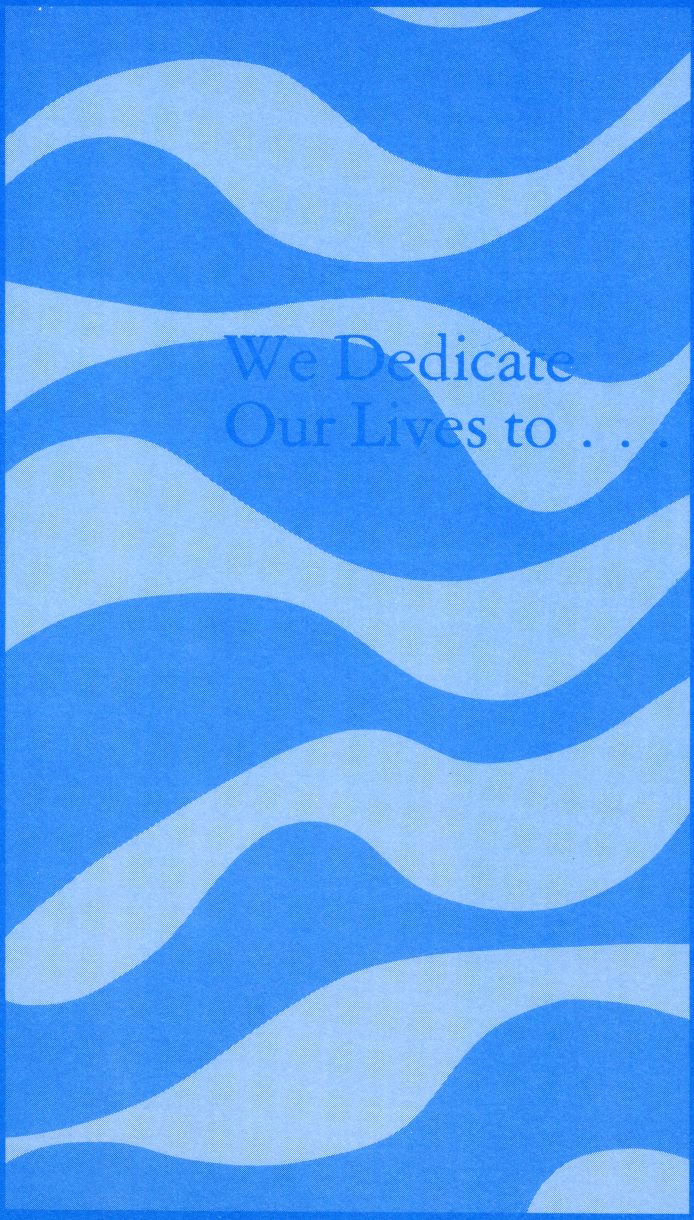
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CURRENTS

in Theology and Mission

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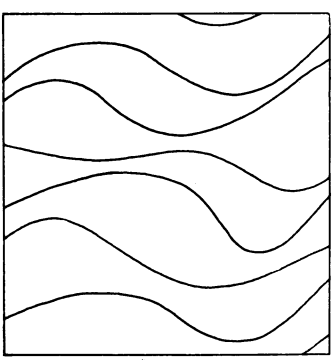
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We Dedicate Our Lives to . . .

This clause from the Offertory Prayer reminds us of the goal of the whole Christian enterprise: to call and equip people for the work of ministry, or better: to call and equip people for the care and redemption of all that God has made. The whole world—animate and inanimate—is our parish. We celebrate its joys and its blessings; we seek to reform its injustices and free it from its sins; we pledge to preserve it and make it whole. Our step toward the communion table locks us into community with millions of other ministers, and it flows from the promise in the Body and Blood. We dedicate our lives... resolutely, joyfully, meaningfully, awesomely.

John H. Tietjen offers what we hope will be only the first of many contributions from readers to the ELCA's six-year study of the ministry. He notes that God has given one ministry to all the baptized for them to exercise individually and corporately. Within the church there is a divinely instituted *office* of the ministry whose purpose is to lead and enable the people to carry out their ministries. This one office has three forms: pastors, bishops, and deacons. Pastors exercise the full responsibilities of the office; bishops are pastors with a wider jurisdiction; deacons carry out specific functions of the ministerial office. We welcome responses to this article, and we invite essays dealing with other aspects of the crucial study of the ministry.

Reformation season these days reminds us of the successful dialogue between the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic traditions. **Alvin H. Horst** reports on current aspects of Mariology in our two churches and the role played in this discussion by a recent papal encyclical. After Vatican II, Mary

has been seen more as a type of the church or a type of the faithful believer rather than as a type of Christ. A recent encyclical may alter this direction, but the mariological discussion today has many implications for modern biblical scholarship, feminist concerns, and Liberation theology. Horst's critical assessment calls both Lutherans and Catholics to seek new forms of Marian devotion and piety.

José David Rodríguez notes that what Jesus said in parables was often offensive, especially to the conventionally religious people of his day. In Matthew 20, Jesus describes the behavior of a kindly person who is generous and full of sympathy for the poor. The story features an employer whose God-like criteria go beyond merit to focus on need. God is an affirmative action employer, who welcomes all into the church and provides generously for all people in the market place and on the employment line.

Hugh Matlack uses stylistic criticism to interpret Proverbs 8:22-31. This poem reports that God created wisdom before anything else, with the result that wisdom observed the creator without comment as creation unfolded before her. Wisdom makes the creation intelligible and worth living within. By declaring creation's goodness she prepares the way for Jesus, the firstborn of all creation. Wisdom, the creature and literary device, gives way to Jesus, neither created nor devised, but, in John's words, "made flesh" and "full of grace and truth." Wisdom relates to creation through play; she celebrates a world untouched by human sin. Since we seek the goodness of creation in a broken world, there are many lessons for us to learn from the playfulness of wisdom.

Endel Kallas points out a great affinity between Martin Luther and a twentieth century Russian Jew by the name of Lev Shestov. The obscure Shestov, who wrote a book entitled *Faith Alone* on the eve of the Russian revolution, noted that Dostoevsky and Luther spoke out publicly against the fatal mark of unbelief in their respective times. By saying no to the monastery and to the securing of any hold on the power of the keys, Luther provided indisputable evidence of faith in the biblical God. In speaking against "whore reason," Luther was denying that medieval scholasticism and human reason are self-evident truth. In affirming the biblical God who alone holds the power of the keys, Luther completely fulfilled for Shestov the essential task of Judeo-Christian philosophy.

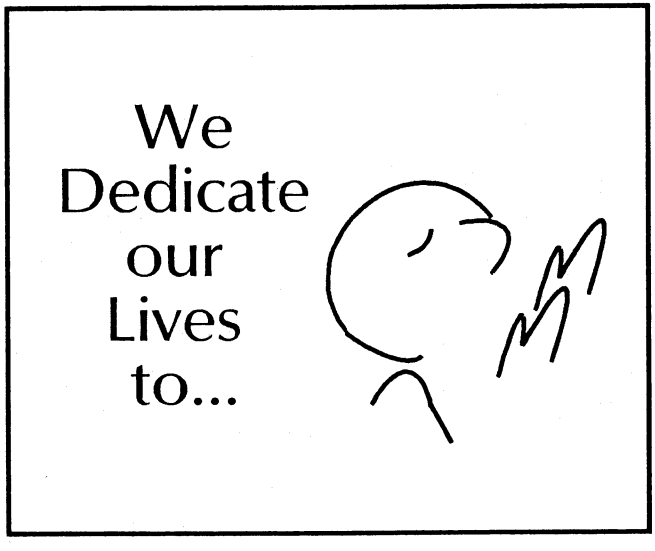
Patrick Keifert reviews at length a recent discussion of revelation by Ronald F. Thiemann, who has undermined the "foundationalist strategy" for the modern doctrine of revelation and proposed a new approach based on the unconditional priority of the one who promises and on the trustworthy character of God's promises. Theology's task is to render Christian beliefs intelligible, coherent, and true. Thiemann's ministry at Harvard is to provide a credible ministry in the public academy.

Edgar Krentz shows the utility of a new computer-based concordance for biblical studies. He believes that "The Perfect WORD" belongs in the software library of every seminary student, pastor, or theologian who uses a Macintosh.

This issue of *Currents* arrives as parishes enter their busy season and as seminaries start up another academic year. God in goodness has given you and me many gifts—the people in the parish, the students in the classrooms, our colleagues. Let us offer ourselves, with them, to God's service and dedicate our lives to....

Yours, holistically,

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

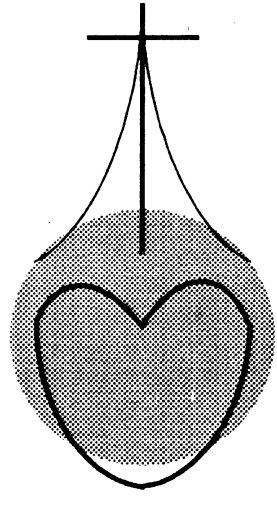


Ministry in the ELCA

John H. Tietjen
Past President, Christ Seminary–Seminex
Chicago, Illinois

"During the . . . period of 1988-1994, [the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America] shall engage in an intensive study of the nature of ministry, leading to decisions regarding appropriate forms of ministry that will enable this church to fulfill its mission."

So says a Continuing Resolution in the documents of the ELCA (10.11.A87). The resolution goes on to say that the study should pay special attention to the tradition of the Lutheran church, to the threefold ministerial office of bishop, pastor, and deacon, and to appropriate forms of lay ministries. As one who helped formulate that resolution in the Commission for a New Lutheran Church I welcome the opportunity to encourage the proposed study and to contribute to our mutual conversation concerning ministry.



People and Clergy in Ministry

Why a study of ministry? What are the issues? Ministry has been an unresolved issue for Lutherans since the time of the Reformation. Martin Luther espoused a high view of the priesthood of all believers, and at the same time Luther had an equally high view of the ministerial office. Where you put the emphasis, whether on the priesthood of all believers or on the ministerial office, accounts for much of the difference concerning ministry that you can observe among Lutherans down through history and still today.

Ministry has been an unresolved issue for Lutherans since the time of the Reformation.

Some Lutherans put the stress on ministry as the responsibility of all the people of God because of their concern for the mission of Christians in the world. Other Lutherans put the stress on ministry as the responsibility of those in the office of Word and Sacrament because of their concern for the ministry responsibility of clergy, especially at a time when there is an identity crisis among clergy.

The problem is made more difficult by the fact that we use the same word "ministry" to describe what all Christians do and what clergy do. Are there two separate ministries, or is there only one? How do you connect the ministry of all Christians to the ministry of the clergy? Do you derive one from the other? Do Christian people get their ministry from the ministry of the clergy? Do the clergy receive their ministry from the people?

Is the ministerial office to be understood as functional, that is, does it consist of certain functions to be performed, such as, preaching the Word, administering the Sacraments, forgiving sins? Is the ministerial office to be seen as ontological, that is, are those in the office to be understood not only by what they do but by who they are, which they have become through ordination?

To try to produce common answers to questions like those I have listed, the ELCA is going to be engaged for the next several years in a study of the nature of ministry. But it will also be trying to determine what forms of ministry it should have to enable it to fulfill its mission. We have to pay attention to forms of ministry both because of our internal Lutheran situation and because of what is happening ecumenically.

Forms of Ministry

The churches that formed the ELCA had different traditions about forms of ministry. All three churches had pastors to carry out the office of Word and Sacrament. In addition to pastors the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches included teachers and deaconesses and deacons as forms of the office of Word and Sacrament with responsibility to carry out the teaching and serving functions of the office. Both the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church certified laity to serve in a professional capacity for the church and included their deaconesses in the category of lay professionals; in their tradition only pastors occupied the office of Word and Sacrament.

Forms of ministry is also an ecumenical issue. In dealing with Roman Catholic views

on ministry the Lutheran participants in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogs affirmed the presbyterate, or the pastorate, as the Lutheran form of ministry, stating that Lutherans practice a presbyterial succession, that is, Lutheran pastors ordain people to the pastoral office. Some are concerned that adoption of other forms of ministry would undermine the dialog efforts. Out of the Episcopal-Lutheran dialogs has come a decision to practice occasional interim sharing of the Eucharist, but Episcopalians have made it clear that resolving the issue of the historic episcopate is necessary for full communion between Episcopal and Lutheran churches.

After many years of hard work the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has produced what it calls convergence on certain issues and published the results in a document entitled *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. The document urges the recovery of the threefold form of ministry developed in the course of the church's history, namely, the form of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. Should the ELCA adopt the threefold form by "articulating a Lutheran understanding and adaptation" of it? Such a possibility was raised in the continuing resolution authorizing a six year study of ministry.

The Ministry of God's People

In dealing with the issue of the nature of ministry it is important to note where the ELCA begins. The chapter on Ministry in the ELCA constitution (Chapter 10) begins with a section entitled "Ministry of the Baptized People of God." That section states: "This church affirms the universal priesthood of all its baptized members. In its function and its structure this church commits itself to the equipping and supporting of all its members for their ministries in the world and in this church. It is within this context of ministry that this church calls or appoints some of its baptized members for specific ministries in this church." That constitutional provision affirming the ministry of the baptized people of God properly reflects the New Testament evidence that ministry is what Christian people are called to do.

In the New Testament ministry is first and foremost what Jesus did. The Greek word for ministry means service, what you do when you wait on tables. Jesus declared that he was in the world to serve. He demonstrated what he was about when, in the Upper Room, he, the disciples' master, did the servant's job of washing the disciples' feet. The climax of Jesus' life of service took place on the cross in his act of self-giving love for others. On the cross as God's suffering servant Jesus atoned for the sins of the world and effected reconciliation with God.

Jesus raised from the dead continued his ministry through his disciples. In the Upper Room the Risen Lord told his disciples, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." (John 20:21) And he breathed his Spirit into them so that he would be present to carry on his ministry through them. Like Jesus, Christians are in the world to serve. They have Jesus' ministry of reconciliation. Theirs is the ministry of building up the body of Christ. They are empowered to love as Jesus did. Jesus' disciples do not have a ministry of their own, different from their Lord's. Jesus ministry continues on in them.

Content of Christian Ministry

The baptized people of God carry out their ministry together. They are a community gathered together around Word and Sacrament. They have each received gifts of the Spirit which they are to use for the good of all, so that as the body of Christ they can

do their work of ministry in the world. The corporate ministry of the baptized people of God includes what they do when they are together for worship and fellowship and nurture. Those acts are themselves forms of witness and service, but they must always ultimately result in witness and service in the world. Christian people are a community for the sake of the world. They live together to bring the good news of God's love to others, to be a presence for good in the community, to act against evil and oppression in society, and to reach out together with healing and love.

The baptized people of God have a ministry not only as a community but also as individuals. Daily life is the primary arena in which Christians carry out their ministry as individuals. As Martin Luther helped us to understand, every occupation is an arena for spiritual service; every station in life, whether occupation or marriage or citizenship, is for the Christian a vocation, a calling from God. Because there are different stations and because the Spirit gives different gifts, there are different ways for Christians to carry out the one ministry all have received.

Because it is Christ's ministry that all have received, the distinction between clergy and laity cannot be in the nature or the content of the ministry they perform. Do pastors have the responsibility to speak the Gospel? So do all Christians. Do pastors have the responsibility to teach the Word of God? So do all Christians. Do pastors have the responsibility to absolve? So do all Christians. Like pastors all Christians have the responsibility to counsel and visit the sick. What about the pastoral responsibility to baptize and commune? Though Christian individuals do not carry out what is a corporate function of the Christian community, they do have the responsibility to see to it that people are incorporated into Christ through baptism and holy communion. Even

Daily life is the primary arena in which Christians carry out their ministry as individuals.

the responsibility to preserve the apostolic Gospel is not the private preserve of the clergy. The one ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments has been given to the whole church. So responsibility for assuring apostolicity must be shared by all to whom the one ministry has been committed.

In coming to terms with the issue of ministry, we in the ELCA need to affirm, first of all, the ministry of the baptized people of God. We need to find ways to implement what the ELCA constitution lists in its statement of purpose as one of the six major purposes of the ELCA: "Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world."

The Ministry of Clergy

If there is only one ministry, Christ's, and if that ministry has been given to all Christians, what do we do with the ministry of those who are clergy? Some people argue that the clergy get their ministry from the ministry of all Christians. For the sake of order some are designated to carry out what

is the responsibility of all, or the responsibility of all is transferred to a few.

The ELCA constitution gives a different answer. In the chapter on Ministry it states that it is within the context of the ministry of the baptized people of God that the ELCA "calls or appoints some of its baptized members for specific ministries in this church" (10.11). Then, in a section on Ordained Ministry (10.20), it states: "Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, this church calls and ordains qualified persons."

According to the ELCA constitution, the ministry of clergy is the ministry of an office. It is an office for proclaiming the Word and administering the Sacraments. It is an office which God has instituted, words which echo the formulation in Article V of the Augsburg Confession.

We need to be clear on what the office of the ministry has been divinely instituted for. It exists "within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers." It is not a different kind of ministry from the ministry of the people of God. Both are the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, an expression that is a kind of Lutheran code word for the mission of the church. The distinction is that the ministry of the office exists for the sake of the ministry of the people of God. Those in the office have the ministry of leading and enabling the people of God in the doing of their ministry. As those in the office proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments, they represent the people of God and act in their behalf. As they do so, they use Word and Sacraments as means to equip and empower the people of God for doing their ministry in church and world.

