Luther or Calvin; they derived theology directly from Scripture, which they read closely and often memorized. Ignorant also of Augustine, they derived an idea of original sin not from him but from obscure references such as 4 Esdras 7:48. They did not believe original sin resulted in total depravity, so they were free to redefine the relationship of Christian to Jesus in terms of discipleship (*Nachfolge*) and the art of self-abandonment (*Gelassenheit*). They stress sanctification above justification and speak of Jesus more as Lord than Christ the Savior, without denying the latter. Friedmann calls Anabaptist theology 'implicit' since there is no explicit system. The reader may judge if Friedmann achieves his goal to set Anabaptism apart as a"third way" in Christianity (a notion picked up by subsequent Anabaptist writers), but his attempt is fascinating and opens new paths for thought.

Jay C. Rochelle

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.

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THEOLOGIANS UNDER HITLER. GERHARD KITTEL, PAUL ALTHAUS AND EMANUEL HIRSCH. By Robert P. Ericksen. New Haven & London: Yale, 1985. viii and 245 pages. Cloth, $25.00; Paper, $8.95.

Of all the segments of German society in the 1930s, why did certain respected theologians succumb to the seductions of National Socialism? The author takes a biographical approach to this question in a comparison of New Testament exegete Gerhard Kittel, church historian and Luther scholar Paul Althaus, and systematic theologian Emanuel Hirsch. All three university theologians had international reputations which preceded and survived the Nazi regime which each supported. Ericksen is interested in the

moral and intellectual failure of these gifted thinkers, their failure to grasp the emptiness of an amoral ideology. He insists that that failure of mind and will in German church and academy was and is not a uniquely German problem. A valueless, post-Enlightenment intellectual heritage is at the root of the "crisis of modernity," of which National Socialism and the Holocaust were but monstrous symptoms.

The book raises great and unmet expectations. Methodologically, Ericksen fails to settle on a firm set of chronological or thematic loci running through each of the three main chapters. The result is a disjointed biographical anthology rather than a unified and readable treatment. The German Church Struggle does, however, lend itself readily to a straightforward analysis of how its actors, both individuals and groups, reacted to certain key events and developments. The reader is left wondering how, for example, Kittel, Althaus, and Hirsch each reacted to the so-called "Sports Palace Scandal" of November 13, 1933. In point of fact, both Kittel and Althaus distanced themselves decisively from the German-Christian Movement as a direct result of Reinhold Krause's attack on the Old Testament and Paul at that rally of the German Christians in Berlin, a fact which Ericksen never mentions. Or how did Kittel, Althaus, and Hirsch react and/or contribute to the voluminous confessional literature of the Church Struggle? The reader has to dig hard in this book to find even a partial answer to this question. It would be simpler to go to the sources themselves, as edited by Kurt Dietrich Schmidt.

There is an additional disappointment in store for the reader, and for this the author ought not to be held solely responsible. The linguistic quality of the text, and especially of the copious translations, and the dismaying number of typographical errors and misspellings, are worthy neither of the topic nor of the formidable research which went into the book, nor—and most especially—of a great university press.

He who works along the road has many masters. To his credit, Robert Ericksen has had the courage to raise large and disturbing questions and to treat the subjects of his theological biography in personal and historical depth. That a secular historian had to leave some of those questions unanswered is perhaps to be expected. That the author-historian himself goes beyond sympathy with his subjects and seems to have been partially seduced by the infernal "logic" of a mind such as that of Hirsch is a great pity. Ericksen's book has now been translated and published in German. In Germany, no allowances will be made for the lack of theological sophistication evident in this example of American research on the German Church struggle. He who leaps into the great ocean had better know how to swim.

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THE FAITH & PRACTICE OF THE QUAKERS. By Rufus M. Jones. Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, reprint edition, 1986. xi & 181 pages. Paper. $3.95.

Jones is known to students of American Christianity as a deep thinker whose research is informed by experience. He wrote much, and most of it is good. *The Faith & Practice of the Quakers* reminds this reviewer of Schmemann's book, *For the Life of the World*, because it was written at the request of those who wanted a short piece to explain a particular form of Christian faith—and the book became a classic, to the astonishment of its author.

Jones calls Quakers mystical Christians, and he puts them between authoritarians and rationalists. He tells us Quakers believe in the divine urge within as the mainspring for faith: "What Friends aimed to do was to ground religion forever upon an inherent relation between God as living Spirit and the elemental spiritual nature of man." There is an excellent chapter on the organization and structure of the Quaker movement, locating it in spiritual values and beliefs; the chapter on the sacraments is also excellent, and shows the Johannine rootage for the Quaker dispensation of the outward symbol.

Jones wrote in the early years of the century, and since then a different understanding has

developed of Quaker roots. Since the writings of Hugh Barbour in particular, there has been a renewed appreciation of the Quaker heritage in the Puritan movement. Jones rejected this aspect of the heritage and opted to identify the Quaker legacy in the spiritual reformation, begun with such figures as Meister Eckhart and the spiritual Franciscans. This disagreement is, however, not evident in this work; here Jones remains a trustworthy guide for those seeking an excellent introduction to the Friends.

Jay C. Rochelle

WORSHIP: SEARCHING FOR LANGUAGE. By Gail Ramshaw. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988. 213 pages. Paper. $11.95.

In this collection of essays on liturgical language, its meaning and use, Gail Ramshaw takes us on an intriguing tour of the treasure house of liturgical traditions. She points out various resources from art, literature, the lives of saints, and the celebrations of holy days that can deepen and enrich our worship life in the church.

Ramshaw makes a close connection between worship and catechesis: corporate worship is the church's primary teaching opportunity, and therefore liturgical forms, hymnody, sacramental and symbolic actions, and language all deserve careful consideration. Her reflections suggest many possibilities for making the most of the catechetical element inherent in worship, and she encourages the reader's own critical and creative reflection on the tradition and its interpretation in congregations today. She believes that more attention should be given to what liturgical elements may serve as appropriate catechesis for children as well as adults. Perhaps her line of thinking could induce worship leaders to devise more creative ways to teach children the meaning of the gospel within liturgy that would go beyond the usual concession to their presence in the form of a children's sermonette. It might also serve to remind us that teaching goes both ways across generational lines, and that liturgical catechesis is an experience by which the whole communion of saints grows in faith and understanding. At any rate, liturgical language surely does determine our ideas about God.

In the final chapters dealing with language about God and the specific issue of naming God as the Trinity, the purpose of the book is clearly manifested. The author asks whether ideas about God that are conveyed and reinforced through liturgical language are an adequate means of representing and communicating with the biblical God, or whether they form a misconception of God as male. Ramshaw distinguishes between theological, devotional (private), and liturgical (public) use of metaphorical language for God and insists that her argument applies only to liturgical usage. But is it possible to make a definite separation between speaking about God theologically and speaking to God devotionally and liturgically? The criterion she applies to language about God relates it to cultural norms and current acceptability. The objection that can be raised to using such a cultural criterion, however, is that the historical tradition of the church becomes subordinate to secular views of reality regardless of their historical background or the meaning of that religious-secular relationship.

In answer to feminist pressure to introduce female terms for God into the liturgy, the author comes up with a compromise: female terms may be used as metaphors for God as long as the metaphorical nature of all language about God is emphasized, but the specific trinitarian names are not so amenable to change. Since Ramshaw considers the Trinity to be a test of Christian orthodoxy, she warns against the old heresies of Arianism, modalism, and subordinationism cropping up in new forms through attempts to modify the trinitarian names. But she also says that Father-Son-Spirit images are probably too limited by traditional ideas of soteriology (sin overcome by forgiveness). Other views of salvation more relevant today might be "life overcoming death" or "meaning overcoming chaos," and different God-images would be more appropriate for these different soteriological conceptions.

Her own suggestion of avoiding sexism while retaining the biblical significance of the names

for God is to designate the Trinity as Abba-Servant-Paraclete. Here the dividing line between liturgy and theology (if there ever was one) has been crossed, and there are problems with this proposed solution as with any other. The use of two foreign words would be a hindrance to ready comprehension, and no reason is given why the biblical term messiah is passed over in favor of the word servant—which itself might not be so readily comprehensible in our modern world. In addition, devising alternate God-images for alternate soteriologies does not address the issue of the need for a broader understanding of sin that is communicable to a secular society. Finally, by grounding proposed changes in God-language on human-centered views of religious reality, she does not recognize that others would use the same data to argue for the total meaninglessness of all God-language.

Despite some problems, Gail Ramshaw has made an important contribution to theology and liturgical studies. Previously, not much has been done in feminist analysis of the doctrine of the Trinity from a Lutheran perspective. This book ought to provoke others to take the discussion of trinitarian language to an even deeper level.