Those in the office *represent* and *lead* the people of God in doing the church's ministry when they preach and teach, when they absolve and counsel, when they baptize and preside at the Lord's table, when they lay hands on the sick and give comfort to the bereaved, when they serve in their communities and speak out on public issues. Those in the office *enable* and *equip* the baptized people of God for the doing of their ministry when they help Christians to discover God's will for their lives, when they enable Christians to see opportunities for witness and service, when they unleash the motivating power of the Gospel within Christians and impart to them the impelling gift of the Spirit.

A Divinely Instituted Office

As God gives ministry to all Christians, so God is the source of the ministry of the office. As people are called to Christian ministry through their baptism, so some of the baptized are called to the ministry of the office through ordination. Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states that no one should exercise the office of the ministry unless regularly called. Ordination by the church is the means by which God calls to exercise the office. Those in the office have the awesome responsibility of ministering in behalf of God and the people of the church. The exercise of the office is always within and for the church, and the church has the right and the responsibility of devising means to hold those in the office accountable for what they do. Yet the primary accountability is to God, who has established the office and sets people into it through the church's act of ordination.

Therefore, those who exercise the office of the ministry are ever so much more than employees of those they serve. They not only have the functions of the office to per-

form. By virtue of their ordination and the promise of God given with it they are ambassadors of Christ in his continuing ministry to his people and ambassadors of the church in its ministry to the world.

In the ELCA as we affirm the ministry of the baptized people of God, so we must affirm the ministry of the office of Word and Sacrament. We don't diminish the ministry of the baptized by affirming the ministry of the office, nor do we diminish the ministry of the office by affirming the ministry of the baptized. Rather, it is precisely in leading and enabling the people of God in doing their ministry that clergy need to find their identity.

Forms of Ministry and Christian Freedom

What shall we do about the issue of forms of ministry? Is there only one form of the office of the ministry, namely, what Lutherans call pastors, or can the office of the ministry take on other forms? Has pastoral ministry as we know it been divinely instituted, or has God given the church the freedom to devise the forms of ministry it needs to carry out its mission of proclaiming the Word and administering the Sacraments?

I have tried to be very careful in the terminology I have used to describe ministry. I have consistently used the word clergy for those in the office of the ministry and have not identified clergy with pastors. I am convinced that pastoral ministry is and should continue to be the chief form in which the office of ministry is exercised among us. But the form of pastoral ministry as we know it cannot be found in the Bible. And therefore it is not possible to argue that our form of pastoral ministry is the divinely instituted form which we must continue to have. As a form of ministry, pastoral ministry, as we know it, is a historical development produced out of the church's freedom to devise the forms of ministry it needs for its mission.

There can be and there have been other forms of ministry in the church's life and history. In the New Testament there are many different forms of ministry. Some of them are charismatically endowed, as in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Ephesians 4. Some of them are offices for which people are set apart, as in Acts and the Pastoral Epistles. Very early in its history the church developed a threefold form of ministry, that of bishop, presbyter, and deacon, and in the course of history changed its understanding of that form from time to time.

At the time of the Reformation the Lutheran confessors stressed the oneness of ministry given by God to the whole church and exercised in a divinely instituted office. The Reformation also stressed the oneness of ministry within the office. It rejected grades or ranks within the office of the ministry and insisted that the same ministry is done by all, whether they are called pastors or priests or bishops. Pointing out that bishops and presbyters are interchangeable terms in the New Testament, the Augsburg Confession affirmed that pastors are bishops and bishops are pastors. In Article XXVIII the Augsburg Confession states that by divine right the power of bishops "is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the Sacraments." The Lutheran reformers claimed that the distinction between bishops and pastors is by human right and is in the jurisdiction they exercise and not in the nature of the ministry they perform. At the time of the Reformation the diaconate was simply a step on the way to the priesthood, not a distinct form of ministry, and so did not come in for consideration.

In many parts of Europe the churches that confessed the Augsburg Confession had to get along without bishops since the bish-

ops identified themselves with the papal position. The result was the reduction of the office of ministry to a single form, the pastor. However in some areas of Europe Lutherans were able to continue the pre-Reformation canonical forms of ministry so that today, in Sweden, for example, there are not only pastors but bishops and an archbishop. In parts of the world where Lutherans were in mission they set people apart as catechists and evangelists, without asking whether they were establishing new forms of ministry. In the nineteenth century the deaconess movement reclaimed a New Testament form of ministry and opened the door to a new kind of ministry for women. Among some Lutherans in the United States teachers and deaconesses and, later on, deacons were recognized as part of the church's official ministry. In my opinion some of those who served as lay professionals in the LCA and the ALC were carrying out facets of the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

A Threefold Form of Ministry

In the years immediately preceding the formation of the ELCA the three churches which produced it gave the title of bishop to their churchbody presidents and to the presidents of their synods or districts. Bishop is the title for the chief officer of the ELCA and of each of its synods. We have come to recognize bishops as pastors with a wider jurisdiction who exercise the function of oversight of pastors and congregations in their particular jurisdiction. Do we not in fact already have two parts of the threefold form of ministry which the convergence document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* is urging upon the churches of Christendom?

Is there room among us for the third of the threefold form of ministry, the diaconate? Instead of multiplying forms of ministry we could group teachers, deaconesses and deacons, and some of those whom we are presently calling Associates in Ministry under a single form of ministry called the diaconate. We could affirm that those in the diaconate carry out a specific function or a combination of functions of the office of ministry. They would not be pastors, since they would not be expected to carry out the full responsibility of the office of Word and Sacrament, but they would share in the one ministry of that office.

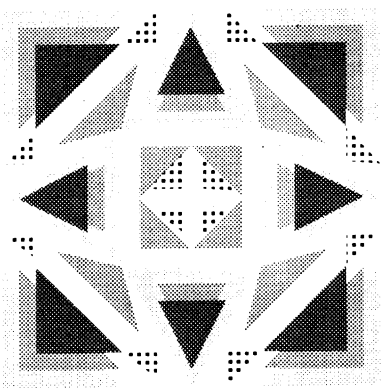
In espousing a threefold form of ministry we would have to make sure that we do not buy into presuppositions that are contrary to our understanding of ministry. We could articulate "a Lutheran understanding and adaptation of the threefold ministerial office of bishop, pastor, and deacon" and share it in our ecumenical relations. And what would such a Lutheran understanding be like? Here is a summary of what I have been saying:

There is one ministry which God has given to the church. The one ministry has been given to all the people of God for them to exercise individually and corporately. Within the church there is a divinely instituted office of the ministry which exists for the purpose of leading and enabling the people of the church in carrying out their ministry. The one office of the ministry is carried out in a threefold form by pastors, bishops, and deacons. Pastors exercise the full responsibilities of the office. Bishops are pastors with a wider jurisdiction. Deacons carry out specific functions of the ministerial office.

Mary in Current Theology: A Lutheran View

Alvin H. Horst
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St. Louis, Missouri

A Presentation Delivered to the Fifth Annual Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialog of St. Louis, May 20, 1987.



The Papal Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer) issued on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1987, has sparked renewed interest in Mary. Although Marian piety and devotion have continued with uninterrupted ardor in third world countries since Vatican II, the situation has been different in the secularized, first world countries.

In the United States ecumenical rapprochement has flourished since Vatican II in part because of the de-emphasis of pre-Vatican II Mariology among American Roman Catholics. The immediate concern among American Lutherans, therefore, with the promulgation of *Redemptoris Mater*, is whether or not the ecumenical climate will change. The encyclical raises questions about the future direction of relations between American Lutherans and Roman Catholics: will they move together more closely, or will they return to pre-Vatican II style Counter-Reformation polemics?

There are five main trends in Mariology which merit comment. They are: 1) Christotypical Mariology; 2) Ecclesiatypical Mariology; 3) Critical Biblical Scholarship Mariology; 4) Feminist Mariology; and 5) Liberation Theology Mariology.

Beginning with Vatican II, when the Council refused to draft a separate schema on Mary and instead included a chapter on Mary in the schema on the church, *Lumen Gentium* (Light to the Nations), the trend in Mariology has been to interpret Mary as a type of the church (Ecclesiatypical) rather than as a type of the Christ (Christotypical).

This trend has been a significant departure from the development of Mariology in the century between *Ineffabilis Dei* (The Incomprehensible Mystery of God) of Pius IX in 1854, which defined the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception, and *Munificentissimus Dei* (The Immeasurable Goodness of God) of Pius XI in 1950 which defined the dogma of Mary's Assumption. In that century, Mariological development was Christotypical.

Christotypical Mariology

In Christotypical Mariology, Mary is interpreted analogously with the Christ. Thus, if Christ was the incarnate, sinless Son of God, then Mary was immaculately conceived, and like her Son, unstained by original sin. If Christ redeemed the human race through his suffering, then Mary is co-redemptrix through her sympathetic suffering at the foot of the cross. If Christ ascended bodily to the Father in Heaven, then Mary, too, is assumed bodily into heaven. If Christ by his work merits grace to be dispensed to the baptized, then Mary is also the dispenser of all graces. Such is the character of Christotypical Mariology. Mary is a type of Christ.

Ecclesiatypical Mariology

Vatican II replaced Christotypical Mariology with an Ecclesiatypical trend. In this trend, Mary is seen as a type of the church instead of as a type of Christ. Thus, Mary becomes an example of the disciple's redemptive suffering to the end that Christ be born in people throughout the world. But, as in Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*, and faithful to that chapter, in all that is said of Mary's role, a clear distinction is drawn between her role and the role of the Christ. Mary as type of the church is a sort of pointer to the Christ. The Mother of God's main purpose is to lead to the Incarnate Son of God. His glory is definitely not to be eclipsed by her glory, for her glory is derived from his.

Lutheran Christians are considerably more comfortable with Ecclesiatypical Mariology than with Christotypical Mariology. They would resonate to Gregory Baum's contention that an Ecclesiatypical interpretation of Mary makes irrelevant such Christotypical Marian theses as co-redemptrix, mediatrix, and so forth. If the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are interpreted ecclesiatypically, the difference between Roman Catholic Mariology and Mariology which could be acceptable to Lutheran Christians is a difference of semantics only but not a difference of sub-

stance. An ecclesiatypical interpretation of those dogmas, in other words, removes their divisive character and makes objections to them groundless—at least for Lutherans.

Much of the Mariology of the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* is clearly ecclesiatypical. Mary is the type of that believer who is obedient in faith. "At the annunciation Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the 'full submission of intellect and will' manifesting 'the obedience of faith' to Him who spoke to her through His messenger." Her "Let it be" is the *fiat* of faith. Her faith can be compared to the faith of Abraham, the "father of faith." Similar examples from the encyclical could be multiplied.

But along with such Ecclesiatypical Mariology, the Holy Father also includes theological ideas which are characteristic of Christotypical Mariology. This raises the fear that future Mariology might return to pre-Vatican II style Mariology. Should this result exclusively in a Christotypical Mariology, there could be new strains on ecumenical dialogue.

Critical Biblical Scholarship Mariology

The third trend in current Mariology is the fruit of critical biblical scholarship. The relevant portion of the book, *Mary in the New Testament*, can be summarized to clarify the way in which that scholarship approaches Mariology. Chapter two describes the presuppositions of modern biblical scholarship. Assumed are three stages in the history of the synoptic tradition. The first stage is the actual history of the events themselves. The second stage is the transmission of elements of tradition. The third stage is the biblical text, the end product of editing by a redactor. The redactor's role was to tell the tradition for a specific purpose and from a specific point of view.

Both Lutheran and Roman Catholic scholars view Mariological reflection as valid on the level of symbol but not of history.

Critical interpretation does not take the text as straightforward non-interpreted history. The events as they actually happened belong to stage one; but stage one is not available to the interpreter. The editors state, "In a precritical period of biblical interpretation it was often presumed that the evangelists were narrating uninterpreted history, so that the detection of the Gospel-meaning was the detection of history. For the most part, both scholarship and the churches have moved beyond this simplistic understanding."

The upshot of such exegesis has been a concurrence in Mariological thought among both Lutheran and Roman Catholic scholars. Both view Mariological reflection as valid on the level of symbol but not of history. Raymond Brown and Wolfhart Pannenberg especially have reached agreement on such a view.

Compared with critical biblical exegesis, the exegesis of *Redemptoris Mater* is of that sort which the editors of *Mary in the New Testament* describe as simplistic. And, perhaps because it is pre-critical, it reverts to a sort of Mariology which can best be described as a mixture of the Ecclesiatypical

and Christotypical trends of Mariology. The encyclical interprets St. John's account of Mary at the wedding at Cana and Mary at the foot of the cross as simple, uninterpreted history. The Johannine material is then used in support of a Christotypical Mariology.

Furthermore, the encyclical interprets problematical elements of the tradition in such a way that exegesis results in traditional Christotypical Mariology. Mark 3:31-35 offers a clear illustration. In this pericope Mary and Jesus' brothers come asking for Jesus. Jesus, who is inside with his disciples, is obviously among a group which does not include his physical family, including his mother. The family is afraid because they consider Jesus to be beside himself. Jesus distinguishes himself and his disciples from his physical family with the well known saying, "Behold my mother and my brothers!"—referring, of course, not to his physical mother Mary and his brothers after the flesh, but to his disciples, the new family of the end time. Or, as he said, "those who do the will of God" constitute his real family and not those who were simply his relation after the flesh.

This passage is interpreted by the encyclical in such a way as to cast Mary in a favorable light. Thus Jesus' words that whoever does the will of God is his mother and brothers are taken to refer specifically to Mary as the one above all others who through her "fiat," her "Let it be," does the will of God.

Finally, in contrast to the Mariology of critical biblical scholarship, the encyclical's exegesis results in a notion of a pre-existent Mary. In commenting on the meaning of the greeting, "Hail, full of grace," the encyclical states,

> In the mystery of Christ she is present even 'before the creation of the world,' as the one whom the Father 'has chosen' as mother of his Son in the incarnation. And, what is more, together with the Father, the Son has chosen her, entrusting her eternally to the Spirit of holiness. In an entirely special and exceptional way Mary is united to Christ, and similarly she is eternally loved in this 'beloved Son,' this Son who is of one being with the Father, in whom is concentrated all the 'glory of grace.' At the same time, she is and remains perfectly open to this 'gift from above' (cf. Jas 1:17).

In this statement biblical exegesis is pre-critical and Mariology is Christotypical, with overtones of Nicean Christology now applied to Mary. Another passage of Scripture, non-related to Mary, is introduced to help interpret the implication of the initial Lukan text.

Feminist Mariology

A fourth trend is that of Feminist Mariology. This trend calls into question not merely the content of past Mariology but also the presuppositions of past theological methodology itself.

A good example of feminist Mariological theology is Rosemary Radford Reuther's book, *Mary—The Feminine Face of the Church* (Westminster, 1977). One of the most surprising elements of this book, as far as current Mariology is concerned, is that Mary the Mother of Jesus takes second place to Mary Magdalene. The latter Mary is preferred by Reuther because she was the non-conventional woman who was the first to understand the resurrection message. In contrast to Mary the Mother, whom Reuther views as not a part of the movement of Jesus and as the non-virgin mother of Jesus' other brothers, Mary Magdalene was part of the historical movement of Jesus and a better exemplar of the Christian ideal.

In comparison with the Mariology of feminist theology, the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* offers a very different female role model for women of the late twentieth cen-

tury. While the encyclical makes assertions about the Blessed Virgin that, were they applied to contemporary women, would seem to supply grounds for radical liberation, little is actually said about the implications of its statements for the role of women today. One statement, however, is worth quoting:

> "...women, by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement... the self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement."

The encyclical perpetuates the notion of the superwoman. Some feminists think this notion has contributed to the oppression of women, and is, in fact, a notion from which women need to be liberated. If Mariology is to be an element which perpetuates the oppression of women, can feminists be expected to endorse it? Can feminist nuns and sisters, for example, enthusiastically respond to the Papal encyclical's plea for a new and renewed Mariology for Christianity's third millennium if such Mariology is actually a reaffirmation of notions which oppress women? Secondly, if the above quoted words about women's capabilities also sound like a fitting description for the pastor of the flock of God, which they certainly do, does the encyclical translate those words into a plea for the ordination of women to the priesthood?

Liberation Theology Mariology

Liberation Theology provides the locus for the final trend in current Mariology. Central here are the theological assertions of the Magnificat, which indicate God's preferential option for the poor. This slogan of Liberation Theology finds an approving nod, but that is about all, in the encyclical. In point 3 of Part II, "The Mother of God at the Center of the Pilgrim Church," the Magnificat is discussed.

> The church's love of preference for the poor is wonderfully inscribed in Mary's Magnificat. The God of the covenant, celebrated in the exultation of her spirit by the Virgin of Nazareth, is also he who "has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly... filled the hungry with good things, sent the rich away empty...scattered the proud-hearted... and his mercy is from age to age on those who fear him." Mary is deeply imbued with the spirit of the "poor of Yahweh," who in the prayer of the Psalms awaited from God their salvation, placing all their trust in him.... Mary truly proclaims the coming of the "Messiah of the poor." Drawing from Mary's heart, from the depth of her faith expressed in the words of the Magnificat, the church renews ever more effectively in herself the awareness that the truth about God who saves, the truth about God who is the source of every gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble, that love which, celebrated in the Magnificat, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus.

"The church's love of preference for the poor is wonderfully inscribed in Mary's Magnificat."

What seems to be lacking most in current trends is a warm embracing of Marian theology on the part of Lutherans and an ardent fostering of a renewed Marian piety on the part of American Roman Catholics. Perhaps that is because Mariology is viewed as a force for the repression of women and an embarrassing reminder of non-sophisticated piety, as in the recent apparitions of the Blessed Mother in Poland. Of great promise for both Lutherans and American Roman Catholics is the fact that the Pope in *Redemptoris Mater* calls upon non-Roman Catholics as well as Roman Catholics to develop living contemporary forms of Mariology for the church's third millennium.

Lutheran Christians ought to welcome the opportunity of assisting in such development. Lutherans take very seriously the authority of the Sacred Scriptures and want to be included among those generations who called Mary blessed. As members of a confessing and creedal church, they remember the devotion to the Blessed Mother of Martin Luther, of the devotion of all the fathers and mothers in the faith, of the admonitions of their own Augsburg Confession and other confessions which highly praise Mary and urge the faithful to follow the example of the saints.

What better way to give thanks for her than to engage in a creative search for new forms of Marian devotion and piety for a new millennium?

The Parable of the Affirmative Action Employer

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Many of the parables of Jesus must have brought shocked surprise to the listeners. Long familiarity and conventional interpretations have obscured, for most of us, the original thrust of these stories. Careful study of these parables helps us realize once again how upsetting they must have been to the first hearers. There was usually a controversial element in Jesus and his words which gave constant "offense" especially, but not only, to the conventionally religious people of his day. The minds of people, even when ready to be sympathetic, could not assimilate all the rich variety of truth with which he confronted them. What Jesus had to say about God and God's Kingdom appeared "offensive" not only to wickedness, but also to generally accepted standards of propriety, prudence, and good sense.

We also become disconcerted by the unexpected teachings we find in these stories. Sometimes we find ourselves in sympathy with those whom the parable criticizes, and the ones who speak in self-defense. It is then that we realize that the overwhelming truth of the gospel—both then and now—is such that human nature cannot readily approve or assimilate it. Not only the evil in us, but also the conventionally good part of us rises up in protest.[1]

My remarks are based on the parable recorded in Matthew 20:1-16, here presented in a modern translation:

> "The God Movement is like a farmer who went out early in the morning to hire some field workers. Having settled on a wage of ten dollars a day, he sent them into the cotton field. Then about nine he went to town and saw others standing around idle. So he said to them, 'Y'all go on out to the fields, and I'll pay you what's right.' And they went. He did the same thing about noon, and again around three. Then about an hour before quitting time, he saw some others just hanging around. 'Why have y'all been knocking around here all day doing nothing?' he

[1]C. L. Mitton, "Expounding the Parables," *The Expository Times* 77 (1965-66): 307.

asked. 'Because nobody has hired us,' they answered. 'Okay, then y'all can go out to the cotton fields too,' he said. At the end of the day the farmer said to his field boss, 'Call the workers and pay them off, starting with those who came last and continuing to the first ones.' Well, those who came an hour before quitting time were called up and were each paid ten dollars. Now those who got there first thing in the morning supposed that they would get much more, but when they were paid off, they too got ten dollars. At that, they raised a squawk against the farmer. 'These latecomers didn't put in but one hour, and you've done the same by them as you did by us who stood in the hot sun and the scorching wind.' But the farmer said to one of them, 'Listen buddy, I haven't mistreated you. Didn't you and I settle on ten dollars a day? Now pick up your pay and run along. I'm determined to give this last fellow exactly the same as you. Isn't it okay for me to do as I please with what's mine? Or are you bellyaching simply because I've been generous?' That's the way it is: Those on the bottom will be on top, and those on top will be on the bottom."[2]

The Story in the Parable

The owner of a vineyard made a contract with some workers in the morning for a denarius.[3] Then he went out at different hours of the day to hire more workers, telling them that he would pay them whatever was fair. At the end of the day he paid each of them a denarius. Those who started working first were angry.[4] They had worked for twelve hours and yet received no better treatment than those who worked only one. They made no effort to hide their indignation. It is not hard to understand their resentment.[5]

The owner, however, reasoned with the grumblers patiently and quietly, reminding them of the agreement which they had all accepted and which he fully kept.

The Meaning of the Parable

In 1965 C. L. Mitton published a study of this parable that is very revealing. After a careful examination of manuscripts and interpretations that range from the time of the early Christian church to the present, Mitton concludes that this parable is first and foremost a story about a surprisingly generous employer who dealt with those who came into his service with quite unnecessary generosity. Mitton argues that in the parable nobody is unfairly treated. The only person to suffer is the owner, who would have been considerably better off had he paid to each one just the exact amount earned and kept the

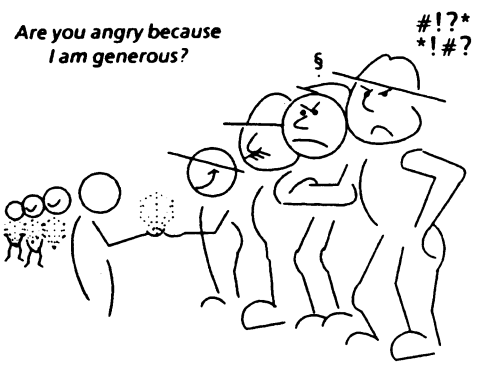
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[2]Taken from Clarence Jordan, *The Cotton Patch Version of Matthew and John* (New York: Association Press, 1970), 67. This is a translation based on the Nestle-Aland Greek text, 23rd ed. (1957). Clarence Jordan received his B.S. degree in agriculture from the University of Georgia, and his Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees in New Testament Greek from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Jordan was famous for having founded Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia, a pioneering interracial farming community in the heart of the deep south. The farm made significant contributions to the surrounding area through its practical demonstrations of scientific farming, but its witness against racial prejudice made it the object of mounting hostility. Sustained by friends throughout the world, Clarence and his dedicated followers braved violence, economic boycotts, and legal reprisals.

[3]The general sense of the term denarius was the normal day's wage for a working person; and even allowing for the difference in modern standards and in purchasing power, this was not a wage which left any margin for the worker beyond satisfying basic needs. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* 2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 222.

[4] Ernesto Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname* 3 (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 179.

[5]Mitton, "Expounding the Parables," 307.



rest for himself. His only fault is that of spontaneous generosity. His concern goes beyond what each one deserves. Their needs and that of their dependents come into his consideration even though it means his own financial loss.[6]

Joachim Jeremias shares this opinion and further claims that the latecomers touched the owner's heart. He saw that they would have practically nothing to take home. The pay for an hour's work would not meet the needs of a family: the children would go hungry if the father returned home empty handed. It is because of his concern for their need that the owner allowed them to be paid full wages. This means that the parable describes not an arbitrary action but the behavior of a kindly person who is generous and full of sympathy for the poor.[7]

The generosity of the owner in the parable, though no doubt greatly appreciated by those who most benefited from it, was angrily resented by those who felt that others had gained more from it than they had. The generous employer portrayed here is meant to teach the hearers something about God, whose treatment of undeserving men and women is incredibly more generous than they can believe possible. This same truth about God is similarly reflected in the attitude of Jesus himself to the "undeserving" of his own day. He was criticized as a "friend of tax gatherers and sinners" who even shared meals with them and went far beyond the accepted custom in his concern for them.[8] God is one who forgives a massive debt, just because the debtor cannot pay and pleads for mercy.[9] God's mercy is not rationed out according to human merit. God makes the sun to rise on the evil as well as the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.[10]

Apart from the employer who treated no one less than fairly, the parable closes with a second emphasis. This emphasis is on the grumblers who had worked all day and resented it when others, who had worked less, gained as much. Had they known nothing of the generous treatment others had received, they would have returned home satisfied. To be sure, it is not that they have been treated badly. It is only that someone else has been treated just as well—without deserving it as much! There can be little doubt that these grumblers represent the Pharisees and their attitude towards Jesus and his ministry. While their fault is clear, we can also feel for them in their protest, just as we can sympathize with the elder brother of the Prodigal.[11] In the world in which we live, we have been taught in so many ways that what the employer did was not fair. That explains why

[6]Mitton, "Expounding the Parables," 308. There is no indication that this is a co-operative farm; his concern for the need of the laborers comes before his profit making desire.

[7]Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1966), 28.

[8]The parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son in Luke 15 also stress this meaning.

[9]Matthew 18:23-35.

[10]Matthew 5:45.

[11]Mitton, "Expounding the Parables," 309.

there is so much of ourselves and of the values of our society in their protest. But the point of the parable is that this attitude did not make them then, nor us now, right.

The Pharisees wanted in religion a system where all people received exactly what they deserved, no more, no less. They wanted God to be just to all people but not indulgent to sinners. The Pharisees felt they had served God meticulously since their early days and therefore deserved more from God. Here

> It is God's nature to give with ungrudging bounty.

Jesus tells us that God is certainly concerned to give them their due, but at the same time God wants to offer "uncovenanted mercies" to many others much less deserving, though equal in their need. It seemed to the Pharisees, of course, a mockery of justice that tax-gatherers and fishermen, without any prolonged period of rehabilitation, were brought into the full assurance of God's merciful forgiveness. To be sure, it is not the case that the Pharisees were being cheated of anything they deserved from God; they received what God had promised them. Their resentment derived not from disinterested concern for justice, as they imagined, but from jealousy that some less deserving than themselves were to receive no less than themselves.

The parable proclaims the truth about the nature of God (reflected in the attitude of Jesus) and also exposes the wrongness of the attitude of the Pharisees who felt they knew better than Jesus what God is like (or ought to be like). The parable is one of the great affirmations of Jesus about the gospel of the grace of God. It was this element of grace in Jesus' teaching which the apostle Paul grasped so firmly and understood so well, though he used other figures of speech to affirm its basic truth: "Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God's own proof of love towards us"(Rom 5:8); "all are justified by God's free grace alone" (Rom 3: 24). Those of us who have been born and nourished in the Lutheran tradition know that this is not just one more teaching of the Scriptures that deserves our interest and attention. It is rather a truth that provides the basis for what later became the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, a doctrine that has been described by many Lutheran scholars as the *articulus statis et candentis ecclesiae*, that is, the article by which the church stands or falls.

Preaching the Parable Today

The parable portrays that truth about God which we always find it so hard to believe, that when we come to God and put ourselves under God's direction, God treats us never less than we deserve, but rather far beyond our deserving. God does not bestow blessings upon us in carefully calculated proportions to match what each one of us deserves, but gives with prodigal liberality all there is to give—not because we have any rights to these gifts, but because God sees our need of them, and because it is God's nature to give with ungrudging bounty. This is the heart of the gospel message, a message of hope for the most worthless and undeserving. God's dealings with us are "all of grace," as Paul might put it, and if he adds "through faith," perhaps that is the equivalent in the parable of the fact that all the

workers (whether sooner or later) had put themselves under the master's direction, ready to do what he commanded and taking whatever he gave them.[12]

A New Reading of the Parable

The Hermeneutical Principle. In any biblical study one of the most important questions placed to the interpreter has to do with the actuality of such a study for the believer. In other words, the interpreter is concerned about the meaning that the biblical text has for the contemporary community of faith. But prior to reaching that point, it is important to understand correctly the process of biblical interpretation, namely, how the Bible is studied and interpreted. I would just like to make the following two remarks about this matter.

1. It is my conviction that the Bible is not just a fixed or locked depository of meaning to which we go to dig up God's revelation for humankind. I believe that the Bible is a collection of texts that provide us with an interpretation of God's redemptive acts in history. These redemptive acts continue to take place in the present. The Scriptures therefore provide the believer with a collection of the founding and generative events of faith that point to God's acts of redemption in the past (the Christian Kerygma) and help us to recognize the way in which these divine redemptive acts continue to take place in the present.[13]

2. The purpose of biblical studies is that of a new reading of the Scriptures that, by including new events in the development of human history, goes beyond a mere actualization of the content of the Scriptures, and goes farther than the mere illumination of our historical reality with the perspective of the Bible. This new reading of the text perceives the Scriptures as the record of the redemptive acts of God in a history that has not yet come to an end, but that continues to manifest, in new instances and events, God's redemptive presence.[14]

The Bible is not just a fixed or locked depository of meaning to which we go to dig up God's revelation for humankind.

Today's Latecomers. Many distinguished scholars, from the time of Irenaeus to the present, have seen in this parable a lesson to those who believe that by having had the privilege of coming into the community of faith very early they have acquired some sort of seniority over those who have arrived later. This was a warning that was addressed to the contemporaries of Jesus, who, knowing that they were the chosen people, looked down on the Gentiles as inferiors. It was also a warning to the disciples. It is as if Jesus said to them,"You have received the great privilege of coming into the Christian church very early, right at the

[12]Mitton, "Expounding the Parables," 310.

[13]José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 88-104.

[14]J. Severino Croatto, *Hermenéutica bíblica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1984), 73-90.

beginning. In later days others will also come in. You must not claim a special honor and a special place because you were Christians before they were. All human beings, no matter when they come, are equally precious to God."[15]

The Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Americans who are a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are just as precious in God's eyes and just as important as sisters and brothers in the faith as any others, even if these others have been part of the Lutheran Church for a longer time span and in far greater numbers.

We need to remind ourselves of this fact since Lutherans have not always shared or expressed this opinion. In a letter of December 14, 1899, quoted recently in *The Lutheran*, B. F. Hankey and H. F. Richards, the first clergy appointed by the Board of Foreign Missions of the General Council to develop Lutheran work in Puerto Rico, described the people of the island as follows: "As a class they are corrupt, with small sense of honor and low standard of morality."[16]

In a 1910 brochure on the rules of the Mission Board, Puerto Ricans are described as "easy-going—as the climate is enervating—, fickle, worldly, careless about religion, ignorant, proud and superstitious."[17] According to the Rev. Michael L. Cobbler, black Americans were seen for a long time as a problem in a mostly white church body. Folks would say things like, What are we going to do about them now? and What will they do next? More recently the question has been, Why do they want so much authority?[18]

Marilyn Sorenson movingly recalls that when she was ten or twelve years old she asked a visiting evangelist whether God loved and cared for her even though she was an "Indian." While being assured that God indeed loved her, she could not hear the same assuring response from her own congregation.[19]

The parable of the Affirmative Action Employer expresses God's generous delight in welcoming latecomers to the vineyard. That same generous joy needs to permeate the mission policies of the ELCA and its congregations as they live and witness in an ethnically diverse country.

The Affirmative Action Employer. In the first edition of his book on the parables of Jesus, Joachim Jeremias called this parable by its conventional title: "The Workers in the Vineyard." In the 1963 English edition, however, he changed it to "The Good Employer."[20] In the tradition of Jeremias, I will now venture a more contemporary title. In my opinion, this is the parable of the Affirmative Action Employer. When I first thought about giving a different title to this story, I considered "The Equal Opportunity Employer." But after a careful study of its content, I concluded that this would be a mistake. The parable does not provide us with a description of someone who is willing to give equal opportunity to people provided they show the same number of credentials, the same curriculum vitae, or the same experience. The story describes an employer whose criteria go beyond merit to focus on need. This is the punch line of the story, or

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[15]William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* 2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 224.

[16]José D. Rodríguez Jr., "Hispanic Lessons for Lutherans," *The Lutheran* (September, 1986), 13.

[17]Rodríguez, Jr., "Hispanic Lessons for Lutherans," 13.

[18]Michael L. Cobbler, "Black Lutherans Gifts and Hopes for the Church," *The Lutheran* (March, 1986), 11.

[19]Marilyn Sorenson, "From Past to Future," *The Lutheran* (December, 1986), 11.

[20]Mitton, "Expounding the Parables," 309.

what we traditionally refer to as the good news, the gospel. All that God gives is a product of grace. We cannot earn what God gives us; we cannot deserve it; what God gives us is given out of the goodness of God's heart; what God gives us is not pay, but a gift; not a reward, but a product of love. For God every human being has a right to work and the right to a living wage for his or her work.

There are some long-time church members who think that the church practically belongs to them and they can dictate its policy. Such people resent what seems to them the intrusion of new blood, or the rise of a new generation with different plans, different ways, different gifts. We have to remind ourselves that in the Christian church seniority does not necessarily translate into privilege. In God's economy there is no such thing as a most favored nation clause, a most favored race, a most favored culture or a most favored language. Those who have been Christians longest may have much to learn from those younger members who are latecomers to the fellowship of faith.[21]

Various ethnic communities want to offer the church today, as Marilyn Sorenson eloquently put it, "their songs, their stories, their sense of walking in balance with nature and their sense of community."[22] We view our backgrounds, our cultures and our languages not as a liability, but as a gift of God, a means of God's grace for ministry. We celebrate having received those gifts, and we want to present them to the church as gifts that will enhance and broaden its ministry.

The presence of these ethnic groups in the church raises anew the ethical demands of faith and the need to give these demands a concrete embodiment. While in sheer numbers it is true that the majority of the poor in this country are White Anglo-Saxons, let us not forget that by percentages a greater number of the ethnic communities that we represent are in the category of the poor. In many cases they and we are still subjected to racism and prejudice in our efforts to seek adequate employment opportunities to meet human needs.[23] They are the people in the market place who spend long hours waiting to be employed. Their presence in the church is a statement of faith in the gracious God in whom we believe.

Lutherans are a confessional movement within the church catholic. We confess that God is an Affirmative Action Employer, and we believe that such a confession ought to become incarnate also in our own employment practices and attitudes toward the poor. What we believe is often what we do. This is not just an issue that relates to the constitutional details or bureaucratic policies of the church. Rather, it is intimately related with our whole understanding of mission and ministry. The God who welcomes all into the church is the same one who provides generously for all the people in the market place and on the employment line. This is our belief and hope; it is an invitation to action for all who take this confession seriously.

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[21]Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* 2, 224-26.

[22]Sorenson, "From Past to Future," 11.

[23]The Department of Labor statistics invariably indicate that Hispanics have higher unemployment rates than the non-Hispanic White population. For a recent study on the economic development of Hispanics in the United States see George J. Borjas, "Jobs and Employments for Hispanics," in *Hispanics in the United States*, ed. Pastora San Juan Cafferty and William C. McCready (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1985): 147-57.