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Briefly Noted

WORDS ABOUT THE WORD. By John R. Kohlenberger III (Zondervan, $9.95). K. offers a guide for selecting among forty-nine English versions of the Bible. His style is light and his theology conservative, though he also recommends a Bible version for liberal/mainline Protestants, for Roman Catholics, and for Jews. The top six sellers in 1986 listed in order of their popularity: the New International Version; the KJV; the Living Bible (these three account for about two-thirds of the sales); the New King James Version; the New American Standard Bible; the New American Bible. The Roman Catholic NAB, in my judgment, is the best of these first six; the equally excellent RSV, Today's English Version, Jerusalem Bible, and New English Bible all fall under the 3% line in total sales! These figures may be skewed since they seem to represent statistics from a supplier to conservative bookstores. Still, there is quite a lesson here. RWK

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE AGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Volume III.2. By Emil Schürer. Revised and Edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman (T. & T. Clark, $49.95). The authors provide "introductions" to Intertestamental Jewish literature of which the original language is uncertain (e.g., 1 Esdras; The Life of Adam and Eve; The Lives of the Prophets) and a lengthy essay—81 pages—on Philo (the latter by Jenny Morris). More than 120 pages of indexes bring this extensive and high quality revision of Schürer's famed 19th century history to its completion. RWK

THE STORY OF ISRAEL BETWEEN SETTLEMENT AND EXILE. By A. D. H. Mayes (SCM Press, £7.50). M. opposes Noth's idea that the Deuteronomistic History was written by one person and argues instead for traces of two editions, one in the late pre-exilic period and one in the exile itself. Both the prophets and the Deuteronomists stood opposed to the main stream of Israelite faith: the prophets stated that God's presence was dependent on the people's ethical behavior, while the Deuteronomists opposed the popular idea of Yahweh's presence at the sanctuary with a theology of Yahweh's name. In the conclusion he proposes that the gathering of the materials in the Pentateuch and their final editing were undertaken under the influence of the already extant Deuteronomistic History. RWK

A GRAMMAR FOR BIBLICAL HEBREW. By C. L. Seow (Abingdon, $21.95). Here is a clear and competent beginner's grammar that will probably replace the Lambdin grammar in many introductory seminary courses. Also good for review for those who like to keep their languages alive in the parish! RWK

FROM EDEN TO BABEL. A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS 1-11. By Donald E. Gowan. **REBUILDING WITH HOPE. A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOKS BY HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH.** By Carroll Stuhlmueller, C. P. (Eerdmans; each $7.95). Here are two more volumes in the International Theological Commentary, a paperback series intended to offer a Christian theological commentary on the OT. Both scholars have outstanding reputations and do not disappoint in these semi-popular treatments. G. uses form criticism to show that Genesis 1-11 was told not just to recall the past but to help one understand one's own encounter with the same realities (tensions between the sexes, violent solutions to human problems, threat of world destruction). S. holds that with Haggai prophecy moved beyond social reform and religious purification of the cult to a hope fixed on an eschatological future. In Second Zechariah's (Zechariah 9-14) ambiguous location between the end of a former age and the beginning of a final age, he finds an analogy to the Christian's location between the first and second comings of Jesus. RWK

WE ARE LIKE DREAMERS. STUDIES IN PSALM 126. By Walter Beyerlin (T. & T. Clark, $13.95). The speakers in this Psalm compare themselves to dreamers because they anticipate in faith what God is going to do and because they experience in advance what the future will bring. Because the first half of the Psalm expresses only anticipation of the future, the second half pleads that this future might appear. B. locates the Psalm in the exilic period and demonstrates its indebtedness to the prophet Joel, whom he dates to pre-exilic times. RWK

ISAIAH: THE EIGHTH-CENTURY PROPHET. By John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine (Abingdon, $15.95). First Isaiah (chapters 1-39) is generally viewed today as a collection of materials from several authors written over a period of several centuries. One welcomes in general, therefore, the attempt by H. and I. to locate almost all of the book (except for chapters 34-35) within the prophet's lifetime, and this holistic approach is also finding other defenders (notably J. J. M. Roberts). Their own proposals, however, break sharply—and unconvincingly—with many previous exegetical conclusions. They believe that Isaiah *supported* Ahaz and that Ahaz is the king referred to by the famous "unto us a child is born" (9:6) and the "stump of Jesse" (11:1). H. and I. excel as popularizers, and one can read their account almost as a narrative, without the stodgy pace of an ordinary commentary. They plan similar volumes on Hosea, Amos, and Micah. RWK

PSALMS 1-59. By Hans-Joachim Kraus (Augsburg, $36.95). K. switched in mid-career from Old Testament studies to systematic theology, but by 1961 he had produced a massive, two-volume commentary on the Psalter in the Biblischer Kommentar series, that still is the standard in

Germany. This translation is made from the 5th edition published in 1978. The only current English rival for a full-scale commentary on Psalms is the Word Biblical Commentary, though so far only the volumes on 1-50 and 101-150 have appeared. The authoritative and highly-awaited volumes in the Hermeneia series (by Patrick D. Miller, Jr.) are still being prepared. K.'s work is encyclopedic and very solid; all readers will profit immensely from it, though naturally full account of developments in the last twenty-five years is not to be expected. RWK

TEXT AND CONTEXT: OLD TESTAMENT AND SEMITIC STUDIES FOR F. C. FENSHAM. Edited by W. Claassen. JSOTS 48 (Sheffield, $42.50). F. has been Professor of Old Testament at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa since 1951. His careful and fairly conservative biblical scholarship is here honored by 22 essays from some of the finest international biblical scholars. A student of W. F. Albright and author of 23 books and 153 articles, his most famous article is entitled, "Widow, Orphan and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature" (1962). RWK

BACKGROUNDS FOR THE BIBLE. Edited by Michael Patrick O'Connor and David Noel Freedman (Eisenbrauns, $17.50). The twenty-four essays in this volume represent a broad spectrum of modern American readings of the text. Topics covered include Scripture and... (Story, Canon, Church, Intellectual History), the study of Scripture, the setting of Scripture, Israelite Worldviews, Apocalyptic Worldviews, the Binding of Isaac, and the Passion of Jesus. RWK

THE EERDMANS ANALYTICAL CONCORDANCE TO THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION OF THE BIBLE. Compiled by Richard E. Whitaker (Eerdmans, $49.95). Bravo! Using a computer, W. has created an up-to-date concordance of the whole Bible (including the Apocrypha) with a key that indicates to the reader what the underlying Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or Latin (2 Esdras) word is. Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin indexes at the back can be used to find all the English words used by the RSV for one foreign language word (*eis* is rendered by 57 different English words) or as a mini dictionary. The ancient languages are printed out in beautifully clear type (not in the awkward transliterations of Young's and Strong's). Anyone with a minimal knowledge of the biblical languages—even only the alphabets—will be able to do sophisticated word studies. Once more: Bravo! RWK

PROPHECY IN ISRAEL. Edited by David L. Petersen (Fortress, $7.95). Seven essays by leaders in the field discuss prophetic identity in Israel (Did the prophets have unusual experiences, or did they speak or write in a distinctive way? Were they part of the cult, and did they have charisma? What kinds of intermediaries were they, and what were their distinctive messages? How can the prophetic message be appropriated today?). RWK

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS IN ENGLISH. By Geza Vermes (Sheffield [Cloth], $42.50; Penguin [Paper], $6.95). It is hard to believe that anyone but a librarian would buy the cloth binding, but the book itself, here in its third edition, is the authoritative translation of the scrolls. V. provides a competent discussion of the history and religious ideas of the Qumran community (identified with the Essenes), and then translates the major documents, including now for the first time the famed Temple Scroll. V. notes that the brittle structure of Essenism was unable to withstand the national catastrophe of 70 C. E. and contrasts it with the pliant strength of Rabbinic Judaism. While the Teacher of Righteousness sensed the deeper obligations in the Mosaic law, he was without the genius of Jesus who exposed the essence of religion as an existential relationship between people, and between people and God. V. laments the fact that many of the priceless documents from Cave 4 have not been published more than thirty years after their discovery. A classic. RWK

THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY. By Michael A. Knibb. Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 2 (Cambridge, [Cloth] $49.50; [Paper] $16.95). This excellent volume provides a representative selection of the Qumran literature([not including the Temple Scroll), accompanied by brief commentary. K. dates the appearance of the Teacher of Righteousness (who may have been expelled from the high priestly office in Jerusalem) and the start of the Qumran settlement to about 150 B. C. E. He identifies the Hasmonaean Jonathan as the Wicked Priest, who lacked the requisite genealogy and was appointed by a Seleucid king. Another figure, variously called the scoffer, the liar, and the preacher of lies, may have broken with the Qumran community and eventually become the founder of the Pharisees. RWK

JEWS IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD. By John R. Bartlett. Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World (Cambridge, $12.95 Paper). In this volume B. provides translations of and commentaries on portions of the Letter of Aristeas (defends the authority of the Greek translation of the Law), the Sibylline Oracles (oracles by inspired Jewish and Christian prophetesses foretelling the destruction of the world and the coming of a savior figure), Eupolemus (concerned with the sanctity of the temple and its glory), and Josephus. It was important to all these Jewish writers to demonstrate to fellow Jews and outsiders that the Jews were an ancient people with wisdom and godliness of their own. Josephus had a double goal: to demonstrate to the Romans that the Jews were not trouble-makers as their rebellion might suggest, and to demonstrate to his fellow Jews that the Romans were not brutal tyrants, as their destruction of Jerusalem might suggest. RWK

ARCHAEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION. Edited by Leo G. Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs, and Gary L. Johnson (John Knox, $24.95). The 19 articles in this book are dedicated to the memory of D. Glenn Rose (d. 1982), an important OT scholar and archaeologist. Five articles survey and evaluate various "schools" of archaeology; seven discuss the excavations of specific sites, including Tell el-Hesi, where Rose directed the excavations; the other seven investigate a variety of biblical-archaeological subjects (Sodom, water systems, the division of the kingdom, Rehoboam's cities of defense, state formation in the Iron Age, the last years of Judah, and early Bronze Age sites). RWK

THE HIGH ROAD. Compiled and Edited by Duane Mehl (Parkside Publishing, 205 W. Touhy Ave., Park Ridge, IL 60068, $9.95). M., a Lutheran pastor and onetime seminary professor, has collected and edited insights on alcoholism and other mood-altering drugs from addicts and alcoholics themselves and from members of their families. The book discusses sexuality and addiction, cross-addiction to more than one drug, addiction and its impact on divorced people or on people experiencing illness, loss, failure, or the threat of death. There are hints for what families can do, and chapters addressed directly to the young. Study/discussion questions conclude each chapter. A valuable resource for a crucial issue in pastoral care. RWK

AN ANTHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS FROM UGARIT. By Johannes C. De Moor (Brill, $39.00). Here is an up-to-date translation of the most important religious texts from Ugarit (1400-1200 B. C. E.). M. provides his translation with a running commentary that will make the documents accessible to the non-specialist. One of his major contributions is the correlation of the Baal epic with the procession of seasons at Ugarit; a table links the six tablets to cultic and agricultural events of the Canaanite year. Nineteen pages of Scripture indexes demonstrate the enduring importance of these documents for students of the Bible. RWK

FIRST AND SECOND KINGS. By Richard Nelson (John Knox, $19.95). **HOSEA-MICAH.** By James Limburg (John Knox, $17.95). Both of these commentaries are part of the Interpretation series, designed to assist the teaching and preaching ministries of the church. Both also are by Lutheran professors of Old Testament, N. at Gettysburg and L. at Luther Northwestern. N. focuses on how Kings functions as theological literature in its final shape for an exilic audience, even though his own doctoral dissertation argued persuasively that there was once a pre-exilic version of this book. The book of Kings faced these questions: How does Deuteronomy apply to our situation? How can a book about temple, land, and community function when these things have all been destroyed? How can Scripture that promises life for obedience work when disobedience has brought death?