The Play of Wisdom

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Proverbs 8:22-31 is most surely a hymn to the Creator God. Yet, it is more. It is the individual artistic creation of an ancient Israelite poet. While it has elements of style and content similar to other creation hymns, biblical and extra-biblical, it is unique.

In this article, I will use stylistic criticism to highlight the artistry of the poet who composed Proverbs 8:22-31 and try to address some of the thorny problems of this text and its place in wisdom thought, concluding with a contemporary application.

Formally, the poem divides into three sections: vv. 22-26, 27-29, and 30-31. In the first section, the main actor on the stage of creation is the God Yahweh. Wisdom is the object acted upon, specifically in being created "at the first." In the context of chapter 8, the "I/me" is understood to be Wisdom. This section makes clear that God is the Creator and Wisdom the created.

The poet has employed several devices of Hebrew poetry to make the necessary points. Verbs of creation ("create" and "make") enclose the section. In between, we see passive verbs of birthing, a type of creation. Yahweh is the actor and Wisdom the acted upon.

We can see two accents. First, the poet is careful to say that Wisdom was the first act of creation. With good Hebrew style in v. 22, that point is repeated:

> "...at the first of his work,
> the beginning of his activity of old."

V. 23 reiterates the point three more times, even including it at the first of the stitch, the position of emphasis.

Secondly, the poet lets us know that Wisdom not only came first but that it also antedated certain other created objects, like the deep, the springs, hills and mountains. Wisdom came even before the very dirt making up the stuff of the earth (v. 26).

The verbs of creation come twice and birthing three times, in a pleasant order: a-b-b-a. This arrangement helps solve a problem for the interpretation of this passage, namely, the status and role of Wisdom.

In the second section of the poem, vv. 27-29, the poet uses several poetic features to stress a fundamental tenet of wisdom thought and to paint a picture of the role of Wisdom in the act of creation. The section opens with the temporal referent, "when," again emphasizing the priority of Wisdom in creation: she was there at the first. The "when" of this second section also ties it in with the first section and sets up a contrast with the third. What follows is quite interest-

ing—and not visible in English translation. In Hebrew, when making a list or series of verbs, the language sometimes shifts into a string of infinitives. All of the verbs of creation in vv. 27-29 are infinitives with an attached pronoun. Hence, the first line opens, literally:

> "When establishing the heavens..."

and the others follow suit. Hebrew poetry loves repetition almost as much as parallelism. Verb after verb here, all repeating the same grammatical construction, all in parallel at the first of the verse following the opening "when," relentlessly hammer away at the same point of God as the Creator, who establishes, traces out, makes firm and strong, sets and marks out.

Standing alone within the structure of the poem as surely as the act itself is Wisdom: "there I was." The word order is important. Notice how the line reads:

> "When Yahweh established the heavens,
> there I was."

Anytime you modify the usual order of words, in any language, you highlight what is out of place. "There" stresses Wisdom's location beside God at the time of creation. Wisdom in the poem has no duties; she silently witnesses the majesty of God's creative activity. Hence the pattern for this section is "when," followed by the verb in the infinitive, and then a description of what is created. In v. 27a, the "there I was" breaks the pattern while also calling attention to the pattern itself (by being an exception).

The only other line that breaks the pattern of the poetic parallelism is v. 29b. Here the parallelism takes a break to emphasize a crucial point in Wisdom theology, namely, the waters not only have a set limit, they are not to disobey God's commands and become disorderly. They were set in place, and there they shall remain. This issue is foundational and typical for Wisdom thought.

In the first section of the poem, God creates Wisdom prior to any other acts; in the second section, Wisdom observes without comment as creation unfolds before her.

Now we turn to the third section, vv. 30-31, which is totally unlike parts one and two of the poem and anything else in Hebrew literature.

In the other sections, Yahweh was the actor, the subject of the verbs. Now Yahweh is the grammatical *object*, and Wisdom the active subject. Though Wisdom had once been the observer, now Yahweh observes with delight the antics of a playful Wisdom. The shift begins with the first word, "then." The poem had opened in the timelessness before creation itself and moved to the "when" within the very creation of time. Wisdom was at God's side, a loved child, a daily pleasure. Wisdom is active, laughing, playing, and enjoying herself, as only a child can do.

Wisdom's role receives emphasis in the repetition of "I was." She plays before God all of the time, in the whole world, and with all of humanity. Wisdom, like a child in the "terrible two" stage, is into everything. She is everywhere with everyone all the time. Like a very young child, she sees and enjoys everything for the first time. She is the perfect witness to creation, itself brand new. Wisdom is for God a "living link" to creation.[1]

Stylistic study helps to suggest solutions to a couple of problems we face in this passage. What is the status and role of Wisdom? The structure of the first section

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[1]R. B. Y. Scott, "Wisdom in Creation: The 'Amon of Proverbs VIII 30," *Vetus Testamentum* 10 (1960): 222.

Wisdom is God's vital link to creation; her joy in the wonder of creation reinforces its goodness.

makes her status clear. Verbs of creation (vv. 22 and 26) bracket verbs of birthing. Wisdom is born, as it were, but it is a birth just prior to creation. While Wisdom comes before the creative act, creation-itself surrounds Wisdom as the second section illustrates. She is witness, not divine partner. Lastly, like a child, she plays in the totality of creation, not quite a part of it but not separate either. She serves as link, connecting God to creation but also expressing the tenor of the goodness of the act. This is her role.

The question addressed to Job is more properly addressed to Wisdom:

> "Are you the first person that was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills?" (15:7)

Wisdom is not some sort of semi-deity. Rather, she is God's vital link to creation; her joy in the wonder of creation reinforces its goodness.

She is a child, born to a loving God, who savors the role of parent. In this case, the poet chose to represent God with the metaphor of a woman giving birth. While there is no question that the verbs in vv. 23 and 24-25 are birthing verbs, even the verbs in v. 22, "create" and v. 26, "make" have related birthing meanings. Elsewhere in the OT, the Psalmist used grammatically related verbs in this way:

> "For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:13)

Yahweh creates the heavens and earth effortlessly. Unlike Genesis 1, not even a word is necessary. Yahweh brings forth Wisdom like a woman giving birth. The one who is born is not a god but a child, metaphorically standing for the joy of creation. Again we turn to Job for an example, where we find inanimate and animate parts of creation witnessing to its goodness:

> "when the morning stars sang together, and all the [children] of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7)

In wisdom thought, God implants wisdom within creation. It is not readily visible to the naked eye, but it is there. Because it is there, people can relate to it and live by it. Wisdom is in this sense a kind of orderly meaningfulness structuring creation. If you attempt to live by its guidelines and submit to its strictures, then you will do well. This principle would not work unless it was implanted by God in the very act of creation. The next step is to put wisdom into action. Knowledge and action remain inseparable.

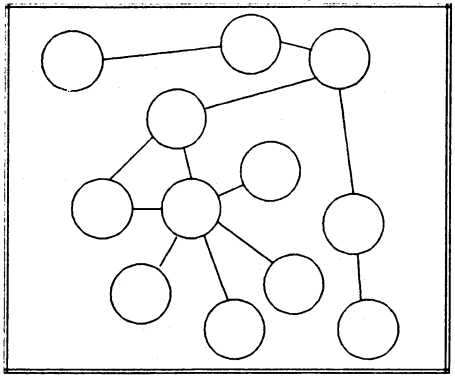
> "My child, be attentive to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge." (Proverbs 5:1-2)

Job 28 forms a good example for this way of thinking. The question is, "...where shall wisdom be found?" (v. 28a). The

answer: "God understands the way to it, and... knows its place" (v. 23). In a passage similar to ours in Proverbs, wisdom is hidden from view when God "gave to the wind its weight, and meted out the waters by measure." Finally, God

> "saw it and declared it;
> established it, and searched it out."
> (Job 28:27)

"It" is wisdom. Wisdom is, in Gerhard von Rad's view, both a part of creation and separate from creation, "like the 'meaning' implanted by God in creation, the divine mystery of creation."[2] Wisdom provides "a meaningful and satisfactory order of events in the world, a purposefulness of created beings and things."[3] Wisdom makes creation intelligible and worth living within. If it were the opposite, unintelligible and disorderly, then that would be hell. Wisdom in Proverbs thrives on the orderly and purposeful.



Wisdom, like the Law, requires action. In order to obey the orders wisdom has set within creation, you have to learn them. Hence, Proverbs has a very hortatory ring to it. The goal is not only to know the truth of wisdom within creation but to do it. The truth of creation in Proverbs 8:22-31 is that creation is delightful. If you want to live well, then you will follow Wisdom's example.

The idea of wisdom in creation is expressed well elsewhere:

> "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;
> by understanding he established the heavens." (Proverbs 3:19)

Wisdom for both passages is a kind of intermediate order or meaningfulness. Only for chapter 8 is Wisdom a person: in vv. 1-21 and 32-36, a prophetess and vv. 22-31, a child. It is not hard to see how this line of thought led to Paul's Christology in Colossians:

> "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.... For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell..." (1:15-19)

And for that matter, the Prologue to John:

> "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God... all things were made through him." (1:1-3).

Wisdom, the metaphor for creation's goodness, prepares the way for Jesus the "first-born of all creation" through whom "all things were made." Like Wisdom, he brings meaning and order to a broken world. The call is to know him and follow him. Wisdom, a creature of God and a literary

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[2]Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, J. D. Martin, translator (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 148.

[3]Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, "Observations on the Creation Theology in Wisdom," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, B. W. Anderson, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 121-22.

device of the poet, gives way to Jesus Christ, neither created nor devised but "made flesh" and "full of grace and truth."

In his book *Creation*, Claus Westermann comments: "The first three chapters [of Genesis] also have something quite basic to say about work."[4] Work is a dominant theme in those chapters of Genesis. In the first chapter, God creates without too much exertion, it would seem; yet God reserves the seventh day of the week for rest because of the labor of creation.

In the next two chapters of Genesis work becomes an honored task for the human being created by God. Only after disobedience does work change into a chore; sinfulness jades the pleasure of the work God reserved for us.

What a contrast Wisdom has for us in Proverbs. The primary way she relates to creation is through play, not work. The primary characteristic she exhibits is delight, not "pain" of childbirth or the "sweat" of work. Wisdom does not despoil creation. She enjoys it to the fullest: laughing all of the *time*, playing throughout the *world*, delighting in all of *humanity*.

Wisdom serves as a metaphor for the goodness and playfulness of creation. Wisdom in her play pronounces creation "good," just as surely as the divine pronouncement: "it was good." The literary form is different from Genesis 1, but the effect is the same. Creation is good.

In *The Meaning of Creation*, Conrad Hyers writes:

> Creation has been depicted as the work of the Creator, as a royal edict, or as the result of a divine battle with the forces of chaos. Such images are surely supported by scriptural descriptions of creation as the divine handiwork, labor, victory, and command. Before such a Creator one is to stand in dreadful awe, with fear and trembling.[5]

In play we celebrate the goodness of creation as Wisdom herself discovered it.

Wisdom does no such thing. She plays and has a good time, even with God close by. She is not afraid. Life need not be all struggle and agony; it can be instead play and joy.

Within the confines of wisdom, the choice is your own. You observe the world, you act rightly, and you will do well. It is important to gauge your response and choose wisely. Jesus in his ministry offered a choice. He described to the crowds his interpretation of their generation:

> "They are like children sitting in the marketplaces...calling to their play-mates, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'" (Matthew 11:16-17)

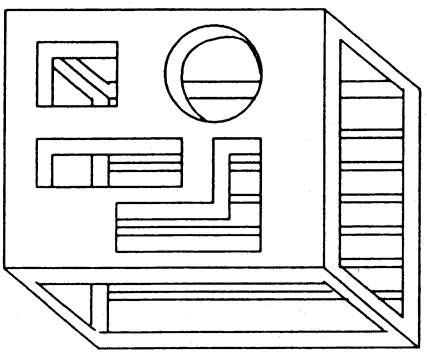
Apparently, some misunderstood and misinterpreted John the Baptist and Jesus. They saw what they wanted to see and drew their own erroneous conclusions. It was, however, an unfair and inappropriate game. Jesus and John "piped and wailed," as it were, but these killjoys refused to "dance or mourn." They didn't want to play the game.

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[4]Claus Westermann, *Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 20.

[5]Conrad Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 191.

In the face of creation, we have a choice. Like Wisdom, we can silently observe its wonder and majesty. Or we can choose to be like the malcontents of Jesus' day and view life with a cynical and poisonous eye. If we are like Wisdom, we are willing to play; if like the malcontents, we will turn on our heels and head home.



Here in Proverbs, we see the child Wisdom calling us to a new and separate reality. She celebrates a world untouched by human sin. She enjoys a world prior to its griefs and disasters. The choice she offers us is to see that world, too. Just as the followers of Jesus had to see beyond him to recognize the Child of God in the Child of Humanity, so we have to find the goodness of creation in the face of a broken world. In a sense, play is one way to that discovery; it is also the response. Without play, we are caught in a rut of work, perhaps endless and discouraging. In play we are refreshed and put in touch with the joyful and pleasurable. In play we celebrate the goodness of creation as Wisdom herself discovered it. With play, we find a new dimension to our lives and to the efficaciousness God implanted in creation at the very first.

Lev Shestov: Martin Luther through Russian Eyes

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On the extreme periphery of 20th century Luther research stands a unique study bearing the Russian title *Tolko Veroi* or *Faith Alone*, whose author Lev Shestov has drawn scarce attention at best within contemporary theological circles. My first encounter with *Tolko Veroi* occurred while I was engaged in doctoral studies at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, and the presence of this solitary Russian volume on Luther often caused me to pause. Because I had no knowledge of the Russian language, the study remained closed to me for years.

It was on a visit to Paris that I happened across a French translation that was newly published in 1983 for the Luther Quincentennial.[1] I was in glory. A rare German translation has been noted by the American scholar Bernard Martin, whose own work has been heavily devoted to the translation and exposition of Shestov for American readers,[2] but *Tolko Veroi* still awaits an English translator.

Shestov actually penned his study of Luther in Russia at the pivotal time between the years 1911 and 1914, virtually on the eve of the Russian Revolution. *Tolko Veroi* might thus be considered the very last study of Luther to come out of Russia before the ascendancy of Marxist and Leninist ideology over the Soviet peoples. By 1920,

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[1]Leon Shestov, *Luther et L'Eglise: Sola Fide* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1983).

[2]Cf. Bernard Martin, ed., *A Shestov Anthology* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1970). This work also includes the most comprehensive listing of works by Lev Shestov, pp. 322-328, whether in Russian or French and English translation. Also translated by Bernard Martin are: *Potestas Clavium* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1968); *All Things Are Possible* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977); *Athens and Jerusalem* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966); *Great Twentieth Century Jewish Philosophers* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1970).

Shestov had departed his Russian homeland for a provisional stay in Switzerland. Later, Paris became his second home away from "mother Russia." The close relationship between Shestov and Paris is well evidenced by the fact that *Tolko Veroi* was translated into French and first published in Paris in the year 1957, almost a decade before the first Russian edition was released by the YMCA Press in 1966, again in Paris. Since Shestov died an exile from Russia in the city of Paris on November 20, 1938, the author never viewed a published copy of his early study of Luther, whether in his native Russian tongue or in French translation.

Tolko Veroi proves still more unusual and interesting if one considers that Lev Shestov was not of Russian Orthodox descent but of Jewish lineage. How curious indeed to think that the primary Russian theological study of Luther for our 20th century should have come from the hand of a Russian Jew!

Lev Shestov was actually born Lev Isaakovich Schwarzman in 1866 in the city of Kiev.[3] The Schwarzman household was steeped in Jewish tradition and religious heritage. A youthful Lev studied in his home under hired Jewish tutors, whose instruction involved lessons in ancient Hebrew and sacred Jewish writings. Working with his father some years later in the family textile firm, Shestov carried on his studies in the evenings and by the year 1895 published his first literary work, entitled *Shakespeare and His Critic Brandes.*

However much a young Shestov took interest in the poetry of Shakespeare, his attention shifted very soon thereafter to the study which so dominated his life and writings until his death, namely, the critical place of religion within the sweep of western philosophical and religious thought since the time of Socrates and the biblical tradition of ancient Israel.

Though often classed a transitional "existential" thinker after the "premiere generation" of Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and before the emergence of Jaspers, Sartre and Marcel,[4] Shestov differs significantly from a more rigorous "existential" methodology by virtue of his profound sensitivity to the historical development of religious thought from ancient to modern times. A cursory review of the index to his *Athens and Jerusalem* will more than amply document Shestov's familiarity with a whole range of religious thinkers from Socrates and Plato in ancient Greece to Spinoza, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in more modern times.

According to Shestov, moreover, the history of western religious thought may well be understood and interpreted with reference to the two critical terms in the title of the book. "Athens" and "Jerusalem" refer not to geographical localities, but operate more metaphorically and reflect perspectives for distinguishing the religious tradition of ancient Greece from that of the biblical tradition. At stake for Shestov, however, is not merely the fact that the religious traditions of "Athens" and "Jerusalem" can be differentiated. Indeed, according to Shestov, occidental religious thought has been caught for centuries in a fundamental methodological problem, namely, should "Athens" and "Jerusalem" be made to agree in principle, or, more dear to Shestov, should not "Athens" and "Jerusalem" be rigorously divided not only in principle but also in practice? In *Athens and Jerusalem*, Shestov outlines his own resolution to the quandary that has so

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[3]Cf. Bernard Martin, *Great Twentieth Century Jewish Philosophers* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1970), pp. 2ff. Martin provides a brief account of the personal life of Shestov.

[4]Cf. back cover to *Luther et L'Eglise*, where the publishers make this point.

Shestov states unequivocally: "History pushed Luther in the background."

befuddled, perplexed, and indeed divided religious thinkers for centuries:

> "Athens and Jerusalem"... Would it not be more proper to pose the dilemma as: Athens or Jerusalem? Were we to appeal to the judgement of history, the answer would be clear. History would tell us that the greatest representatives of the human spirit have, for almost two thousand years, rejected all the attempts which have been made to oppose Athens to Jerusalem, that they have always passionately maintained the conjunction "and" between Athens and Jerusalem and stubbornly refused "or." Jerusalem and Athens... have ever lived peacefully side by side. And this peace was, for human beings, the guarantee of their dearest longings, whether realized or unrealized.[5]

Shestov in *Athens and Jerusalem* argues for the substitution of the "and" by the "or" so that there might ultimately be hope for the recovery and preservation of authentic religious faith in modern times.

A perspective on "history" also figures prominently in the way Luther assumes significance within the thought of Shestov. Whether it be in the mature work *Athens and Jerusalem* or the early study *Tolko Veroi*, Shestov makes it plain that Luther hardly belongs to the "greatest representatives of the human spirit" from history, but in his favor, he does belong to a pre-eminent company of religious figures whose concern has been to set forth with clarity the unique character of the ancient biblical religious tradition or "Jerusalem." Shestov states unequivocally: "History pushed Luther in the background."

The primary reason for this was Luther's willingness, indeed his "audacity," to uphold against great odds a critical principle of biblical thought presuming differentiation between "Jerusalem" and "Athens." Accordingly, Shestov entitled his monograph on Luther *Tolko Veroi*, suggesting that when Luther effectively argued for "faith alone," the phrase presumed the need for authentic "faith" to stand "alone" or in contrast methodologically to that which was other than or inimical to the "faith" of the ancient biblical tradition.[6]

Notwithstanding the fact that Luther was not Jewish but Christian, notwithstanding his polemics against Jews during the 16th century, Shestov—the Russian Jew—still finds in Luther a kindred spirit and theological ally whose historical significance not only separates him from the "greatest representatives of the human spirit," but also guarantees him a place alongside the most noble company of patriarchs and prophets from biblical times, the apostle Paul and Augustine from antiquity, and in more modern times, Pascal and Kierkegaard.

In suggesting persons from the past with whom Luther might be closely associated, Shestov begins *Tolko Veroi* with reference to a literary figure whose importance would be well appreciated by a Russian readership, namely, Fydor Dostoevsky.[7]

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[5]Cf. Martin, *A Shestov Anthology*, 258.

[6]Cf. also Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 246, where the same argument is set forth.

[7]*Luther et L'Eglise*, 1ff.

To the best of my knowledge, Shestov may be the first of the early 20th century Luther scholars to have acknowledged an historical parallel between Dostoevsky and Luther. Though conceding that Dostoevsky had only the vaguest knowledge of Luther or his writings, Shestov nonetheless makes a bold statement that, were it not for Martin Luther in the 16th century, there might well never have been Dostoevsky in the 19th century. A radical proposal, indeed! Opening *Tolko Veroi* with so bold a comparison probably occasioned immense curiosity in 20th century Russian readers, whose acquaintance with Luther was most likely by name alone, and into whose Russian language Luther has still been scarcely translated.

In making his case for an historical relationship between Dostoevsky and Luther, Shestov turns the attention of his Russian readers to one of the most famous literary narratives by Dostoevsky: *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*. With this literary masterpiece Shestov begins to build his argument for the association of Luther with Dostoevsky. According to *The Legend*, Christ returns to the world of Seville, Spain, in the time of the Spanish Inquisition. A cardinal inquisitor turns the power of his authority and the church against the person of Christ, subjects him to searching inquiry, and finally passes last judgment: death at the stake.

According to Shestov, the *Legend* was written by Dostoevsky to expose within western European culture and Christendom a tragic and abhorrent absence of true faith. On page one of *Tolko Veroi*, Shestov elaborates on this literary significance of the *Legend* and makes his own position clear: "Europe does not have faith. Everything that has been accomplished by human beings within occidental society, that which seemingly manifests creative genius—the sciences, literature, philosophy and theology—bears the fatal mark of unbelief."[8] This was, for Shestov, implicit in Dostoevsky's writing of the *Legend*, and still more so for Luther, who in the 16th century similarly revolted against Christendom and called for the recovery of faith.

> Dostoevsky and Luther . . . were daring enough to speak out publicly against the "fatal mark of unbelief" within their respective times.

In short, Dostoevsky and Luther stand together and represent for Shestov a "small number" whose historical significance was this: they were daring enough to speak out publicly against the "fatal mark of unbelief" within their respective times. Whatever the *Legend* proposed to say to Christendom and western European society, it was for Shestov not only fully in agreement with what Luther said in the 16th century, but also "without Luther" would most probably not have been penned by Dostoevsky in the 19th century.[9]

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[8]*Luther et L'Eglise*, 1.

[9]Cf. *Luther et L'Eglise*, 3-4, "Peut-être, sans Luther, Dostoievski n'aurait-il pas su percer le grand mystère du catholicisme, c'est-à-dire qu'il ne lui serait peut-être venu à l'esprit de chercher l'incroyance dans les replis les plus secrets de l'âme humaine."

In his further development of the historical and pivotal religious significance of Luther, Shestov often draws on a classic Latin expression that has rarely, if ever, been used within modern 20th century Luther research: *potestas clavium* or "power of the keys."[10] The phraseology comes from Matthew 16:19, where Jesus says to the disciples: "I will give you the keys of heaven; and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The *potestas clavium* is uniquely adapted by Shestov for his framing of a basic question of human existence and the religious life, namely, who really possesses the power of the keys and thus has virtual control over heaven and earth?

According to Shestov, the phraseology *potestas clavium* pinpoints a universal human problem that reaches well beyond the world of Jesus and indeed stirred Greek thinkers from Socrates onward. Shestov argues that in ancient Athens Socrates first advanced the thought or principle that human beings in general possess the "keys," if only they are made conscious or personally aware of the "power" immanent within themselves.[11] With the advent of Christianity, Shestov adds, the church said "never" to the premise of Socrates and classical Greek thought, and then declared that only the church itself held rights to the "keys" by virtue of the promise of Jesus in Matthew 16.

The struggle for the *potestas clavium* has still prevailed through modern times, but for Shestov it is the philosophers or modern scientists who claim power over earth and heaven against Christianity and religion. Shestov maintains that no age has finally resolved the search for the *potestas clavium*,[12] except that during the 16th century Luther faced the problem and faithfully came to terms with the issue in a way that gives him utmost significance within the development of western European religious thought, to say nothing of relevance to the 20th century.

According to Shestov, Luther variously faces the dilemma of the *potestas clavium* at three critical junctures in his life: in the monastery, against the Roman papacy, and in his opposition to medieval scholasticism.

Shestov maintains that the experience of Luther in the monastery can be interpreted as a first encounter with the question of the *potestas clavium*: can anyone really get a hold on the keys and thus attain heaven and God? Luther eventually realized not only his failure to grasp the *potestas clavium*, but also finally how his very efforts to pursue the "keys" moved him paradoxically in the direction of the denial of God. Shestov vividly recounts the ironic turn in Luther's monastic experience:

> Imagine to yourself Luther's situation. He was a faithful and devoted Catholic. He was a monk and a priest. He became a monk only because he was convinced that the monastic life permitted him to serve God better. And this very Luther, after having spent the years in a monastery, had to admit that he belonged to the army of the Antichrist, that it was not God whom he was serving but His eternal enemy. Having made vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, despite the advice of his friends and against his father's wishes, he hoped that he would accomplish a work pleasing to God; and, lo, suddenly he discovered, as he later recounted, that in pronouncing his vows he was denying God.[13]

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[10]Cf. Bernard Martin, ed., *Potestas Clavium*, 47ff.

[11]*Potestas Clavium*, 49.

[12]This is a literary theme which can be found in many of Shestov's works.

[13]*Potestas Clavium*, 52.

The monastic years effectively pushed Luther to the point where he had to ask himself whether he believed in God or was an atheist.

In the mind of Shestov, the monastic years effectively pushed Luther to the point where he had to ask himself whether he believed in God or was an atheist. By virtue of his saying "no" to the monastery and to the securing of any hold on the *potestas clavium*, Luther provided indisputable evidence of faith in the biblical God. For Shestov the eventual decision to break free from monastic devotion effectively opened the way for Luther not only to cut loose from "Athens," but also to take hold once again of faith in the biblical God of "Jerusalem."

In analyzing the struggle between Luther and the Roman Catholic Church, Shestov again draws heavily upon the conceptual religious principle of the *potestas clavium*. Throughout his literary works Shestov rarely muted his personal unhappiness with the Roman Catholic Church and particularly with the theological affirmations of Vatican I.[14] His times were anything but "ecumenical" in character!

Shestov, however, is not merely concerned with applauding Luther for the way he similarly fought with the papacy and the Roman hierarchy, but he saw behind the disputes the operation of the principle of the *potestas clavium*. Indeed, Shestov analyzes the quarrel between Luther and Rome as though it were little more than a corollary to that which Luther initially faced in trying to secure for himself the "keys" in the monastery. The only real difference was that it was no longer Luther himself who figured to grasp the *potestas clavium*, but instead the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope.

Reformation historians have variously narrated the volatile and entangled rivalry between Luther and Rome, noting differences of personality and perspective, misunderstanding, lack of communication, and indeed genuine differences of religious opinion. Shestov, however, cuts through historical complexity with his assertion that Luther is suggesting that no human institution—the Roman Catholic church, the papacy or otherwise—can allege right to the power of the keys.

Though the complex relationship between Luther and medieval scholasticism has been widely explored within contemporary scholarship, Shestov narrows his interpretative point of reference to one pivotal question: ought theologians draw on concepts, principles, logic, or categories from outside the religious tradition of the Bible in order to explain or interpret the biblical tradition? The question may seem removed from or extraneous to the matter of the "keys," but it was not so for Shestov, especially not in his analysis of medieval scholasticism.

According to Shestov, the theological enterprise of scholasticism goes badly awry by allowing the intellectual tradition of ancient Greece to inform the study and exposition of the biblical faith.[15] Scholasticism

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[14]Cf. *Potestas Clavium*, 52.

[15]Shestov argues this point vigorously against the Roman Catholic Church historian Etienne Gilson in *Athens and Jerusalem*, 347ff.

actually opened the way for "Athens," or Greek thought, to exert claim to the *potestas clavium* against the explicit intention of the ancient biblical tradition. Once medieval scholasticism made allowance for the "self evident truth" of Greek logic, reason, and law, Shestov argues, it compromised biblical "truth" and effectively gave the *potestas clavium"* back once again to "Athens."

Whatever Luther says negatively about medieval theology involves for Shestov a struggle to wrestle the *potestas clavium* from "Athens." According to Shestov, Luther believed scholasticism allowed for the "self evident truth" of Greek logic, reason and law, and drew upon them in the exposition of the biblical tradition, but he saw danger in "Athens" for biblical "truth" and faith. For Shestov, Luther is thus not being irrational in his speaking against "whore reason," but only denying medieval scholasticism *and* human reason the supposition of being "self evident truth."

Who then holds the *potestas clavium*? According to Shestov, no human being, no human institution, no philosophic or scientific methodology. This, too, was for Shestov the final conclusion of Luther. "History pushed Luther to the background," says Shestov, because human beings shun "inward struggle" and prefer never to forsake the quest for the "keys."

It is still not as though Shestov only appreciates in Luther his "inward struggle" and nothing more. At the very point, Shestov maintains, where Luther abandons his claim on the *potestas clavium*, there begins his faith in the biblical God of ancient "Jerusalem." Thus, it is hardly accidental that Shestov entitled his own study of Luther *Tolko Veroi.* On this theme, Shestov writes:

> So then Luther, with his *sola fide*, made a mad, desperate attempt to realize the very thing that Judaeo-Christian philosophy considered its essential task. History, it is true, has seen to it that human beings should not listen to Luther, as they have not listened to other thinkers who aspired to create a Judaeo-Christian philosophy without taking account of the problems, principles or technique of the thought of the Greeks and who dared to oppose the "faith" of Jerusalem to the "knowledge" of Athens in order to overcome the latter through the former. But can history be considered the final court?[16]

To history, Shestov would clearly say only one thing: "no." In affirming the biblical God who alone holds the *potestas clavium*, whose existence far supersedes the power of human institutions or rational argument or historical evidence and in whom human beings are called to have "faith alone," Luther completely fulfilled for Shestov the "essential task" of "Judaeo-Christian philosophy." Thus, a 20th century Russian Jew and a 16th century German church reformer are in strange but nonetheless significant religious accord and together raise important questions for the contemporary church and the faithful.[17]

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[16] *Athens and Jerusalem*, 360.

[17] A doctoral dissertation or two might still be written on Shestov and his interpretation of Luther, Lutheranism and church history. In this essay I have only explored the most positive points of accord. This is not to suggest, however, that there were no differences. In *Tolko Veroi*, Shestov also expresses unhappiness with Lutheranism that, for him, had missed the deeply experiential character of Luther's theology and "fatally" replaced it with little more than "une forme logique." Shestov, in *Tolko Veroi*, also spends nothing less than six chapters (!) expounding on the conflict between Augustine and Pelagius as a critical historical precedent to Luther and the 16th century. At the very least, this study hopes merely to open the way for the greater reading of Shestov within our days and in the church.

A Book Worth Discussing: *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise*[1]

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If for no other reason, this book is worth discussing and rejoicing in the pages of *Currents* because of its heritage. We ought especially to note this volume because it renders this heritage public in a manner seldom achieved by a Lutheran systematician in the United States. Lutherans are—to little fault of our systematicians—better known as historians than theologians in American academic circles. This volume could well signal the end of this limited perception of Lutheran scholarship. And, despite the fact that its author has decided to take up administrative work as the new Dean of Harvard Divinity School, it promises to be the first major work of a brilliant writing career.

In my days at Concordia Seminary and Christ Seminary–Seminex, we read a book of essays entitled *The Promising Tradition.* In it were articles by Robert Bertram, Edward Schroeder, Walter Bouman, Robert Schultz, and Werner Elert, among other notable theologians of this heritage. The content of Thiemann's book clearly continues major portions of the agenda and subject matter of *The Promising Tradition.* It is in many ways the most tangible written evidence that there is a new generation formed in that same promising tradition that is able and willing to continue it.

Beyond its interest to insiders to the promising tradition, this is a strategic book for the much more public audiences of the academy, church, and popular culture. It is a successful attempt to reach its primary audience, the public of the academy, particularly as it articulates clearly a position gathered out of the new Yale theological school. It continues the trend among some American

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[1]By Ronald F. Thiemann. Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1985. 272 pages. Cloth. $23.95.

Lutheran theologians to interpret the Lutheran witness to the gospel according to a Barthian strategy. This is strategically significant for the church, since it proposes a modest but more central place for theology in the church. Its construal of the state of popular culture, especially its sense of pluralism, is equally strategic. This text assumes a radically pluralistic setting, one within which there is little significant consensus regarding theology. All of this strategy is accomplished by a thorough examination of the doctrine of revelation, the prevenience of God's grace, and the identity and reality of the promising God depicted in the biblical narrative.

The Argument for the Academy

Thiemann's overall aim is to reiterate the importance and coherence of a doctrine of revelation in relation to belief in the prevenience of God. Contrary to those who consider the doctrine of revelation more trouble than it is worth, he is convinced that if he can take a different tack than other modern theologians, the doctrine can be justified. Instead of a general theological theory of human experience and religious consciousness—the dominating approach of the modern period—Thiemann proposes a much more modest justification of the doctrine of revelation. He draws upon contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, especially the combination of Wittgensteinian linguistic analysis and the American pragmatism of such thinkers as Richard Rorty and W. V. O. Quine.

Thiemann begins with what is a seemingly elemental Christian belief: "faith's knowledge of God is a gift bestowed through God's free grace." This traditional conviction regarding faith's knowledge of God is made even more important in the modern period because of the ever-increasing sense of how *human* knowledge is. Thiemann is especially hounded by this Enlightenment truism regarding human knowledge; besides Luther, he quotes only two other theologians extensively on the subject of revelation in his introduction: Karl Barth and Ludwig Feuerbach, in that order. Lest we forget what is at stake, Thiemann's quotation of Feuerbach ends with that fiery river's critique of revelation: "Here we have a striking confirmation of the position that the secret of theology is nothing else than anthropology—the knowledge of God nothing else than a knowledge of man!" Whatever else Thiemann wishes to accomplish in this argument, he certainly wishes to render Feuerbach's critique regarding Christian theology invalid, on the basis of the prevenience of God in faith's knowledge of God.

Undermining the Foundationalists

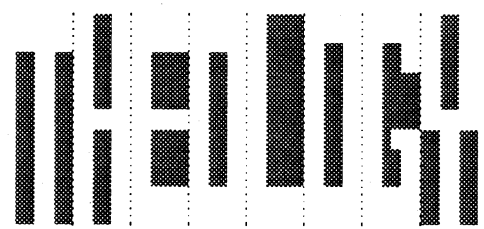
In the first part of the book, Thiemann seeks to undermine the various attempts in the modern period to accomplish this same end. In the first chapter, he examines the modern doctrine of how we know God. Since the early seventeenth century, beginning with Descartes, a coherent account for how God is prevenient to our knowledge of God has eluded Western minds. Thiemann holds that this inability is inherent in the presuppositions upon which all the arguments have been made. Each of the attempts to demonstrate the prevenience of God in revelation has depended upon an epistemological foundationalism. Thiemann identifies five key aspects of a foundational epistemology:

> 1) a set of non-inferential, self-evident beliefs which serve as the given or foundation of all knowledge, 2) a distinction between foundational beliefs and other inferential propositions, 3) a claim that

> foundational beliefs are justified immediately by a form of direct experience, 4) an appeal to the mental act of intuition, 5) an assertion of correspondence between the self-evident beliefs and the language independent world.