L. deals with the first six Minor Prophets in a similar, sensitive way. On Hosea 11: "The fact that both masculine and feminine images are found in the Bible suggests that we ought to be imaginative in developing our own theological language in both directions. In so doing, we shall be following in the creative tradition of Hosea himself." On the role of Edom in Obadiah: "Obadiah suggests that there are no 'innocent bystanders'....If the church has not often found itself in the role of the oppressor, has it too often played the role of the innocent bystander?" How does Jonah talk about God's amazing grace? "By speaking of the Lord's concern for the cows of Nineveh?" This commentary is "accessible" to those without advanced theological training. RWK

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE CHARISMATIC. By Lowell J. Satre (Fortress, $5.95). This book provides a clear and concise overview on the biblical teaching of the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The author emphasizes the breadth of gifts by showing that the different lists in Paul are not meant to be exhaustive but suggestive, and that we are thereby invited to name more gifts in service to congregation and world. A good book for adult study groups, especially during the Pentecost season. JCR

THEOPHORIC PERSONAL NAMES IN ANCIENT HEBREW: A COMPARATIVE STUDY. JSOTS 49. By Jeaneane D. Fowler (Sheffield, $34.95). In this revised dissertation, F. studies all Hebrew names in the Bible and in inscriptions that contain the name of the deity and therefore express beliefs about God. She also compares and contrasts these names with the onomasticon of all Israel's Semitic neighbors. Hebrew names, she discovers, incorporated no thoughts that were incongruous with the mainstream of Israelite religion. Thus, there is no consort for God, and no titles of female deities (while many names say God is my divine father, brother, etc., there is none which calls God mother, sister, or the like). She also finds no substantial evidence for syncretism despite the constant threat posed by Baalism. The name Bealiah (1 Chr 12:5 [not 14:7 as she asserts]) is parsed as Yahweh is Lord, not Yahweh is Baal. RWK

A COMPREHENSIVE ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE FOR READERS OF ENGLISH. By Ernest Klein (Macmillan, $121.00). The language in question is Modern Hebrew, which includes a large percentage of biblical and Mishnaic vocabulary. K. was a rabbi who survived the Holocaust and spent his later years in Toronto. The word translated "firmament" in our English versions is here given the meanings "extended surface" or "expanse," with the explanation that etymologically it means something beaten out. The word "sailor" is derived from Akkadian and Sumerian roots meaning "ship" and "going." Thus a sailor is one going on a ship. Hours of good times here for all arm-chair philologians, who of course recognize that etymology is only one way—and not always the most important way—that we decide what words mean. Plenty of modern Hebrew words are here too, like flamingo, which came into Hebrew from Portuguese! "Radio" and "telephone" are also modern "Hebrew" words. RWK

BEING PEACE. By Thich Nhat Hanh (Parallax, $8.50). Nhat Hanh was central to the peace movement among Vietnamese Buddhists. He lives in France and has established a new Buddhist order called *Tiep Hien.* The words literally mean "being in touch in the present," but Nhat Hanh translates them as "interbeing." His new book offers an introduction to Buddhist practice in Vietnamese perspective. The threefold vow of refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha is discussed, as well as Buddhist anthropology and meditation practice. A chapter on working for peace discusses the seven Buddhist principles of reconciliation. The fourteen precepts of the *Tiep Hien* order form the final chapter. Nhat Hanh's lectures in the U.S. have been skilfully edited into a sturdy, concise enchiridion for meditation and action. JCR

CELEBRATING GOD'S PRESENCE. By William E. Hulme (Augsburg, $6.95). A brief and simple guide to Christian meditation, Hulme here offers advice on the varieties of prayer and on the use of the imagination in meditation, on meditation as receptivity to the Spirit of God, and he gives us a guided meditation through the body. The book ends with an injunction to become soaked in the Scriptures. JCR

EXTRAVAGANT LOVE. By Mary R. Schramm (Augsburg, $6.95). Here is a book which gives practical assistance in developing a non-violent life, from prayer to war tax funds. Central to the book is the thesis that following Christ enables us to release anger and to transform it into a creative force for love and peace. Stories of everyday folks in conflict situations help to highlight the process. Good for study groups in parishes. JCR

PREACHING ABOUT THE NEEDS OF REAL PEOPLE. By David H. C. Read (Westminster, $9.95). Read is one of the deans of American preaching after three-plus decades as pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. In this book he offers a brief theology for pastoral preaching, sends us into the streets to listen to people where they live and hurt, and tells us that "by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Great Contemporary, the preacher must be the vehicle though which the good news becomes alive and up-to-date." He focuses on basics and concludes with two sermons. Robust, down-to-earth, and sound advice. JCR

A WAY OF WORKING. Edited by D. M. Dooling (Parabola Books, $8.95). If you are involved in any way with craftsmen, artists, or those who think about and teach art, or for that matter if you are involved with journeymen carpenters and so forth, this little book holds clues for your ministry to and with such people. It is a collection of concise and lively essays oriented around the notion that craftsmanship is a way, a spiritual pathway involving the transformation of matter through creative energies into a new creation which evokes or displays the spirit both human and divine. Especially useful are the chapters on the space the craftsman creates and on the relationship between intention and action. The book would also do as a meditation for preachers, to be repeated often until learned within the soul. JCR

BUDDHISM AND ZEN. By Nyogen Senzaki and Ruth Strout McCandless (North Point, $7.95). A classic, originally published in 1953, and now re-issued after almost twenty years out of print, this is one of the handful of influential early works in English in the United States on the Zen tradition. S. was one of the first zenmasters to make the trek to the West along with the zen philosopher D. T. Suzuki. This book, definitely for all readers, will give you a good introduction to the winsomeness and charm of Zen and will also give you first clues in the difference between Buddhism and Christianity. JCR

BREAK THE MIRROR. By Nanao Sakaki (North Point, $9.95). S., the so-called wandering poet of Japan, emerges here as a master of the imagistic tradition as represented in the orient by Japanese *haiku.* His poems are, however, longer

than *haiku*, and yet the similarity is evident as he teases the universal meaning from particular and local events within the cycle of nature. Not only are the poems deep, but they can be funny—on occasion hilarious—as S. lunges from the eschatological to the scatological with breathtaking leaps. A spiritual romp through the American west through the eyes of this wanderer. JCR

A ZEN HARVEST. Compiled and translated with an introduction by Soiku Shigematsu. (North Point, $12.95). 773 poems that capture the spirit of Zen for those willing to sit and ponder. This is their first translation into English, and it is an unobtrusive one. The harvest reminds one of the imagist poets of the early years of the 20th century in the West, but also of earlier poets in the Christian tradition like Angelus Silesius and Gerhard Tersteegen who tried in brief pictures to disclose spiritual truth. In fact, these are so-called "capping phrases," poems to be chosen by a student who has solved a *koan* (riddle) to demonstrate the truth learned. A good introduction by the translator offers us a way to read the poems under four angles of vision onto Zen. JCR

CONFIRMATION: ITS ORIGINS AND REFORM. By Aldan Kavanagh, O.S.B. (Pueblo, $12.95). K.'s books are welcome additions to liturgical scholarship. His thesis is that confirmation originated as a dismissal rendered by the bishop and involving prayer and the laying on of hands. It is thus *not* identified with chrismation, contra our earlier understanding, which is a separate sealing in the Spirit. In the early church, the eucharist itself was considered a "confirming," i.e., a strengthening in the Spirit. In the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, there is a transitional dismissal as people moved from baptism and chrismation to their first communion, where a prayer asks for the confirmation of their faith by the Holy Spirit. In the AT the *missa* is not an "ordination," but a release of the neophytes into the priestly ministry of the whole church. It is this latter understanding that K. wants to retrieve. Baptism contains a messianic accounting with which confirmation should not be confused. He traces the shift to a medieval notion of confirmation (which Luther inherited and rejected) and wants the order catechesis/baptism/confirmation/eucharist (called "baptismal-transformational") preserved in the church (as, indeed, it is in the Rite for Christian Initiation of Adults); and he contrasts the theology of this order to that order common to Lutherans and Catholics, namely, baptism/chrismation in infancy, followed by catechesis, penance, first communion, confirmation (the "educational-prophylactic" order). The book is highly recommended especially for parishes where catechesis and confirmation is being studied... or should be. JCR