As long as this epistemological foundationalism prevails, faith does not seek understanding but a foundation. Unfortunately the foundation cannot be found; and any attempt is doomed to incoherence.

When Thiemann accuses an argument of being "foundationalist," he means that the argument claims to depend upon or build upon—hence the language of foundation—a non-inferential intuition. These non-inferential intuitions do not depend upon other experiences or inferences but are self-authenticating. Example: Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute dependence." In the



modern period, Thiemann argues, this search for a self-authenticating foundation is linked to the causal prevenience of God in our knowledge of God. Each of the arguments holds that we can know our knowledge of God is caused by God on the basis of such a self-authenticating foundation.

By way of developing his undermining strategy, Thiemann in chapter two examines three arguments regarding the doctrine of revelation by three modern figures: John Locke, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Thomas Torrance. (Why Thomas Torrance deserves this company is unclear; in principle, Karl Barth would be a more suitable candidate.)

The argument in each of the three cases, though sparse, is altogether clear. In each thinker's work, Thiemann claims to ferret out a foundational epistemology. Each thinker falls prey to what Rorty calls the ancient Platonic notion that

> "truths... are certain because of their causes rather than because of the arguments given for them.... The essential feature of the analogy is that knowing a proposition to be true is to be identified with being caused to do something by an object. The object which the proposition is about *imposes* the proposition's truth." (p. 40, emphasis Rorty's)

The result of this undermining argument is the severe judgment that "the modern epistemological doctrine of revelation... is a failure not because of inept execution or insufficient imagination on the part of its defenders, but because of the impossible logical demands of the project itself" (p. 46).

Others have come to similar conclusions regarding the doctrine of revelation. In chapter three, Thiemann singles out Gordon Kaufmann, David Kelsey, and Charles Woods. While Thiemann shares these scholars' conclusions regarding modern doctrines of revelation, he differs on an appropriate replacement. Against Kaufmann, he argues that the demise of the modern doctrine of revelation does not lead to a rejection of the basic conviction that God is prevenient over our faith. Remember, Feuerbach hounds Thiemann in his entire argument. If we cannot argue for God's prevenience in faith's knowledge of God, then Feuerbach wins. Against Kelsey's and Woods' functional account of scriptural authority in theology, Thiemann asserts that the doctrine of pre-

venience is a constituent part of any understanding of scriptural authority in theology. Thus, Thiemann parts company with these partners in the critique of the modern doctrine of revelation. After using both philosophical and theological skepticism to undermine the doctrine in the first three chapters, he then abandons the position of skeptic and takes up the second part of the argument, the more constructive task.

A Non-Foundational Theology

This task begins with a description of a "non-foundational" or "descriptive" theology in chapter four. Descriptive theology makes holistic justifications rather than foundational ones. Holistic justifications center in the relationship "between a disputed belief and the web of interrelated beliefs within which it rests" (p. 75). These approaches also focus upon the biblical narrative.

Holistic justifications on the basis of the biblical narrative demonstrate that "the Christian belief in God's prevenience" is intelligible (chapter 5), that it satisfies "the criterion of Christian aptness" (chapter 6), and that "Christians are warranted in asserting this belief as true" (chapter 7). In this constructive argument, Thiemann's heritage in the promising tradition shows, since the central category for making this justification is narrated promise.

Justification of the Christian belief in God's prevenience depends neither on a "universal religiousness of the human species nor a causal explanation of the origin of theological knowledge" (p. 93). Instead, Thiemann wishes to display "the warrants of the Christian confession that God's promises are trustworthy" (p. 93).

Thiemann uses two linguistic analysts to develop his concept of promise. He further draws upon several traditional sources for a member of the promising tradition: Melanchthon's discussion of promise in Article IV of *The Apology to the Augsburg Confession* and the centrality of God's prevenience in the Eucharistic Prayer and other liturgical usage.

Perhaps the key insight in this analysis of promise and God's prevenience is the difference between a causal and a promissory concept of the divine-human relationship. Thiemann shows how the promising tradition underlines the "unconditional offer of salvation" and manages to break away from "the causal conception of the divine-human relation with its work-righteous structure..." (p. 98). "Promise is a relational category which requires both a speaker and a hearer but grants primacy in that relation solely to the one who promises" (p. 108). The logic of promise holds that "for a promise to be 'non-defective' the hearer must merely acknowledge that this speech-act fulfills the conditions of promising. But that acknowledgment does not in any sense constitute the promise" (p. 110). Nor is such acknowledgment the same as faith. Nonetheless, the logic of the promise requires that "the unconditional priority be given to the one who promises. 'This promise is not conditional upon our merits but offers the forgiveness of sins and justification freely.' The logic of the promise implies God's unconditional prevenience" (pp. 110-11).

Having demonstrated that the Christian doctrine of God's prevenience is intelligible, Thiemann turns to an extensive interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew. Thiemann's reading reflects the work of his dissertation advisor, Hans Frei, and the work of Jack Dean Kingsbury. Thiemann examines the narrative to establish the identity of God, which leads him to conclude that the God individuated and identified within this narrative "is alone the gracious initiator, actor,

and fulfiller of his own promises," and so "is necessarily prevenient" (p. 137).

In chapter seven, Thiemann argues that belief in God's prevenience is not only intelligible and appropriate for Christians but also true. Selectively borrowing from Paul Ricoeur's extensive analysis of how narratives make sense and make truth claims, Thiemann tries to provide for the truthfulness of the Christian doctrine of revelation. He asserts that it is necessary to move from the text to the world, from sense to reference, when making truth claims. Unless one can trust the promise given in the narrative regarding this prevenient God, the truth claim falls flat. One must first accept the sense of the text in order to follow its referential claims. Thiemann outlines this point earlier in the book:

> Meaning and truth are sufficiently linked in the Christian gospel as to preclude a theory of truth and reference logically separable from an account of meaning.... [When] the internal logic of Christian claims is examined one discovers that meaning and truth are closely intertwined, because God's reality and Christian language are intrinsically and internally related. (82)

This final chapter is very short, especially the argument regarding truth claims. Thiemann forewarns the reader when he demurs from solving "the tangled issues of truth-claiming in religion" (p. 93). Nonetheless, he considers it extremely important that we distinguish "between the logic of our truth-claims and the logic of the justification of those claims" (p. 93). If Thiemann is correct, we cannot justify our truth claims by some non-inferential self-evident arguments. "But it does not follow that we can no longer make historical or ontological claims to truth" (p. 93). As a student of Paul Ricoeur, I find this final chapter suggestive but unsatisfactory. Much more needs to be argued before I am "overwhelmed by this account of the truthfulness of the biblical text." This conversation, however, belongs in another place, since I have promised to demonstrate some of the implications of Thiemann's argument for the church.

Implications for the Church

Thiemann's conception of public life in the post-modern West has clear implications for the role of theology in the life and mission of the church. He recognizes, perhaps in a nihilistic way, the breakdown of any public consensus, not only in theology but also in philosophy and ethics. In the face of this radically pluralistic setting, his nonfoundational theology could appear to be the church circling its wagons. His descriptive, nonfoundational theology has three characteristics: 1) its justification is specific to the Christian faith; 2) it implies "a much closer relation between the direct 'first order' expressions of the church's faith and the reflective 'second-order' activity of theology; 3) its justification is "holistic" rather than appealing to external referents of the faith.

If non-Christian justifications are incoherent in the contemporary public conversation and we are only left with Christian specific justification of Christian beliefs—that is a big "if" which Thiemann does not establish—then it follows that Christians ought to get their own act together. Even if the contemporary public conversation is not that bleak, it is advisable for Christians to spend a greater amount of time attending to the basic grammar, logic, and rhetoric of their faith. Thiemann's book takes a big step forward in the logic of the promising tradition's witness to the gospel.

Thiemann's attack on foundationalism has several very practical implications. For example, as a teacher in a seminary strongly influenced by Pietism, I have found that

some students eventually face a crisis similar to the one Feuerbach, the product of German Pietism, experienced. They discover how much of their faith is themselves written large, and how much their theology is a self-actualizing project. Then they panic. Like Thiemann's three modern theologians, they look for some external, objective, noninferential, self-authenticating ground for their faith and theology. Theology above all must have this objective ground. If Thiemann's antifoundationalism is correct, and I think it is, then theology can only fail them. Other students, already exposed in state universities to a post-modern intellectual world, seek refuge in a fundamentalistic subjectivism and/or a pragmatic relativism, expecting to learn the appropriate techniques to "help people." Theology as an intellectual discipline is of little use to these students.

> Theology should concentrate on the ordinary faith language of the Christian community.

Thiemann's proposal understands theology's task as much more modest and much more central to the church's work than most of these students think. Rather than trying to find some elusive objective, noninferential, self-authenticating ground for Christianity, theology's task is to render Christian beliefs intelligible, coherent, and—within the limits of the biblical narrative—true. Theology, according to Thiemann, should concentrate on the ordinary faith language of the Christian community, rather than seeking to "translate" this faith language into the contemporary contextual language. Furthermore, Thiemann would have theology spend more time garnering the whole of the Christian web of belief. Rather than connecting piecemeal the parts of Christian belief to acceptable contemporary assumptions, theology would understand Christian belief as a whole. All of this is to the good.

Despite all my praise for his book, several matters keep me from fully endorsing Thiemann's proposal. It is not clear Thiemann successfully avoids a retreat from the public place. In practice such a retreat means a forsaking of God's presence and even revelation among the nations. Could this proposal actually forsake the promising tradition at one of its most crucial insights, the intimate relationship between God and God's good creation? The promising tradition has always included all creation, reason and the public life, within the doctrine of God's prevenient grace. God does promise to be present in Jesus Christ, and his continuing presence in Word and Sacrament. But to limit God's presence and revelation to these sources is to limit God's promises and in this sense to try to limit God. Thiemann is quite correct when he suggests that the Christian doctrine of a good creation does not necessitate a foundationalist methodology. However, the doctrine of a good creation cannot support the abandonment of the public place. On the contrary, a theology of the cross can and should have a high place for creation and the revelation of God's will in the law in its methodological consideration.

The Perfect WORD: Software for Bible Study and Research

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The consistent and informed use of a concordance is the most valuable tool of interpretation available to the biblical interpreter. It is also time consuming drudgery. Computers are supposed to do some of that slave labor for us. People who don't have MS-DOS based computers probably read Ralph Klein's recent ecstatic review of a concordance program for IBM computers (or clones)[1] with interest and some envy. I know I did, because I use a Macintosh, which cannot run WORDsearch, the program he reviewed. Now Macintosh users can rejoice over The Perfect WORD[2], a powerful and flexible program with the Macintosh features that make use of the computer easy.

The software I examined came on five 3-1/2" diskettes, one for the program and four that hold the text of *The New International Version* (NIV) of the Bible. Star Software also markets its concordance with the King James Version (KJV) or the Revised Standard Version (RSV). The cost is $230.00 with one version on disk; add $60.00 for a second English version.

Why buy such a program when you already own a concordance—Young or Strong, for example? Because you can answer more complicated questions more easily and quickly. Examples: The Perfect WORD quickly printed out in full the nineteen verses in which the name Nineveh is used. (The average printed concordance gives only a few words on each side of the key word.) Issue one small command, and each passage appears on screen with the verse before and after it, too, to give you the wider context. You can set the number of verses from the context that will be listed. Ask Perfect WORD to count the number of times a word is used, and it lists how often the term occurs.

One can also do complicated Boolean searches (AND, OR, and NOT searches).

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[1]Ralph Klein, "WORDsearch: State of the Art Concordance," *Currents* 15:4 (April, 1988):194-96.

[2]©1988, by Star Software, Inc., 229 Live Oaks Blvd., Casselberry, FL 32707.

AND searches allow one to call up all passages in which a word (e.g., disciple) occurs with another word in the immediate context (e.g., twelve). An OR search allows one to find all passages that use either "disciple" or "the twelve." A NOT search allows you to find all places in which "gospel" is found, unless the word "spirit" is in the context. These Boolean searches allow for very sophisticated queries to be formulated about the text. Finally, one can also search using an abbreviation as entry. Thus "just." would list all words that begin with these letters: just, justly, justify, justification, etc.

Flexibility is built into the program. One can limit the search to a specific section of the Bible, e.g., the NT, the gospels, or the prophets (one can define the parameters precisely). If a term occurs frequently, you can ask for only the biblical references to be listed. The term "God," for example, occurs 3969 times in the Bible, while "Jesus" is named 1274 times in the New Testament. "Jesus" and "Christ" occur together some 530 times. The 51 words that occur most frequently ("the," "and," "he," etc.) cannot be used alone in performing a search—they would overload the memory very quickly—but can be used in combinations of words (e.g., "the elect"). The printed manual, elsewhere very clear, nowhere gives a list of these 51 words. That should be added in any revision.

Search results can be saved to disk as either a verse file (i.e., references only) or a text file. Any file can be edited, added to, or modified. It can also be printed out as hard copy. By copying it to the Macintosh CLIPBOARD, it can be imported into a word processing program such as Macwrite or Microsoft Word. It thus complements the standard programs one is accustomed to running on the Mac. One can open up to five "windows" at a time, making comparison of different search results easy. The value of this flexibility becomes clear as one uses the program.

Because it uses the familiar Macintosh menus, The Perfect WORD is very "user-friendly." The menus are modified to enable special program functions. An OPTIONS menu calls up dialog boxes with entry boxes and buttons that make text searches easy to command and carry out. The HELP menu makes assistance available at any time while using the program. The *User's Guide* (Manual) is clearly written, well organized, and fully indexed.

The Perfect WORD can be run on a Macintosh 512E with a hard drive, a Macintosh Plus, SE, or Mac II. I ran it on a Mac Plus with two floppy drives, which demands quite a bit of disk changing to search the entire biblical text. Storing program and biblical text on a hard disk would make the program run rapidly. Even without the hard disk the program runs searches more rapidly than anyone can perform them manually.

Star Software promises that The Perfect WORD will run, display, and print the Greek New Testament (UBS Third Edition, = Aland's 26th edition) and the Hebrew Old Testament (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, fully pointed and accented). These texts will be available on disk this fall "for about $50.00 to $100.00 more than the English." Nothing was said of the Greek text of the Septuagint; I hope it is included or made available later as an additional text.

I have already recommended this program to pastors and seminary students. My basic introduction to biblical exegesis class will include a new unit on the use of the computer in biblical study and refer students to The Perfect WORD, especially when the Greek and Hebrew texts are available. Powerful, flexible, and easy to learn, this belongs in the software library of every seminary student, pastor, or theologian who uses a Macintosh.

Book Reviews

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS CANON. ITS MAKING AND MEANING. By Harry Y. Gamble. Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985. 95 pages. Paper. $4.50.

The book's introductory chapter briefly outlines the historical and theological problems involved in the formation of the New Testament canon and then provides definitions of the terms *canon, scripture* and *New Testament.*

The chapter on the history of the New Testament canon begins by discussing the second century. Many individual gospels were in circulation, the fourfold gospel collection first appearing in the late second century. A Pauline school is credited with collecting and editing the apostle's letters as well as composing new letters in his name. Many other Christian scriptures were in circulation, but the idea and shape of a Christian canon remained indeterminate at the end of the second century. Our information on the third century is rather limited; the many fourth century lists (almost none alike) show the slow but sure progress toward a canon of Christian scriptures.

In the chapter on factors in the formation of the canon, Gamble skillfully demonstrates that Marcion, various gnostic groups and the Montanists were not, as is usually asserted, catalysts that led to a second century closing of the canon of Christian scriptures. In my view Gamble does not sufficiently draw the consequences of this correct observation (and of his insight, p. 65, that the issue was not which books were normative but how they were to be interpreted). I would go further than Gamble and say not only were Marcion, the gnostics and the Montanists not catalysts for a second century closing of the collection of Christian scripture, but there was no second century closing of the scripture collection at all. The canon with which the church combatted its opponents in the late second century was not the canon of scripture but the canon of truth. The canon of scripture did not emerge until much later. In any case, this chapter on factors in canon formation discusses with insight various criteria of canonicity and several other reasons for the emergence of the canon of Christian scripture (Gamble unfortunately omits the significance for canon formation of the fact that the church became established as the church of the empire in the fourth century).

The final chapter discusses the promises and problems of canonical criticism as well as other perennial issues (the canon within the canon; scripture and tradition). An appendix contains the text of the Muratorian Canon, which Gamble dates in the late second or early third century, rejecting A. C. Sundberg, Jr.'s view that it is a fourth century document. Since Gamble correctly asserts that "Origen neither knew nor developed a formal list of authoritative Christian scriptures" (p. 50), a second century date for the Muratorian Canon makes it an anomalous document that precedes by well over a century the emergence of other extant canon lists and, in my opinion, the emergence of the concept and the reality of a canon of Christian scriptures.

This is a fine book suited to a wide audience. With a rare combination of brevity and depth, Gamble informs the person who knows little and challenges those who know the field well. I conclude with a quibble about terminology—Gamble consistently calls the books that came to be called the Old Testament the "Jewish scriptures"; while "Old Testament" would be anachronistic, his terminology is quite misleading almost every time it is used. The problems begin on his first page (p. 11), where he says that "the NT constitutes the *canon* of Christian scriptures"; rather, it is the *second half* of the canon of Christian scriptures.

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ATLAS OF THE BIBLE. By John Rogerson. New York: Facts on File, 1985. 237 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

THE HARPER ATLAS OF THE BIBLE. Edited by James B. Pritchard. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. 254 pages. Cloth. $49.95.