IMAGES OF FLIGHT. By Clive Hart (University of California, $32.50). This is an elegant book, beautifully produced and written, with copious illustrations. The only lament is that the illustrations are black and white, but color plates would have pushed the price beyond any sensible reach. The text is an exploration of a novel idea. What if, thought this author, I were to assess the understanding of flying before it was technologically possible? What taxonomy of flight could I invent? What ideas about flying did people have, especially in the medieval and renaissance period? And lo, the answers are in the book. You can learn what people thought and believed about flying up and flying down, about the metaphors of flying in literature, about the flight into union through sexual encounter, and about the demonic side of flight, namely, crashing to the earth through impure motives. This is a wonderful book for browsing and meditation. A welcome addition to your coffee table, despite its demure size. JCR

CHURCHES RESPOND TO BEM, VOLUME V AND VOLUME VI. Edited by Max Thurian (WCC Publications, $10.40 and $12.90). For students of the ecumenical movement, WCC continues its publication of responses to and reception of the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document of the WCC. Volume V contains the surprising response of the Greek Church, which disagreed with both the idea of "reception" and the WCC's power to call for the same; Volume VI

contains the response of the Roman Catholics, who support WCC efforts but criticize in all three areas. Each volume also contains a broad set of responses from other first and third world churches. JCR

LIGHT FROM LIGHT. Edited by Louis Dupre and James A. Wiseman, O. S. B. Paulist, $14.95). Anthologies are maddening. You look for favorites or those whom you think should be represented, and always you end up sad. Such is the case with this book. Inclusion is the anthologist's problem: whom shall I let in? The authors—both Roman Catholics—have trod the narrow path with Catholics and make two odd but understandable exceptions in William Law and Jonathan Edwards. The former represents Anglican tradition and the latter American faith, though one could criticize anthologizing Law at the expense of Hooker, Andrewes, or Donne; yes, and why not Martin Luther King? And why two representatives from the quietist tradition? The book is helped by a good printing format; it lies open for meditative reading, the print is good-sized, and there is a brief biography and bibliography for each person. An index cross-references themes in spirituality. The introduction is competent and adequate, bright but not dazzling. For beginners. JCR

THE PRAYER BOOK OFFICE. Compiled and edited by Howard Galley (Harper & Row, printed as a Seabury Press book, $49.95). Lutherans have no up-to-date breviary for use; this one could fill the bill. Included are the orders for morning prayer, noonday prayer, evening prayer, and compline. Optional canticles are provided for these services. Propers are provided for all the seasons of the church year and for the sanctoral cycle. The entire Psalter is included with antiphons for general use and for Easter and with notes for varying forms of recitation or singing of the Psalms. A daily office lectionary is included which is the same as LBW, but which adds a rota of Psalms more complex and complete than LBW. Churches which celebrate lesser fasts and festivals might want to consult these tables for a broader use. Included also is a collection of non-scriptural readings for saints' days, modeled after the Roman use with certain indigenous additions from Anglican history. An order for the Great Vespers of Easter is included, useful for services on the evening of Easter day. Beautifully printed and bound. JCR

COMMUNITY FOR LIFE. By Ulrich Eggers (Herald, $9.95). The Bruderhof is not well known even where it flourishes. This community of Christians, some thousand in number, is the result of movements in Germany under the leadership of Eberhard and Emmi Arnold in the first decades of the 20th century. The community—since the mid-70s part of the Hutterian societies in the U. S. and Canada—shares in goods, meals, child care, and so forth. In 1973 a sociological study by Benjamin Zablocki, *The Joyful Community*, was published by Penguin Press and introduced many people to the phenomenon of the Bruderhof. In *Community for Life,* a less scholarly approach is taken by a young German journalist who discovered the society through a series of occurrences and subsequently set off for a month sojourn at the Woodcrest Bruderhof, which was followed later by three more weeks spent in community and studying archives. The book contains a lot of pictures in black and white and in color which enhance the text quite well with their candid depiction of Bruderhof life. E. is able to capture in his text a feeling for the life at a Bruderhof. Intentional community is certainly not for every Christian, and we tend to think of it in terms of communities of celibates, anyway, but the Bruderhof displays a true working alternative to the hippy commune of the sixties and the Catholic communities of singles. Well worth the browse. JCR

LUTHER'S CATECHISM COMES TO AMERICA. By Arthur C. Repp, Sr. (Scarecrow, $29.50). R. traces the early use and influence of Luther's *Small Catechism* on American Lutheranism by examining many catechetical resources, most of which added numerous questions and answers to the chief parts of Luther's catechism, which questions formed an adaptation to fit a

slant of Lutheran understanding. Such material thus supported rationalism, pietism, or confessionalism without changing the basics of Luther's *Small Catechism* (though that happened in some cases).

R. wrote the classic study of confirmation in the Lutheran Church in 1964, and his new work examines the catechisms that grounded the six models of confirmation he initially categorized. Since the study ends with the 1850s, it does not include the Schwan and Jacobs texts which were in use in the LCMS and ULCA, respectively, into the 1950s. R. concludes that German and English catechisms were the major tool for learning by the mid-19th century, that rationalism had much less effect on the catechetical process than it did in theology (some catechetical helps were written to combat the decay of faith under rationalism), that pietism shaped much of the catechetical process and introduced the notion of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*), in which Luther's catechism fit into the order itself! At the same time the pietist catechisms stress confirmation as renewal of the baptismal covenant, and some list prayer and the cross of affliction as means of grace. Luther's Table of Duties was presented in some catechisms as a "holy order" wherein each person found his or her ministry.

This book is expensive, but when we are searching for overall leads in rethinking and reshaping the process of catechesis for a new age, we do well to study our history. Perhaps a consortium of churches engaged in catechetical ministry would invest in a copy of it. JCR

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Preaching Helps

The Resurrection of Our Lord—Seventh Sunday of Easter, Series C

Full-Bodied Easter Celebration

I remember years ago talking with Walter Hahn, a marvelous artist living in Pleasantville, New York. My memory, like some of my other body parts, is a bit creaky, but what I recall is his telling me something like the following. He noted that artists have through the ages given us moving portraits of the birth of Jesus and of the suffering and death of Jesus, but rare are the great pictures of Jesus' resurrection. As he mulled that over, he suggested that the wonder of birth, the joyous interplay of mother and child, the pain of suffering, and the terror of death are within the experience of all of us. But we have to reach and guess when it comes to resurrection.

Analogies abound, from earliest times. Seeds bursting in the soil and springing up into flowers. The whole world in springtime rising from the deadly grip of winter. The smell of soil, rich and fertile. Song and color and movement where moments before all was frozen and gray and silent. From caterpillar and chrysalis to butterfly.

But as marvelous as April may be, all these remain weak parallels, not quite up to the work of confronting us with the full-bodied shock of his resurrection. Images, analogies, and parallels can be enormously helpful, but inevitably they fall short of the reality itself.

What is the reality of the resurrection? It is an event in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Resurrection means his breaking out of the tomb, shaking off grave cloths, bursting free from the maw of death. Resurrection means that God reversed the work of whip and gallows and spear thrust. All that, but still more.

Easter is a decisive event also in the life of the universe. God shouts a shattering cosmic "No" to the injustice of it all, the stupidity of it all, the hurt of it all. And God cries an everlasting "Yes" to Jesus, friend of the vulnerable and scourge of the venerable, guest of tax collectors and host to the hungry, cleanser alike of holy places and of hearts possessed by demons, strong healer and liberator bent beneath the world's terrible burdens, patient and impatient, serious but never sour, no place to lay his head but possessing all things, radiant with joy. At Easter God sends shockwaves through the universe, refusing to permit injustice and death to still and silence the energies which had erupted in such stunning fashion in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus and his project continue.

Preachers may well wonder whether their words ("mere words") can possibly convey the wonder of it all and the truth of it. It may help to remember that God apparently puts great store in words. The gospels are words and the good news takes shape and penetrates as word. Easter words are indicatives and convictions, imperatives and resolutions, interrogatives and questions for the rulers of this age, subjunctives full of hope, exclamations and shouts of celebration.

The First Readings in this issue attempt to focus tightly on some single aspect of the Gospel readings, thinking exegetically in order to explain not everything but some one thing. The Pastoral Reflections are the work of the Rev. Jan Gallagher, who is at this time working on a Ph.D. in Literature and Theology at Fordham University. She lives in the Bronx (New York) with her husband, the Rev. Tom Pranschke. They have cats named George Eliot and Emily Dickinson, which somehow seems natural for a person who has a special interest in the ways the writers of the Hebrew Bible and modern authors tell stories about God.

To keep us asking questions that stretch our imaginations and attempt to crack us out of narrowly psychologizing proclamation, we once again have the Rev. Don Prange writing Prophetic Voice. His words from the coal country of Nora, Virginia, give voice to the cosmic dimensions of Easter. He compels us to keep on thinking until we have seen the fullness of that which is "new and different" (his theme) in the promise of Easter.

Blessings, as you embody Easter in word and life!

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor

The Resurrection of our Lord March 26, 1989

Exodus 15:1-11
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 24:1-11

A FIRST READING

A fair sized delegation of women disciples (Luke 24:1,10) stood inside the tomb on Easter morning, and they were completely at a loss (v. 4). Throughout the chapter Luke pays attention to the variety of human feelings and emotions, and charts the move of disciples both male and female from perplexity and fear to faith and great joy.

Two men in dazzling apparel snapped the women out of their confusion with a question dripping with irony: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (v. 5). What are you doing in a tomb? Why are you poking around in a cemetery? Why are you dressed in mourning, bearing spices, looking for a corpse? Why are you surprised when you do not find Jesus lying in a row along with other famous corpses: David and Solomon, Socrates and Plato, Washington and Lincoln?