MAPS OF THE HOLY LAND. By Kenneth Nebenzahl. New York: Abbeville, 1986. 164 pages. Cloth. $55.00.

Atlases are one of humankind's most beautiful and entertaining achievements, and these three books provide the eye and the mind with many stimulations and delights.

Nebenzahl publishes a history of cartography, ranging from maps inspired by Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria (150 C.E., though the extant maps based on his theories actually come from the 15th century) to the first modern map of Palestine, based on triangulation, which was drawn by Pierre Jacotin in 1799, while on the battlefield with Napoleon's army.

The oldest surviving map of the Holy Land is found at Madaba in Trans Jordan (not in Jerusalem as the dust jacket would have it) and consists of more than two million cubes arranged in a floor mosaic. This map, though severely damaged, dates to about 565 C.E. It would take a team of three artisans, working 12 hours a day and setting 200 cubes an hour, almost a year to lay this map. Fortunately, its depiction of Jerusalem has survived and has been greatly illuminated by recent archaeology.

Many of the maps in this atlas have East at the top of the map, though one 17th century map has West at the top so that we view the Holy Land from the point of view of Moses from Pisgah. The Eastern orientation often puts Paradise in the East, while an Islamic map puts South on the top in order to give prominence to Mecca.

Many medieval maps make the Dead Sea bend in incorrect directions, resulting from difficulties in measuring longitude, a technological problem that also affected early maps of Lake Michigan. Jerome held that the Jordan river was formed by the imaginary rivers Jor and Dan, a view that persisted in maps until the 17th century. Another peculiarity are the medieval T-O maps, so called because they are basically discs (hence the O) on which has been inscribed a T. The T divided the disc into three parts to accommodate Asia (Shem) on the top and Europe (Japheth) and Africa (Ham) on either side of the T's leg. An Irish map from the 10th century was the first to draw in the tribal divisions, but it made the Holy Land cover one sixth of the world's surface instead of the tiny portion of one percent that it actually represents.

The author clearly analyzes the sixty major maps he publishes and indicates that there were two schools of cartography: a biblical or pious view and a more classical or scientic perspective. Because of the expense of this volume, it will probably be limited primarily to theological libraries, where its presence will be a great boon.

The other two atlases are more conventional, but by no means the same. Rogerson begins with brief sections on the Bible's composition and history before moving on to his main contribution: geographical comments on twelve regions of Israel.

Maps are provided for each of the twelve regions, and the author describes their geographic particularities, including flora and fauna, rainfall, and the like. He also lists the biblical events that happened in each region and decks out the discussion with landscape photographs, archaeological objects, and artistic pieces of various sorts. One of the most unusual features of this atlas is the inclusion of 14 pages of medieval and modern artistic depictions of biblical events. The most complete regional account, naturally, is devoted to Jerusalem, with fine presentations of the topography of the passion and of Herod's temple. There are spectacular aerial photographs of Masada and Gibeon.

Rogerson wants to give the reader the same geographic conventions which would have been known by the biblical authors and their original audience. Hence critical reconstruction of history plays almost no role in his discussion; the focus is geographical rather than historical. The 43 maps and 350 illustrations make for a most useful book, though the 14 pages of art seem somewhat out of place and add needless expense to an atlas.

The Harper Atlas is a true dazzler: it boasts 134 maps and more than 450 illustrations. Nearly fifty scholars assisted the editor in producing this work, and it joins the previous *Harper's Bible Dictionary* and the forthcoming *Harper's One-Volume Biblical Commentary* as truly valuable contributions to a basic biblical library for lay people, pastors, and scholars.

The Harper Atlas overwhelms the eye with color and drama. Most maps are drawn to represent the curvature of the earth and are often crisscrossed by bright blue, red, or green arrows to show migrations, trade routes, battles, and the like. Pritchard confesses his indebtedness to the map-making innovations of Yohanan Aharoni. While some maps have a northern orientation, other maps put the Northwest at the top—or Southeast, South, or West.

The purpose here is not theological, but to permit the mapmakers to give the best perspective for depicting historical events. The western orientation works wonderfully for the campaigns of Shishak and Sennacherib and to depict the intertestamental province of Judaea. Most maps have a small arrow to indicate which way is North, but where that arrow is lacking—as in the depiction of the battle of Ai, the map of Masada, and the reconstruction of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus—the map may be confusing. The next edition should put such arrows on all maps.

This atlas also pays attention to daily life, in addition to its primary historical focus, and has many city plans drawn by archaeologists, graphic discussions of burial practices, and illustrations of the flora and fauna of the Levant. One of its most spectacular features is the inclusion of reconstructions of ancient sites: Solomon's Jerusalem, ancient Babylon and Athens, the fortress of Herodium. The latter is a sensational combination of a modern reconstruction and an inset picture of the excavated site, itself a truly impressive tourist attraction.

The beauty of this volume must be seen to be believed. It ends with more than 60 pages of indexes to the people and places of the Bible and the biblical world, including alternate spellings of place names in Arabic and Hebrew and grid-coordinates to help the reader find the *exact* location of a given site.

No book, of course, is perfect, and the historical orientation is sometimes marred by inadequate information. With regard to the battle of Ai, for example, the reader is treated to a dramatic depiction of the attack by Joshua and the ambush that attacked the Canaanites from the rear (though the amateur may have trouble knowing which direction he or she is looking, as noted above), but the reader is not told that Ai at the time of the conquest was uninhabited according to modern archaeologists! The atlas does, however, acknowledge the difficulties with the traditions of Abraham coming from Ur and with connecting him to the Amorite migrations. All this means is that one must consult a modern critical history to get the most benefit even from this atlas.

Let the last words be praise. Nebenzahl has compiled a priceless history of 1650 years of biblical mapmaking, replete with the interface between theology and cartography and the steady advance of the science of cartography itself. Pritchard has edited an atlas which I now recommend as the number one choice. All three of these books will help you while away many worthwhile hours!

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JOB IN THE LIGHT OF NORTHWEST SEMITIC. Volume 1. Biblica et Orientalia 42. By Walter L. Michel. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1987. xvii and 436 pages. Paper. $44.00.

"The brevity, intricacy, and the multitude of forgotten allusions make it very difficult to translate most of the verses in the book of Job."

"Read slowly, aloud, and in one sitting, the translation [of Michel] does not seem to be without power."

Both of these statements from Michel's book are true. The difficult nature of the Hebrew of Job is universally acknowledged and has led modern scholars either to emend the text or to ransack the lexicons of other Semitic languages in search of illuminating etymologies. Michel follows the second of these options, though he limits the

comparative material primarily to the Northwest Semitic field (Ugaritic, Phoenician, Punic, and Eblaite). He presents a highly original translation, and an extensive philological commentary to explain and justify his innovations. This book assumes acquaintance with the usual fare of a Job commentary: form criticism, tracing the line of argument between Job and his friends, exploration of the problem of evil, the relationship of Job to ancient wisdom literature, and the like.

Michel modestly suggests that his book is a collection of the many contributions of Mitchell Dahood to the study of Job. It surely is that, but it also contains hundreds of other similar suggestions, many by Michel himself. Those who are familiar with Dahood's three-volume Anchor Bible commentary will recognize Dahoodianisms like double-duty, Phoenician, or dative suffixes, new divine names, and the assumption that the vocalization of the Masoretes often obscures the original meaning. Michel, like Dahood, often discards the traditional vocalization completely and creates a different division of consonants that makes for altogether new words. He does not consider these real emendations, and he himself avoids conjectural replacements for the consonants of the text.

Since this volume only discusses the first fourteen chapters of Job, two more volumes are planned for the future. The final volume will contain a conclusion, a grammar of the Hebrew of Job, and comprehensive indexes. The bibliography and indexes in the present volume itself run to 100 pages!

The method used in this book is experimental and controversial, and a reader must have a considerable background in Semitic languages to be able to follow the technical argument. Michel provides a literal translation, but his assessment of the power of his translation, cited in the second quotation above, is a considerable understatement. Advanced students of Job will often be challenged, enlightened, perplexed, or even shocked by the originality of his suggestions—they will never be bored. Casual readers of the book will be most impressed with the large number of new divine names he proposes for the God of Israel, for Mot, the god of death, for the Underworld, and for other deities.

Three examples will have to suffice to show the uniqueness of this effort. In each case, Michel's translation is printed first, followed by the RSV.

13:15 If the Victor slays me
I must be silent. (Michel)
Behold, he will slay me;
I have no hope. (RSV)

14:4 O that He would declare 'clean' the
unclean, O Victor-Unique! (Michel)
Who can bring a clean thing out of an
unclean? There is not one. (RSV)

14:13 O that from Sheol
You would hide me. (Michel)
Oh that thou wouldest
hide me in Sheol. (RSV)

Scholars will profit from many of the suggestions in this book and will turn to it often for possible clues to intractable problems. The author needs to be encouraged to pursue his efforts to the end of the third volume and then add a fourth in which he would provide a commentary on Job based on his unique translation.

Ralph W. Klein

AN EXODUS SCROLL FROM QUMRAN: 4QPALEOEXOD^{M} AND THE SAMARITAN TRADITION. By Judith E. Sanderson (Harvard Semitic Series 30). Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. 358 pages. Cloth. $20.95 ($13.95 members).

This work, based on the author's 1985 doctoral dissertation at the University of Notre Dame under the direction of Eugene Ulrich, presents the first complete study of the unpublished Qumran scroll, 4QpaleoExod^{M} (Q^{M}). Q^{M} preserves parts of the text of Exodus from 6:5-37:16. The uniqueness of the scroll lies in its paleo-Hebrew script, its full orthography, and its Samaritan-like text. It is the only Qumran scroll to exhibit all three characteristics.

Sanderson's concern is the third and most important characteristic, the Samaritan-like text. Q^{M} exhibits many of the same traits assigned by scholars to the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP): inter-

nal expansions, harmonizations of parallel passages, interpolations from the book of Deuteronomy, and differing orders of verses and passages, most notable being the placement in SP and Q^M of Exod 30:1-10 after 26:35 as opposed to its placement after 29:46 in the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Greek (G). Sanderson carefully analyzes all variants which occur between Q^M, SP, MT, and G (chapters II and III). From this analysis, preferable, secondary, and synonymous variants (readings in which no preferable text can be discerned) are grouped according to their supporting witnesses. The data collected supports the view that each of the four texts analyzed preserves both preferable and secondary readings.

What this suggests is that none of the texts was copied in a vacuum but was at some point in contact with the other three. Sanderson's comparison of variant readings already pointed to patterns of relationship between the texts. In chapters IV and V she makes excellent use of this data to outline the textual affiliations and the character of each text.

Sanderson concludes her study by investigating what the textual changes found in these four witnesses contribute to our understanding of the editorial and scribal processes of the Second Temple period. This section will be of special interest to those who study the development of the canon and the canonical text. Close attention to what is and is not added, omitted or altered in Q^M reveal "that the *words* of revelation were treated with more care than the *form* or *structure* of revelation" (p. 271). While numerous minor changes and even corrections in the text were allowed by copyists and proofreaders, major changes in the text no longer were. Only the exact words of revelation (and these rarely from outside the Pentateuch) might be added to a parallel passage, regardless of the motivation—be it political, theological, or literary—for including them in the text of Exodus. The strict Masoretic system of a later period was not yet in effect, but some of its presuppositions and rules were already being practiced.

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WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? NINE MESSAGES ON SOME OF JESUS' GREAT ACTS AND STORIES. By George W. Hoyer. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987. 108 pages. Paper. $5.95.

SOUNDS OF THE PASSION: MEDITATIONS ON JESUS' JOURNEY TO THE CROSS. By David M. Owen. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987. 110 Pages. Paper. $5.95.

I do not normally recommend sermon collections, but these two little paperbacks from Augsburg may be an exception. The danger in reading such books is that the preacher is tempted to plagiarize the material, without being terribly creative. If, however, one looks at these two books as "suggestions" for preaching, they may prove helpful. The nine messages by George Hoyer are designed for the Lenten/Easter season, and encourage the preacher to be creative by providing "Helps for Hearing" at the beginning of each meditation. The eight sermons by David Owen, Pastor of Reigate United Reformed Church in England, are a refreshing new insight to some old and often repeated Lenten stories. Both books provide valuable spiritual resources for those who would be "hearers" of the word, preacher and parishioner alike, in quiet reflection or personal mediation.

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HOUSEHOLD OF FREEDOM. By Letty Russell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. 116 pages, notes, bibliography. Paper. $8.95.

I look forward to reading Letty Russell because Letty Russell is forward looking. She understands that the power of revolutionary transformation comes from the future—from God's eschatological future—which translates into the promise that the world will not always be the way we find it today. If we are to have hope for changing the present reality, then this hope must

be prompted by a vision of the future in which the present broken creation will be mended.

The problem the Yale systematician confronts in this book is the problem of authority. What we take to be authority in the church is really illegitimate power which expresses itself as dominance, especially the patriarchal dominance of men over women. In its place Russell proposes a feminist vision of authority. According to this vision, authority should be understood as legitimate power (21). What we need to construct is a community of partnership which is characterized by interdependence. This partnership will gain its authority through *authorizing* the inclusion of all persons as partners and through *empowerment* for self-actualization (23, 61).

To describe this new form of authority, Russell invokes the metaphor of the divine household. Rather than employ the term 'kingdom of God,' which connotes dominance by describing God as king, she lifts up for our attention the New Testament concept of *oikos*, "house." We ordinarily use *oikos* to refer to ecumenical unity. Here, however, God is described as the divine housekeeper (56, 83f), and we are the free, equal partners who live in the divine household. What Russell calls us to do is to clean the ecclesiastical house and to establish the justice and equality to which this metaphor calls us.

Her method departs slightly from that of other feminists. She desires the same social changes advocated by Rosemary Radford Reuther or Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, but Russell finds it necessary to go beyond looking for past paradigms to envision the projected new social reality. What we need is a vision of the future, she says. Such future consciousness is actually implicit in any doctrine of social transformation. We need the power to imagine the new reality. "In my own theology," she writes, "I have tried to image this world beyond oppression as a mended creation in which human beings, nature, and all creation are set free from their groaning and are at home with one another" (71). This is an unabashedly utopian component:

...we live out of a vision of God's intention for a mended creation, and it is this hope that helps us "keep on keeping on." In an important sense Christian feminists only have this future, for the patriarchal structures of scripture, tradition, church, and theology are such that the process of reconstruction of women's place in man's world requires a utopian faith that understands God's future as an impulse for change in the present (18).

Russell's vision of God's household as a community of partnership may be idealistic or utopian, even naive. But this is its virtue. It is a vision based not upon an appraisal of present reality—of the present state of creation in its brokenness—but rather upon confidence in God's promise that a new and mended creation is coming.

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FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER: PIONEER OF MODERN THEOLOGY. Edited by Keith W. Clements. Vol. 1 in the Making of Modern Theology: 19th and 20th Century Theological Texts, ed. by John de Gruchy. London: Collins, 1987. 281 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

This book marks the beginning of an important series of classic texts that have influenced contemporary theology. The editors can be thanked for producing a clear and concise introduction to the social setting, content and trajectory of Schleiermacher's theology.

The 65-page introduction by Keith Clements gives a brief, solid outline of the age of Enlightenment and the transition to Romanticism. Schleiermacher's life is then set in that context. The bulk of the introduction is commentary on the selected texts and aims to demonstrate how Schleiermacher contributes to the shaping of contemporary theology. The general introduction and the preludes to selected texts accomplish this goal.

Text selection is a difficult task, but Clements has provided a fairly exhaustive set of organizational topics: 1) "Religion as Feeling and Relationship"; 2) "The Distinctiveness of Christianity: Redemption through Jesus Christ"; 3) "Theology as Reflection and Communica-

tion"; 4) "Hermeneutics: Conversation with History"; 5) "God and the World"; 6) "The Person and Work of Christ"; 7) "Nation, Church and State"; 8) "Christianity and the Religions."

The selection of readings emphasizes the following major themes: 1) The inner experience of God as mediated in history through Jesus, the Christian community and the individual. 2) Schleiermacher's relational view of reality via community and language becomes apparent and cautions charges of subjectivism. 3) The clear anticipation and beginnings of the phenomenological approach to religion.

Missing are selections on the understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology (the letters to Luecke) and nothing from the *Dialectics*. This theme too is central to contemporary Christianity and needs inclusion. Also, more from the introductory sections of *The Christian Faith* seems necessary to clarify the proving of the human psyche which posits the experience of God as the essential core of humanness.

Overall, this book is a welcome introduction and primary text selection for theological students, students of religion, pastors, and the interested scholar from another discipline who wants to read Schleiermacher in order to gain background in hermeneutics and phenomenology. A short, standard bibliography leads the reader to the best secondary sources available in English.

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THE LIVELY EXPERIMENT CONTINUED. Edited by Jerald C. Brauer. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987. xix and 240 pages. Paper. $18.95.

In 1963 Sidney E. Mead's collection of essays, *The Lively Experiment*, broke new ground with his belief that the cornerstone of this nation's religious history was the American Revolutionary Period in which religious liberty was incarnated in the Constitution. The consequences of that "lively experiment" have been unfolding ever since.

The Lively Experiment Continued gathers essays by former students (identified only by name, even in Brauer's introduction), colleagues and peers of Mead. Editor Brauer leads off with an in-depth look at Mead and the University of Chicago historical tradition. Martin E. Marty focuses on Mead the teacher, noting that his predecessor's persona in the classroom and in writing were one. J. Ronald Engel analyzes Mead's theological apology for the "religion of the Republic."