Jesus is "the Living One." Compare him, if compare you must, with Zeus, whose name (related to *zoe*, life) also means the living one. Jesus, says Luke, and not Zeus, is life, source of life, nurturer of life, lord of all living creatures. These words seemed to the sequestered disciples to be "an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (v. 11). How can we put flesh on these words and help summon people from unbelief? RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Excuse me, but the first thing I notice about these three lessons is that they are all verses 1-11. That's the way my mind works, going right past the heart of the matter to latch on to the inconsequential. But it's an Easter-ish coincidence. When word of the resurrection comes back to the disciples, it comes back to disciples numbers 1-11. The perfection of twelve is not yet; the tribes aren't all there.

Maybe *that's* the way my mind works, to notice what is missing, even in a festival as glorious as Easter. A resurrection feast is not particularly good news to whose who feel dead. "April is the cruelest month," says T. S. Eliot in the opening line of *The Waste Land*, meaning that rebirth, renewal, regeneration seem impossible to those who don't want their dull roots stirred by spring rain.

I teach college freshmen to write. Easter-ish sort of people, freshmen, full of hope and expectation and a sense of their own boundless possibilities. But I look behind the bright faces and discover that many are scared and lonely, all are overwhelmed by the work of being freshmen, and a frightening number cope with serious problems ranging from abusive families to anorexia to substance abuse. This is a Roman Catholic university, so most of these freshmen are baptized. They are a new creation. But they keep having to cope with the same old thing.

The problem, and the glory, of Easter is that it is not yet fulfilled among us. Since Easter falls not during April but during March this year, many of us will be kindling the new fire in a clearing we make in the snow, celebrating new life in the midst of the earth's death. That we keep on celebrating, keep on hoping, despite winter's chill grip on the land and too often on our hearts, is a gift of God, not the result of contemplating our own possibilities. We believe that spring will come because it came last year and the year before that and the year before that for as long as anyone can remember. We believe that God will come to help us because God came to the people before us and the people before them and the people before them for as far back as the Book goes.

Miriam and Moses and the people of Israel sing, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and its rider he has thrown into the sea." But the wilderness wandering has yet to come; what God is doing among them is not yet finished. The song goes on to describe God's

triumph over Israel's enemies in giving the Promised Land to the Chosen People—an anachronism in its context, yes, but in its context a wonderful anticipation that God who has done great things among us has yet more glorious things to do. JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

The Resurrection is not just an event to which we give a doctrinal 'yes.' It is the keystone of a movement which is a living witness to Christ's triumph over the forces (death, injustice, and oppression) that conspired to crucify him. The earliest Easter liturgies celebrated Christ as "our Passover" (1 Cor 5:7). Good Friday–Easter is a deeply political event which has its roots in the Exodus uprising. It is both the ultimate blast from God's nostrils (Ex 15:8) against the forces of death and oppression, and it is the warm breath of God giving life to the New Creation. No wonder it has possibilities of both terror (Lk 24:8) and nonsense (24:11), because it can only be celebrated (and make sense) out of the experience of those who know the full terrors of oppression and injustice, out of an authentic theology of the cross.

Just as the reality of the crucifixion/resurrection forced re-thinking on the part of the earliest followers of Christ, so this is for us a liturgical season for re-examining our commitment to a new and different life which says 'no' to the idols of death with a celebrative 'yes' to the God of life. Easter is the festival of messianic and apostolic community, the community "rejected" (Ps 118:22) by the architects of idolatry, but the "keystone" (Ps 118:22) in the building of a New Creation. DP

Second Sunday of Easter
April 2, 1989

Acts 5:12, 17-32
Revelation 1:4-18
John 20:19-31

A FIRST READING

Most sermons about Thomas miss the point that John is trying to make. They focus naively on Thomas as a person requiring hard evidence before he will reach the conclusion that Jesus' heart has begun to beat again. It's as though Thomas had demanded: "I want to see the shape of his cheekbones and the color of his hair to make sure it's not some look-alike. I want to hear his voice and test his memory, asking some questions that only he could possibly answer, before making up my mind that it really is Jesus." It's not a bad idea to let your imagination run along these lines. What tests would you set up if what you wanted was merely to establish that Jesus, after having died, was really up and walking? Those tests would be different from what Thomas actually asked.

John takes it for granted that Jesus does in fact and reality live again. But it is in the nature of his Gospel always to press beyond the tradition he has received. Through the Thomas episode John ponders (and would have readers ponder) the odd centrality of the cross. What Thomas demands to see are the wounds of the crucified: nail-prints in hands and spear-wound in side. John in effect says that Jesus is still the crucified one. The living and exalted one, "My Lord and my God," bears the marks of crucifixion forever. He not only was but is the passionate and loving one. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Remember when they always chose you last for softball? Or when the boys put a big sign on the treehouse, "No Girls Allowed," and they wouldn't let you in even though you helped carry

the wood up the tree? Or when the kids were talking and laughing next to their lockers but stopped when you came up? Thomas Didymus, my twin, the Outsider.

Poor Thomas. He steps out for some groceries and comes back to find that the world has changed and everyone knows about it except him. He makes the perfectly reasonable statement that seeing is believing, and gets for his pains the rebuke that believing without seeing is even better. After that, I would have gone to India, too.

Someone latched on to Thomas' concern with how we can know the unknowable and named a Gnostic gospel after him. Thomas the Outsider becomes the one in the know, the one with the inside information.

We Christians are both insiders and outsiders, like Thomas. We have a sort of inside track with God, though it does not behoove us to play upon that insiderness as if it were some sort of automatic distinction. God has, after all, chosen us rather than the other way around. And that is exactly what makes us outsiders to the rest of the world.

We pastors feel that tension of being simultaneously insiders and outsiders most acutely. Church members treat us as the ones with the inside information, which they often seem to believe includes some sort of inside track with God that is further inside than their own baptismal grace. But we are outsiders in the rest of the world precisely because of that perception of an inside track. Almost all of us have had the experience of watching a non-church-type person take two steps back when we tell him what we do for a living. I've sat on a city bus with people standing nearby refusing to take the seat next to me because I was wearing clerical clothes.

The church has dealt with that tension of being insiders and outsiders from the beginning. We are in but not of the world. We cannot escape the tension; indeed, we are forbidden to try, for we are in the world for the world's salvation.

We cannot escape the tension, but we are given a way to deal with it. The highlight of today's Gospel pericope is the lovely three-fold refrain, "Peace be with you." I don't know exactly how that gift of peace can play itself out in our lives of inside outsiderness; exploring the possibilities would take more than the two sentences I have space left for. But the peace that the risen Christ bestows—repeatedly, as if knowing that we would need to be reminded—seems to me to be a good place to start in proclaiming the good news when we're inside the church building preparing to be Christ's body on the outside. JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

If Easter's "new song" (Ps 149:1) is sung to the tune of Jubilee, then "repentance and forgiveness of debts" (Acts 5:31) is the resounding chorus! It's central to the new and different life! To be sure, it is threatening. It can drive our faith into seclusion in our own fearfulness (cf. John 20:19); and it certainly stirs fears among the wealthy and powerful who conspire to "arrest" (Acts 5:17,18) such liberating ideas. But the risen Lord penetrates locked doors of little faith with a reassuring "Peace be with you," and with a clear directive that the apostolic mission to proclaim the forgiveness of debts is indeed of the Spirit (John 20:20-23). And other liberating forces are at work in the world, angels "of the Lord" (Acts 5:19) overcoming imperialism's prisons so people can learn "all about this new Life" (Acts 5:20), including the social, economic, and political dimensions of the new and different life.

This is the experience of the early church, the *ecclesia* of messianic and apostolic community committed to a new spirit in economic life. And John's Revelation offers apocalyptic visions as spiritual empowerment for communities under persecution. The 'new song' was a threat to the empire and to those with power, prestige, and wealth, as well as to those whose 'theologies' had made idolatrous accommodations to such powers. The message to struggling communities then is a message to us: "Do not be afraid!" (Rev 1:7). Don't be afraid of new and different dimensions in mission! Don't be afraid of theologies of liberation! Don't be afraid to express solidarity with the oppressed! Don't be afraid of new and different approaches to economics! This is the word from the "Living One," the One who has overcome the powers of death (Rev 1:18). DP

Third Sunday of Easter
April 9, 1989

Acts 9:1-20
Revelation 5:11-14
John 21:1-14

A FIRST READING

Seven disciples (count them, John 21:2) look like a picture of the whole church. In fact, all the images of this final chapter of John's Gospel are churchly: fishing (vv. 3-8), feeding (vv. 9-14), shepherding (vv. 15-19).

The intended climax of the Gospel is found in the next scene (vv. 20-25), where the particular form of the Beloved Disciple's ministry is described as bearing witness by means of words, the powerful words of what we call "The Gospel of John." Preachers may well be grateful for the Beloved Disciple's ministry as prototype for their own. However, the lectionary lops off the final verses of the Gospel so that the climax of the reading is now found in the scene involving Jesus and Peter.

The three questions of Jesus are often taken to be reminders of Peter's three denials, as though Jesus were rubbing some salt into Peter's wounds: "Told you so!" It is more useful and more accurate to remember that "three" means something like "all the way." Peter had completely denied and now promises to be a shepherd all the way. Paul's conversion is told three times in Acts, indicating how that former persecutor was turned upside down and inside out. The four living creatures before the throne of God never cease to sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy," ascribing full and complete holiness to God alone (Rev 4:8).

Jesus' question is this: "Will you be a shepherd all the way? Will you love to the utmost, as I, the Good Shepherd, loved to the very end, all the way to the goal?" (see John 10:11 and John 13:1). This lection says that celebrating Easter means having the love of God in the living Lord Jesus Christ welling up in us and flowing forth from us. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

I seem to be dealing with pairs of opposites in these meditations: joy and despair, inside and outside. Today it's fullness and emptiness. The empty nets become full; the hungry and perhaps perplexed disciples share a meal that their Lord has prepared. Saul, blind and fasting, receives sight and eats, the spiritual emptiness that the vision on the road made clear to him filled by his reception of the Word and baptism. No one is found worthy to break the seals of the scroll until the Lamb comes (this is earlier in Revelation 5); the Lamb's sevenfold worthiness is proclaimed by the fullness of the whole creation. Empty to full, nothing to everything: that is in fact the testimony of the whole revelation, and of the whole of the book that bears that name.

Two thoughts occur to me on the subject of emptiness and fullness. They might be useful, if not homiletically, in your pre-preparation phase.

The first is a pretty simple observation: that some are empty while others are full—some hungry and others overfed, some homeless and others with three homes, some despairing and others joyful, some who receive the Word and others who don't—is not the way the Bible tells us it ought to work.

The second is perhaps more immediately relevant to the task of preaching, the fruit of my having read through all the lessons from Acts that are the first lessons for the Easter season. It is the contrast between the fullness of the preaching of the apostles and the emptiness of our own preaching. Ananias converts Saul—well, all right, he had considerable help. But in the two pericopes from Acts 13 that are the first lessons for the next two Sundays of Easter, Saul-cum-Paul preaches with a fullness that inspires belief in some and fear in others. Even a cursory skimming of the book of Acts highlights the difference between the apostles' preaching and our own. They converted people; we preach to the converted. Their preaching inspires response, whether positive or negative; perhaps the worst indictment of our own preaching is that it rarely upsets anyone enough that people want to run us out of town. No matter how inspired we may be over our text and

what God has given us to say about it, our proclamation rarely inspires others.

If I had answers to this problem I wouldn't see any need to write about it. Surely, considering the emptiness of our preaching must force us back to the source of our inspiration, for we can trust only in God to make our preaching effective for the people we preach to. The one thing that I personally take comfort in is the fact that my preaching is always followed by the Eucharist. People leave the service filled one way or another, whether my preaching has been full or empty. JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

The first time those Galilean fishermen left their boats, they were hardly ready for the new and different way of life to which Jesus called them. But Jesus made himself known to them at the lake again after his death and resurrection. This time their "mourning turned into dancing" (Ps 30:11). The second time they left their boats they became exactly what Gamaliel called them, a "movement" (Acts 5:38), a social, economic, political movement reflecting the content of Jubilee. And more (Acts 2:44,45; 4:32-35), they set in motion a movement embracing "all the living things in creation" (Rev 5:13).

If we are not yet ready to say "Amen!" (Rev 5:14) to the 'new song' celebrating the beginning of a new social, economic, and political order, might we not at least take Gamaliel's advice (Acts 5:38) and wait to see how things work out? Otherwise, we might find ourselves "fighting against God" (Acts 5:39), and Paul's story shows that that is always a losing battle.

"Ten thousand times ten thousand" (Rev 5:11) people of "every race, language, people and nations..., a line of kings and priests to serve our God and rule the world" (Rev 5:9,10). A great vision, this is no mere figure of speech. The reality of Easter lives in sisters and brothers throughout the world who draw faith and courage from the biblical vision for a new and different way of life. If Saul could become Paul, what may we yet become? And what changes are coming in the social and economic order? DP

Fourth Sunday of Easter April 16, 1989

Acts 13:15-16a, 26-33
Revelation 7:9-17
John 10:22-30

A FIRST READING

The winter feast of "Dedication" was actually the feast of the rededication of the temple after the Seleucids of Syria had defiled it by slaughtering a pig before an image of Zeus. The Maccabees had liberated the temple and finally gained both political and religious freedom from the Syrians. In ancient times Dedication or Hanukkah was a time to ponder freedom. And it was a good time to ask Jesus whether he was the Christ (John 10:24). Would he do for his day what the Maccabees had done for theirs?

It would be an easy business to talk about how Jesus' contemporaries were blinded by their national aspirations and failed to comprehend Jesus' program. It would be better to admit how often we ourselves yield to the temptation to under-use or mis-use Jesus. It happens whenever we turn him into a purveyor of mental health or human potential or make him into an architect of some needed social program or hold him up as the champion of our race or our religion or our nation or our kind of people.

In John's Gospel Jesus uses strange rhetoric to describe his own person and program. Instead of being one with some national party or religious movement, Jesus declares that he is "one" with the Father, "one" with God. He descends from the divine side of reality, courses through the world, calling his sheep, who follow him in his train.

At first (v. 28) he says that his sheep, his own people, the believers, are in his hand (Ps 95:7, "we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand"). But then he says that his task is to place people safely into the Father's hand (v. 29). His hand or God's hand? What difference? "I and the Father are one."

Against all the gods, gurus, and gimmicks that promise "enhanced life" or "a better life" or "a deeper life," Jesus is the true shepherd of humankind. He never kills or uses, never deceives or abandons. The cross and empty tomb ("I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it up again," v. 18) define Jesus as the Good Shepherd who leads our human lives into union with the life of God, which is the life of everlasting love. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Good Shepherd Sunday is full of wonderful associations for those of us who grew up with the shepherd–sheep image, but the image is problematic for everyone else. Even if sheep and shepherds were still common, we would probably have trouble with the metaphor. Thinking of Jesus as shepherd forces us to think of ourselves as sheep. The sanitized little lambs from the old lithographs are cute, but real sheep are smelly, mindless creatures, and I for one don't much care for the idea of being herded around.

The host–guest image from Psalm 23 is a more potent one for modern times. Though hospitality has gone almost as far downhill from Oriental standards as sheepherding, we still take responsibility for our guests. We do our best to make them comfortable, happy, and secure in our homes. Hosts even have a certain legal responsibility for their guests. You have always been able to sue if you fell on an icy sidewalk on your way out of your host's home. Now hosts even have a legal responsibility to see that their guests don't drink too much.

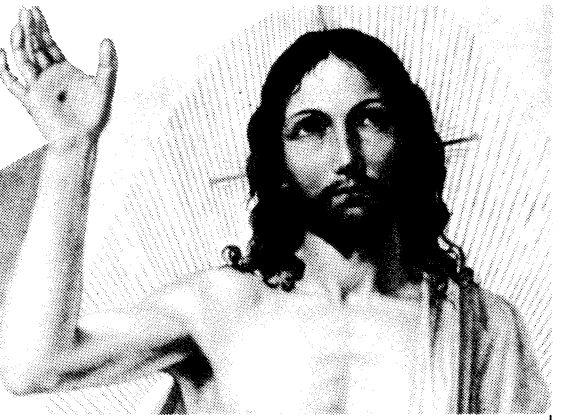
That's the negative side of being a host, but it does point out that hosts have important responsibilities for their guests. Put the God of infinite power and majesty in the place of the host, and you get the infinite responsibility that God takes for us as guests, which is one of the themes of today's lessons. If God takes endless responsibility for us, then we enjoy the endless security of being God's guests. Jesus says, "I give them [my sheep, my guests] eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." The 144,000 who came through the great tribulation came through because of God's care for them, and now they enjoy God's endless hospitality, "and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Even in the first lesson, we see the rulers of the synagogue extending the hospitality of the synagogue to Paul, who returns the favor manyfold by extending God's hospitality to them. When, as we will see in next Sunday's lesson, the synagogue ceases to invite, Paul then invites the Gentiles, extending God's endless hospitality to the whole world, and even to you and me. JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

It's all too easy to spiritualize the Easter message of new-and-different-life. All it takes is to translate *soteria* (Acts 13:26) as "salvation" instead of "deliverance." But see how Luke used that word when Zechariah (Luke 1:69) spoke of a *deliverance* from those who rob others from living "life to the full" (John 10:10). Any religion or theology which spiritualizes the biblical message participates in that robbery, a robbery tantamount to stealing from God (cf. John 10:29; Luke 19:45,46).

There is perhaps no better illustration for how we distort the biblical message than in our traditional spiritualizing of Psalm 23. A poor man, robbed of the fullness of life, defiantly proclaims in a context of false shepherding (bad political leadership) that "Yahweh is my shepherd!" (Ps 23:1). He sees a table prepared (23:5) at which the "people from every nation, race, tribe, and language" (Rev 7:9) sit down to enjoy the fullness of life God has intended for them. "They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev 7:16,17). Jesus comes as Good Shepherd (John 10), validating and confirming the psalmist's confidence that God would one day lead him to fullness of life. DP

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Fifth Sunday of Easter
April 23, 1989

Acts 13:44-52
Revelation 21:1-5
John 13:31-35

A FIRST READING

After washing the disciples' feet (13:1-5), Jesus interprets his strange act first of all as a parable of the washing he will perform for the cosmos by his being lifted up on the cross (13:6-10). His dying will be akin to the cleansing performed by household slaves as guests arrived at their master's house. It is cleansing offered as part of the larger act of welcoming to one's house and table. Jesus goes to the cross as the one indispensable act of initiation into his fellowship and hence into God's own company. And then he speaks of his act as a model of humility to be imitated by his disciples (13:12-17).

At the cross Jesus and God are "glorified" (13:31). Jesus enters by means of the cross into that perfect union with God which he had before he was spoken into the world as God's redemptive Word, and God is perfectly honored by Jesus' crucial self-giving.

Jesus goes away or departs by means of the cross, and the disciples cannot follow him immediately (13:33), but they will follow him afterward (13:36). That is to say, after his death and resurrection (=his glorification), after their eyes and minds are enlightened (as Thomas' eyes were eventually opened, 20:19-29), then they will walk in his steps and follow as disciples on his cruciform path. And the form of their following will be love.

Love is the new commandment, new because it flows directly from the cross and empty tomb, the signs of the new age. It is easy to point to "wars and rumors of wars" or to mounting crime statistics and call them signs that the world is growing older and heading for imminent ruin. John in his Gospel leaves all such to one side, and concentrates brilliant light on the glorious sign of the dawning new age: love (*agape*).

Love of family, love of neighbor, love of those near and dear to us is a good start. But Jesus calls to a love as broadly welcoming as his own, one that abandons the kind of clan solidarity that marks the boundaries of affection in the old age. Love like his own, one that washes feet, one that moves crossward, is called by Jesus in another context love of the enemy (Matt 5:48). That kind of love is the most moving of Easter liturgies. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

What's new? This is new: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you." This is new: that God sent the Word not only to Jews, but to Gentiles, that the whole world might believe. This is new: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth.... And he who sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'"

That was new news 1900-odd years ago, but it's old news today. Still it remains new news, and good news, for each individual Christian, as we renew daily the covenant God made with us in baptism. The central challenge of preaching the Word is to make the same old 1900-year-old news new each time we stand up to preach it.

Writers who want to write stories about God in the modern age face the same challenge. Flannery O'Connor continually rails in her occasional writings against the invincible ignorance of her readers toward the mysteries she is trying to convey. She says that she has to draw in "large and startling figures," as for the near-blind (*Mystery and Manners*, 34). Walker Percy, another Southern Roman Catholic, sees the problem in opposite terms. He thinks that the Gospel has become too familiar to be heard: "The old words of grace are worn smooth as poker chips and a certain devaluation has occurred, like a poker chip after it has been cashed in" (*The Message in the Bottle*, 116). Both choose to attack the problem by writing in a grotesque mode, with characters and events that are larger and stranger than life. Their choice leaves their work open to the possibility of many interpretations, which a Christian, familiar with the eternal verities of which

they write, might see as misinterpretations. Even more conventional writers like C. S. Lewis or J. R. R. Tolkein find it impossible to write about God's action in the world as we know it, so they invent new worlds—Narnia, Middle Earth—in which to convey the old story in a new way.

Some of us choose to tell stories as a way of making the old news new. But whether we preach in stories or in more conventional forms, we face the same problem. Much of the world, including many of the people in our pews, sees this new-old news as a different kind of reality, a fairy-tale reality, far removed from real life as we really live it (whatever *that* means). The challenge is in conveying that the news we have is in fact more real, more alive, more true, than what confronts us on the street or on the CBS Evening News as "real life." Do we do that by drawing larger-than-life figures, by preaching stories set in fairy-tale worlds? If we do, we leave ourselves open to the kind of misinterpretation O'Connor and Percy have been subject to. Do we try to make the new-old news come to life in the down-to-earth situations our listeners live in? If we do, we may miss conveying the truth of this other reality we talk about. Given the world, the devil, and the sinful flesh, it seems to me that most of the time we will fail to make the good news new. All we can do—indeed, what we are commanded to do—is try. JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

Paul's work in Antioch resulted in new and different social, economic, and political arrangements. That is why resistance arose from "devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city" (Acts 13:50).

The "sovereignty" of God (Ps 145:12,13) is not some abstract doctrinal notion that God is ultimately in control of things. God's sovereignty takes shape as God's subjects manage the creation as God's own dwelling place (Rev 21:3). "The world of the past" (21:4) will not do. If we try to hang on to what is "gone" (21:4), or if we just stand by as observers while systemic oppression goes on denying a fullness of life and destroying the ecosystem, we are denying the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The "new heaven and new earth" (Rev 21:1) operate with new and different principles: No more death! No more policies which condemn many to oppression and poverty in order to preserve a life of abundance for a few! Resurrection power breaks out in acts of authentic love (John 13:31-35). DP

Sixth Sunday of Easter
April 30, 1989

Acts 14:8-18
Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23
John 14:23-29

A FIRST READING

Scripture offers more than one answer to the question: Where is the dwelling place of the living God? So this Sunday the Seer in his Revelation speaks of God's presence indwelling the New Jerusalem beyond the destruction of the old aeon, filling that new city and giving it light, so that it has no need of those created lights we call sun and moon. In his Gospel John begins with another form of ancient answer. He shows Jesus speaking of "many rooms in my Father's house" (14:1-3). But it is just like John to mull over traditional ways of talking about the things of God and to press more deeply.

He pictures Jesus gradually unfolding to his disciples (and to the readers) the meaning of his departure and return so that "where I am you may be also" (14:3). He promises the disciples, disturbed by thoughts of his leaving them, that he will not leave them "desolate" (the Greek is *orphanous*, 14:18). He will come to them, and display himself to them, and they will see him, even though the world will not see or understand (14:19-22).

The climax to the whole meditation comes when Jesus declares flatly that both he and the Father will come and make their dwelling place

(same word as "room" in v. 2) with and in the disciple, in the person who trusts Jesus (vv. 1, 10-11) and, trusting him, also loves him and keeps his word (vv. 21-24).

Where is the temple, the home, the dwelling place of God? Where is the Resurrected and Living Jesus Christ? God and the Christ of God are enthroned upon the faith and love of the new community. These lines are being written two weeks after newspapers carried the news that the Shroud of Turin is not a burial cloth of the first century but an artifact of the 13th century. Even if carbon-14 dating had certified it as coming from first century Palestine, it would remain a fact that trust and love always have been the best "evidences" of the truth of Easter. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The last two Sundays of Easter, along with Ascension and Pentecost, seem to me to be a good time to meditate upon presence and absence, the modes of being-with and of being-without. They are, of course, two sides of the one coin, *yin* and *yang*, each a thing that we cannot know except by reference to its opposite. Today's focus might be on anticipating the absence—a thing that anyone who has sat by a deathbed or contemplated a move to a distant city can relate to—and upon the peculiar mode of presence that comes when we anticipate absence.

One way of making the old news new is to enter into the experience of the disciples as they hear Jesus telling them that he is going away. The promise of the Paraclete can't mean much to them yet, since they haven't experienced that particular mode of presence. All they hear—all I would hear if I were in their place—is the promise of absence. We might think about what they are feeling by remembering how we have felt when we knew that a friend or relative was dying or moving away. Anticipating the absence is almost as bad as the absence itself. But a peculiar thing happens to the remaining weeks, hours, days of presence: they become precious, distinctive, full of import. We want to latch on to them, hold them, keep them from trickling away while we get all we can out of a person's presence before it is gone. We treasure moments—a pain-free hour of reminiscence and old jokes, the last lunch together—even as they slip, or more likely dash, away from us. We want to sear the good times into our memories, knowing that they will be all we have to sustain us in the absence.

If we can maintain that frame of mind while we think about the disciples sharing this last supper with Jesus, we might find ourselves doing what they probably did: listening with acute attention to every last word, trying to milk every ounce of comfort and hope from them. Then the words take on their full meaning, when Jesus says, "we will come to [you] and make our home with [you]" or "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." They become the last words of a departing friend, precious not so much for what they mean as for who they come from and why he says them. JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

What John calls "the world" (14:27) we might better call "world systems," the principalities and powers in opposition to the sovereignty of God. "The world" has a way of exploiting our insecurities.

"This-world" economists, the "theologians" of the owners of capital who resist the universal ownership of God, would have us believe there's a scarcity. So instead of peace or *shalom*, instead of economic approaches seeking the welfare and security of all on the basis of need, we have competition and injustices, and the resources of the earth are squandered in sacrifice to the idolatrous gods of mammon, war, and death.

As a consequence, there are some who have "never walked" (Acts 14:8), some who have never enjoyed a God-given and intended peace, some who have never known the peace that comes when the "good things" (Acts 14:17) God intends for everyone (rain, crops, food, and happiness) are shared with equity and justice. The Seer envisions a new and different world order, one in which God and the Lamb enlighten the entire fabric of our lives together. DP

The Ascension of Our Lord May 4, 1989

Acts 1:1-11
Ephesians 1:16-23
Luke 24:44-53

A FIRST READING

At the beginning of Luke 24, the women were confused and the men were paralyzed by doubt (vv. 4,11). Luke proceeds by offering us unforgettable portraits of disciples gripped by depression and sunk in unbelief (vv. 17, 25). But by the end of the chapter these same women and men are full of the holy energy of joy and thanksgiving (vv. 52-53). They finally see themselves as living not in the valley of the shadow but under the uplifted hands of Lordly blessing (v. 50), and they stand ready to bring to fulfillment the historic program long ago enunciated in Moses and prophets and psalms. They are about to undertake a colossal task embracing all nations, calling them to repentance and offering them amnesty, the cancellation of all their sins (v. 47).

Ascension means that God has had enough of evil empires and that God is eager to get on with the business of establishing a new human community under a new kind of sovereign (the sovereignty of the one who came to seek and to save the lost, Luke 19:10) built not on the power of blood and iron but on the basis of "power from on high."

Ascension is about Jesus, about his new status in the universe, but it is also all about a new way for human beings to relate to one another under the arms of Jesus upraised in blessing. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

More meditation on presence and absence (see the reflection for the Sixth Sunday of Easter), and another attempt to enter into the experience of the disciples.

Now the absence becomes real. There was already the one absence, the Good Friday absence, and the beginning of the mourning process for the disciples, forestalled by the resurrection appearance. Presumably this time the promises of a new presence mean a good deal more than they did the first time, since the disciples now know that the one who promises has conquered death, the ultimate absence. Still, his going away again, though it doesn't look in the least like a death, leaves them again dealing with absence. They wait in the city, as they have been commanded to do, but they must feel a little at loose ends.

It's an odd, loose-end sort of holyday, Ascension, for the church as well. The Pascal candle has been extinguished, but the Spirit has not yet come. We deal with an absence, a being-without after the being-with. It's a little like the experience of the widow who comes home after the funeral to a house that rings with absence. It's not so much that she can't deal with her husband's absence as that she has continually to deal with the marks of his presence, now lost: the chair that still bears the imprint his body wore into it after so many years, the favorite cup he mended that still has a hairline crack running down the handle.

Ephesians gives us the up side of the absence: Christ sits at the right hand of God to rule over the earth and particularly over the church, a more pervasive kind of presence than the one he could exercise while he walked among us. We rejoice in the glory that is Christ's, and ours, and wait with eager anticipation for the promised Paraclete. The up side is a little like the words we say to ourselves at a funeral: we are glad the absent one is suffering no more, and we rejoice that she now knows God's full presence. It's not that we doubt those truths, or that we would, even in our best moments, undo the good that has been done for the dead one for the sake of healing the wound left by her absence. It's just that the wound remains.

Maybe the disciples, like the widow, are thrown back on the old modes of presence while they wait for the new presence. They believed, after all, that YHWH was present with Israel long before the coming of the man they now name

Messiah. Can they find that mode of presence sufficient for the time being, after eating and drinking with the Chosen One of Israel? Or is all their hope for the future mode of presence?

And we, living in these in-between times, not only between Ascension and Pentecost, but between the First Coming and the Second, where do we find our hope? In what ways is God present among us? The obvious answer has to do with the Spirit's presence, with Word and Sacraments, with the church. I believe there's a tension in that answer, though, and I have no more space to deal with it here. If you are interested in my further musings in the subject, you can go on to the reflection on the Seventh Sunday of Easter. JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

In spite of all their first-hand instruction, there was still confusion and misunderstanding among those closest to Jesus (Acts 1:6). They continued to show tendencies (like the church today) to rely on a power related to the world rather than on a power stemming from a peace the world cannot give. The praxis of Jesus reveals the transcending nature of God at work in the world. It is a liberated approach to life "above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named" (Eph 1:21). Omnipotence, contrary to what the disciples were thinking (and to what the church is often thinking), was wrapped up in servanthood committed to the realization of Jubilee.

The true apostolic tradition is rooted in the transcending "order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4). It means openness to all the new and different possibilities set in motion by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. It means a new and different life flowing freely from the fact that "we are clothed with the power from on high" (Luke 24:49), and not with the power of this old eon. DP

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 7, 1989

Acts 16:6-10
Revelation 22:12-17, 20
John 17:20-26

A FIRST READING

"That they may all be one" (John 17:11, 21). Has any saying of Jesus been sewn onto more banners, printed on more bulletin covers, or offered as text for more sermons? It is well-known and yet it may be badly known.

Oneness is a surprising Johannine word for the gift Jesus bestows by going to the cross. Jesus gave up his life "that all the scattered children of God might be gathered into one" (11:52). By the power of the dying of Jesus there will be one flock, one shepherd (10:16).

The age-old condition of humankind is seen by John as one of dividedness and fragmentation. We are divided from one another by all our warfares and hot hatreds and cool indifference, divided from God, the source of our being, by fear and distrust. We are broken pieces with as much chance of living as branches torn from a tree, or arms broken from a body.

But the cross is a ladder, bridging impossible gaps. It is strong medicine, healing obscene fractures. In his "High Priestly Prayer" or "Prayer of Consecration of Self" Jesus in prayer interprets his going to the cross. He speaks of it as his moment of glorification (re-entering the glory he had with God before the world was made, v. 5). And it will yield oneness for the world, a fruitful grafting of people into the life and being of God. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The subject is again presence and absence, this time an odd mixture of both. These are in-between times. We are still in those odd ten days between Ascension and Pentecost, so that as we

try to live the church year we find ourselves without either the presence of Jesus or the presence of the Spirit. On the broader level, reading Revelation as we have done these past few Sundays cannot help but remind us that we live in the time between the First Coming and the Second, a time that even to the New Testament writers was beginning to seem too long for human faith to sustain. We are the ones whom Jesus prayed for, "those who believe in me through their word." We have not seen Jesus. We believe only because the Spirit has worked through the church through the ages to bring the word to us.

The church through the ages has yearned for that Second Coming. One of its first prayers is echoed in today's pericope from Revelation, "Come, Lord Jesus." We pray that prayer eschatologically, yearning for a time when Christ will come again to set things right in the world. All humanity shares a similar yearning, though they would not necessarily put it in the same terms Christians would, for we all long for a time of peace, justice, and fulfillment. Nothing seems more obvious when we look at the world around us than that Christ is not here; this world does not look much like the Kingdom of God.

But we pray the prayer not only eschatologically, but also with a present faith. We pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest/ And let these gifts to us be blessed." We mean that we want Jesus to come now, not as Alpha and Omega but as our guest and host, a present presence among us by the power of the Spirit. While we missed the first presence of Christ and may well miss the Second (at least in our normal human lifetimes), we still expect Christ to be present among us.

This is the Seventh Sunday of Easter, not the Last Sunday Before Pentecost, so we are celebrating the presence of the Risen Lord. But it is still—though not in capital letters—the last Sunday before Pentecost, so we look forward to the Spirit's coming. We live in between times; we have not seen Jesus, and, if history goes on the way it has for the past two thousand years, we shall not see him before we die. That's the absence. The presence is the presence of the Spirit among us, the one through whom the word came down from the first disciples to other disciples to still other disciples and so on down to us. The presence of the Spirit is more difficult to discern than the presence of Jesus; we cannot see the Spirit as we could have seen Jesus if we had lived in Galilee two thousand years ago. That's why we are given tangible signs of the presence: water, bread and wine. That's why we have each other, each of us the presence of Christ for another in the church. "Come, Lord Jesus" becomes for the church "Come over to Macedonia and help us." JG

PROPHETIC VOICE

The whole context of Paul's Macedonian organizing work has some interesting episodes about economic exploitation (Acts 16:16-24) and thoughts on Roman justice (16:35-40) which suggest that the "Good News" (16:10) which was "turning the whole world upside down" (17:6) was indeed a new and different power related to the spirit of Jubilee. It was because Jesus acted by the spirit of Jubilee that he was arrested and executed, and it is that very spirit of Jubilee which is vindicated in the resurrection.

Jesus' last prayer before his arrest was that we might be united with the "Righteous One" (John 17:25), the God of justice, "the Great King of the whole world" (Ps 47:2). And we cannot claim unity with that God when we are linked to social, economic, political systems serving another god (cf. Rev 22:15). We cannot claim unity with the God of justice when "the right to feed on the tree of life" (Rev 22:14) is being denied to millions of persons on the face of the earth because of systemic economic injustices.

That there are no quick and easy answers to our problems is a given; but that there is a resurrection power capable of new and different tactics is also a given! In the spirit of Jubilee let us celebrate with no strings attached: "Let all who are thirsty come: all who want it may have the water of life, and have it free" (Rev 22:17). DP

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One of the First Fruits

Roger Fjeld
President, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

We are at a curious stage in the life of our new ELCA. We've completed the planning which led to the formation of this church, and we've moved into the new organizational and physical structures. We're still immersed in what seems like an endless process of transition. We're at the point where we long for the fruits of this massive effort to become a new church in mission, but most of those fruits still lie in the future. Yet there are some first fruits, some signs of the good things to come.

One of those was the launching this past September of the expanded Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest. As soon as the Consultation on Theological Education for the ELCA paired LSTC and Wartburg and gave us, together, an assignment in and for the Southwest, we started to plan for that new program. It is an exciting assignment:

> The consultation recommends specific attention to the Southwest, including the possibility of establishing a seminary in Texas. Lutherans in the Southwest have expressed a desire for such a seminary for a number of years. The consultation, through its study, affirms the need for such a school. The Southwest is an area to which great numbers of people are coming from all directions, including persons from throughout the United States, Mexico, and other parts of the world. There is a significant opportunity for Lutherans to engage in ministry to and with people in this convergence of cultures. The presence of a major theological education center in this area would be of tremendous help in this ministry, and could offer specialized training for it. As a stage toward the above objectives, the consultation recommends the two seminaries, people in the Southwest, and appropriate church body representatives be involved in finding a way soon to have regular Master of Divinity students at the Austin site.

What that last sentence envisions is now a reality! A new director, Dr. August Wenzel, was called in 1987 and began his work January 1, 1988. An added faculty member has been called to the program in the person of Dr. Luis Alberto Pereyra. Eight new students were admitted to the first class of the new program, with three more joining it at mid-year. The goal is a student body of 40 and a faculty of four, within five years That goal is clearly within reach! In October we celebrated these first steps with the installation of Wenzel and Pereyra and the formal launching of the new program. Our partner seminaries in Austin, the Episcopal Theological Seminary in the Southwest and the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, joined us in that celebration.

So far, this sounds like a news release, not the editorial for which this page is intended. But let me now reflect on what this new program represents. It is, first of all, one

of the first fruits of the new ELCA. We are doing, together, what it would have been very difficult to do alone. Two teamed seminaries and unified synods of Lutherans in the Southwest are in a much better position to create this new program than would have been overlapping judicatories and two separate seminaries with differing approaches to serving that area. The planning has not been easy, nor have we always agreed on how best to approach the assignment; but the fact remains that we have in the space of two years fulfilled what the consultation called "a stage" toward "a major theological education center in this area."

Equally significant, in my mind, is the nature of this new program. It is not another seminary nor even just a regional program in a region which did not previously have its own program. Rather, it is an attempt to take seriously what the consultation aptly called "this convergence of cultures." This new program intends to take that convergence seriously; to prepare candidates who represent those several cultures and who are intent upon serving in multi-cultural settings. This first fruit of the ELCA takes seriously the commitment of the whole church to reach out to and to minister with people of every culture and heritage. The first group of new students in the program already represents a substantial cultural mix. The program is a tangible evidence that the intentions of this church with regard to inclusive mission are being translated into realities. And for that, we give thanks and invite you to share our joy.

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