In the second section, which explores how the American "fair experiment" actually worked out in history, Winthrop Hudson centers on the rise of civil and religious liberty in the colonial period, while Edwin S. Gaustad concentrates on the dimensions of liberty in Thomas Jefferson. William G. McLoughlin, taught by Mead to "think big," sorts out the factors which produced the American treatment of Native Americans.

Four of Mead's students explore the boundaries of the "lively experiment." Richard T. Hughes examines Mormon missionary Parley P. Pratt's vision of American pluralism. The conflict of the Christian Right with the Supreme Court is addressed by Ronald B. Flowers. JoAnn Manfra approaches the church-state problem through study of the French influence in American Catholic episcopacy. Robert T. Handy uses Mead's categories to compare the Canadian religious scene.

The volume concludes with Mead's own summary of the assumptions and premises of his work. Although entitled "Reinterpretation in American Church History," Mead's essay reviews his understanding of the significance, nature, and place of *religion* in the United States.

The essays ably demonstrate that American historiography continues to be influenced by Mead. They provide ample material for further reflection of the "lively experiment" in American culture and religion. The tradition on which Mead built continues.

A bibliography of Mead's writings would have been much more helpful than just a footnote referral.

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PLURALITY AND AMBIGUITY: HERMENEUTICS, RELIGION, HOPE. By David Tracy. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. 148 pages, notes, index. Cloth. $15.95.

Hermeneutics Über Alles! Interpretation is inescapable. This is the point of the book: "all experience and all understanding are hermeneutical" (p. 77). In our emerging post-positivist postmodern world, we are becoming aware that all human understanding consists of a process of conversation in which we interpret new experiences in light of the tradition which has formed us. We have no other access to truth. "Reality is what we name our best interpretation" (p. 48).

Tracy, author of *Blessed Rage for Order* and *The Analogical Imagination*, does more than merely *de*scribe our increasing awareness of the pervasiveness of interpretation. He *pre*scribes what disposition we should carry into our intentional acts of interpreting. We should be open to plurality, i.e., open to a multiplicity of differing interpretations of the same classical text, and also accepting of its resulting ambiguity.

In the case of a religious text such as the Bible, for example, we should not require that only scholarly theologians be permitted to interpret it. Lay people make truthful interpretations as well, a point driven home by liberation theologians who advocate that the poor interpret scripture out of their context of oppression. Tracy does not even require that the interpreter be a believer. We need to hear the challenges to orthodox interpretation offered by atheistic readers of the Bible such as Marx, Freud, Nietzche, or Bloch. The plurality of interpretations is part of the life of a single classical text.

We can tolerate the ambiguity produced by such pluralism if we are grounded in hope. Hope for Tracy is founded upon his faith in God (110), though he recognizes that his faith in God represents one interpretation of reality among many others. Yet it is on this basis that he can make extravagant claims for the value of interpretation done well: it just may transform our society from an ego-centered and destructive modernity to a postmodernity characterized by a de-centered ego which recognizes oneness based upon similarity-in-difference.

Tracy is convinced that we have already left the modern world which strives for "domination and mastery" behind (78, 114) and entered the postmodern era. I for one think that the modern world is still very much with us, and that the full fury of the centered ego and its striving for mastery may yet be unleashed. Yes, of course, there is an emerging post-modern consciousness which has some affinities with the ego-transcending love about which Tracy writes (107), but it is not yet here in its fullness. I will be ready to greet its arrival, however.

This is a book for scholars who want to trace with Tracy the newest applications of insights gained from the hermeneutical and linguistic philosophers of our century.

Ted Peters

MARTIN LUTHER. AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS LIFE AND WORK. By Bernhard Lohse. Translated by Robert C. Schulz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. 288 pages. Cloth. $26.95. Paper. $16.95.

With this work Bernhard Lohse has made an important contribution both to casual and scholarly Luther research. The volume, first published in German in 1980 but now available in a fine English translation by Robert C. Schulz, is an excellent resource for the study of the life, thought, and significance of the Reformer. In a relatively concise book, Lohse manages to introduce the reader to the major writings of Luther, the vast literature about him, the major questions yet to be addressed by Luther scholarship, the chief episodes of the Reformer's life, and the major themes of his theology. In addition, he discusses the scholarly editions, translations, and resources available for the study of Luther.

This book has a very specific character and purpose. It is an introduction to Luther's life and work. Other studies must be consulted for more detailed information regarding the topics touched on by Lohse. However, no other volume serves so well as an introductory reference for the variety of

issues related to the study of Luther. Lohse's scholarship is impeccable, his analytical judgments are sound, and his insights regarding specific interpretative questions are trustworthy. Its clear organization and the concise presentation of the material enhance the usefulness and attractiveness of this work.

Most readers will find chapters four and five particularly helpful. In chapter four Lohse evaluates the literary significance of Luther and then discusses his major works in chronological order. The chapter is a quick yet informative introduction to the vast corpus of Luther's writings. The content, context, significance, and genre of each work is described, and the editions in which it can be found are cited. Chapter five does not address all of the major themes of Luther's theology, but important aspects and problems of the Reformer's theological formulations are discussed. Significant interpretative issues, which must be kept in mind if Luther is to be understood properly, are also examined with precision and scholarly insight. The chapter constitutes a useful overview of chief aspect of Luther's theological insights.

Throughout the volume Lohse not only presents and evaluates the findings of past Luther scholarship, but he also identifies areas which deserve more extensive attention. The book, therefore, not only reviews past scholarship, but it also seeks to influence future research. Although a bibliography of selected English works is provided, only the footnotes cite the more extensive non-English literature. Perhaps this shortcoming will be corrected in future editions. Nevertheless, this book is a highly practical and useful work which can be consulted again and again and which should be part of every Luther student's library.

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SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES: NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION FOR DISARMAMENT. Edited by Arthur J. Laffin and Anne Montgomery. New York: Harper & Row, 1987. xxi and 243 pages. Paper. $8.95.

W. H. Auden once wrote that "you cannot tell people what to do, you can only tell them parables... particular stories of particular people and experiences...." This book is a collection of such stories, all involving "plowshares" actions—nonviolent direct actions in opposition to militarism—all written by participants in those actions. As such, it is an important vehicle for reflection on what we ought to do. The book includes a substantial amount of background material on the nuclear arms race, 60 pages of appendices analyzing the arms race and defenses based on international law, and a list of resources.

Because the stories come from participants, they offer insight into the decisions made by ordinary people who engage in civil disobedience involving increasingly harsh penalties. Especially useful in this regard are the contributions of Agnes Bauerlein and Elizabeth McAlister, who—like many who engage in civil disobedience—speak in terms of the impact of their actions on relationships with family, particularly children, and of Martin Holladay, who speaks in terms of relationship with the land. Daniel Berrigan and Jim Douglass offer significant theological reflections on their actions. Douglass' "Civil Disobedience as Prayer" addresses the question of "effectiveness" by reminding readers that it is God's action that is effective and that civil disobedience can itself become a waging of war if it is dominated by "the will to transform others from the outside." Berrigan's "Swords into Plowshares" reflects on the 1980 "Plowshares Eight" action at the General Electric nuclear missile plant in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, as a Greek tragedy that purges pity and fear. Shelley Douglass' "Obedience in the Beloved Community" reflects on 20 years of involvement in terms of Martin Luther King's vision.

I was especially struck by Berrigan's use of "tragedy"—which I read in light of Kierkegaard's discussion of Abraham as tragic hero and knight of faith. For Kierkegaard, the knight of faith is *not*

a tragic hero precisely because his or her "action" is not communicable. Abraham is condemned to silence—but not Antigone or Oedipus. Antigone and Oedipus, as tragic heroes, stand apart and inspire our admiration as well as our pity; but Abraham, as knight of faith, is indistinguishable from the "ordinary" person unless he speaks—in which case he can only be seen as a murderer. It is precisely *there*, in an ordinary world which appears to condemn us to silence or incoherence, that most of us have to struggle with the question of resistance and faithfulness.

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GENESIS 1-15. By Gordon J. Wenham. Vol. 1 in the Word Biblical Commentary. Waco: Word Books, 1987. iii and 353 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

CREATION VERSUS CHAOS. By Bernhard W. Anderson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. 210 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Wenham's volume is part of the *Word Biblical Commentary* series. According to the Editorial Preface, the audience and contributors to this series are "evangelical." This term is defined as those having a "commitment to Scripture as divine revelation, and to the truth and power of the Christian gospel." Wenham's comments throughout clearly fall within this definition. After an Introduction which deals with such matters as text, current critical theories, and the theology of Genesis, the body consists of comments on the text. Wenham provides a (very good) recent bibliography, a new translation of the text (with grammatical and text-critical notes), comments on the form/structure/setting of the unit under discussion, verse by verse comments on the text, and explanation. The final explanatory section contains more theological comments including the later use of these materials in the Christian tradition.

Two strengths are evident in this particular explication of Genesis. The first is that Wenham briefly and clearly outlines the major positions which are currently taken on a variety of critical issues involved in the study of these chapters of Genesis. Even when the reader disagrees with his eventual position, there is a feeling that Wenham has presented the alternative views fairly. A second strength lies in Wenham's obvious sensitivity to the literary features of the text as it now stands. He often points out connections and patterns which may appear in the text which other critics have overlooked.

Many readers will not agree with Wenham's virtual rejection of the (now) traditional source-critical theories of the past century of scholarship. While he still uses the J, E, D, P designations, his conclusion that the text was composed by "J" based on earlier P and proto-J material in the general period from 1250-950 B.C.E. sounds subtly like an effort to save a type of "Mosaic" authorship. This view will undoubtedly be welcomed in some circles, but the case is not argued sufficiently in this volume to convince most critical scholars. Also, Wenham never defines very precisely the audience he envisions for these chapters of Genesis. This lack of specificity results in his remarks having a general validity, but they often seem to miss some of the power that a clearer definition of audience and author would make possible. A further minor observation: it is annoying that Wenham constantly refers to subordinate divine entities in the text as "angels." The use of "angel" to translate the various Hebrew terms is misleading to the modern reader.

Anderson's volume is not a commentary on the early chapters of Genesis, but rather an attempt to deal with the mythology/theology of these chapters. The main body of the text is a welcome reprint of the original 1967 publication (Association Press) by the same name. This work now has the status of a "classic." Anderson's comments have stood the test of time well, although his sharp distinction between the culture and mythology of the Israelites and their neighbors should not be as sharply drawn today. The volume ends with a postscript, "Cosmic Dimensions of the Genesis Creation Account," reprinted from a 1985 lecture. In this essay Anderson attempts to find areas of rapprochement between theologians and scientists in the implications of

the Creation story for "The Mystery of the Emergence of Life." In these areas he hears science and religion using different language but does find areas for dialogue.

Wenham's volume will be a useful addition to other commentaries on Genesis for the pastor. Anderson's comments have been a valuable resource for a wide range of readers from layperson to professional scholar. It deserves a place in your library.

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THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM: ASPECTS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE TALMUD AND THE MIDRASH. By Gordon M. Freeman. New York: University Press of America, 1986. Paper. $11.95.

Gordon Freeman has given us a fine book that does several things at once. His principal interest is in political theory, and he attempts a reading of Rabbinic Judaism in these terms. Whereas western political theory, beginning with the Greeks, is systematic and structured and easily discovered, Rabbinic Judaism operates with a different method, apparently lacking structure.

To find the basis of political theory, or, as he puts it, political theology, one must dig into the texts to find the principles masked in parables and homiletical dicta. "This study," he avers, "is meant to be a contribution to political thought ...concerned with political issues."

Hans Jonas has suggested that the entry of structured Greek culture into the Middle East in the third pre-Christian century was the shock that caused the Eastern Cultures to react in their defense. He sees Rabbinic Judaism as a response to this challenge.

Questions arise, like who influenced whom and how much? What were the connections? Certainly Greco-Roman culture had its impact on Judaism because of political and geopolitical events. Was the rabbinic rhetorical-exegetical style influenced by the Greeks? Were their logical systems derived from them?

David Daube and others believe that there are clear evidences of interaction and influence. Others, like Saul Lieberman, were not so sure. They were inclined to believe that the Rabbis were fully aware of Greek and Roman literature and philosophy, but they used it only for the purpose of opposing its basic premises.

The first part of the book is an account of the encounter of Greek and Rabbinic thought across the chasm of their separation. He gives an excellent summary of Greek and Western thought, and notes that it is the Stoics, via the Phoenician Zeno, that come closest in attitude to Rabbinic Judaism. To this he attaches an equally cogent summary of Rabbinic thought processes.

Since this is a book about political theory, and the center of political theory revolves around the idea of contract and covenant, he concentrates on the rabbinic transformation of the idea of covenant with an individual into the giving and receiving of the Torah as a national covenant.

His careful analysis of carefully chosen rabbinic texts to support these ideas is the great strength of the book. He opens up this fascinating literature in a new way to provide deep and useful insights.

While he places great stress on the tension between rabbinic and Greek thought, he also touches on the separation between Judaism and Christianity, where the latter interpreted Covenant in terms of grace, while the former placed the emphasis on reciprocity and mutuality in covenant.

The link between the Rabbinic "Heavenly Kingdom" and Augustine's "City of God" suggests how the examination of rabbinic literature in terms of western culture might answer the continuing search for bridges.

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JOHN. By Robert Kysar. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 331 pages. Paper. $14.95.

I, II, III JOHN. By Robert Kysar. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 159 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Kysar enjoys an excellent reputation for his various publications on John: 1) *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel* (a critical survey of contemporary scholarship; see also his article in *RSR* 9[(1983] 314-323); 2) *John the Maverick Gospel* (a non-technical introduction to the thought and symbolism of the Fourth Gospel); 3) *John's Story of Jesus* (a retelling of the basic narrative as an aid to seeing how the story as a whole "works").

Kysar finds himself in accord with interpreters like J. L. Martyn who trace the history of the Johannine community through several stages: 1) the Johannine community originally constituted a part of a Jewish synagogue; 2) the members of the Johannine community were expelled from the synagogue because of their missionary efforts toward fellow members in the synagogue and toward Samaritans and because the synagogue in the days after the destruction of Jerusalem (C.E. 70) began to define being Jewish in a way that excluded sympathizers of Jesus; 3) with the crisis in the synagogue in the past, the Johannine community experienced internal conflicts over the proper interpretation of the gospel and faith.

The earliest traditions preserved in the Fourth Gospel originated in stage one. The major distinctive themes of the Gospel were shaped in stage two. In stage three the Gospel received the shape it has today, and the Epistles were written.

I would myself stress more than Kysar has done the non-Jewish connections of the Gospel. The cultural roots and the particular historical setting of the Gospel are of course debated matters.

As for theology, Kysar is certainly correct in stressing that in the mind of the Fourth Evangelist "the identity of Jesus... is the single most important factor in what it means to be a Christian" (p. 17). Kysar indicates how John has produced, in the course of illuminating the identity of Jesus, a profound meditation on the meaning of Jesus' death (not as sacrifice but as a magnetic power drawing people to God) and on the nature of mature Christian faith (not resting on signs). The Paraclete, John's unique contribution to NT statements about the Spirit, is clearly described as the alter ego of Jesus, but why that should be John's focus is not spelled out. I wish that Kysar had done more to find the connection between the Paraclete passages of the Gospel (ch. 14-16) and the warning in 1 John (4:1-6) about distinguishing between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, especially since he himself notes that the Paraclete passages appear to belong to the latest stage in the production of the Gospel when the Epistles also were written. However, we must recognize the impossibility of answering every question and be grateful for what we have.

Someone once described the Book of Revelation (another document of the Johannine community) as "the happy hunting ground of cranks." That description might be used of every book of the Bible. They have all suffered terribly at the hands of their interpreters. Fortunately, Kysar is anything but a crank. His commentaries on the Gospel and Epistles of John are clear-headed and sober-sided. He is obviously well informed. (Who knows the literature on John better than he?) His style is direct and his prose is eminently readable. But finally, Kysar is pastoral, and teachers and preachers as well as academics will find these offerings to be rich and useful fare.

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GALATIANS. By Edgar Krentz. **PHILIPPIANS AND PHILEMON.** By John Koenig. **1 THESSALONIANS.** By Donald Juel. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985. 255 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Three different authors here contribute really helpful comments on four shorter NT books. Edgar Krentz writes on Galatians in a manner we would expect: his own crisp prose illuminating the vocabulary and syntax of the original Greek,

exploring the forms and the rhetoric of Galatians, sensitive to the patterns of thought, penetrating to the evangelical heart of the letter. His comments on 6:6-9, "Mutual Interdependence," in a totally unpretentious way throw light on the words *autarkeia* (contentment, self-sufficiency), *katecheo* (teach), *koinoneo* (mutual care), and on the phrase translated by RSV as "God is not mocked." Krentz notes that this latter statement employs an unusual verb based on the term for an animal's snout and suggests that the sentence might be rendered something like this: "You can't lead God around by the nose like some animal." Throughout Galatians Paul argues that God does not conform to our human standards but confounds our expectations, upsets our norms, shatters our traditions, breaks through our careful arrangements in order to make all things new. The end-notes are a refresher course on the whole modern discussion of Galatians.

In his introductory comments John Koenig explores the theory that our Philippians is an ancient compilation of several shorter letters. After sifting the evidence, Koenig concludes that, for all the evident shifts in mood in the course of Philippians, he still holds it to be a letter composed by Paul on a single occasion, close in time to the composition of Galatians (ca. C.E. 55).

The Christ Hymn in 2:6-11 ("A Hymn Celebrating the Congregation's Share in Christ's Victory") and Paul's autobiography in 3:1-11 ("Judaizing Teachers and Paul's Experience of Christ") are handled in a fashion that is both scholarly and pastoral. The rich academic tradition is reviewed and weighed in clear clean prose, but Koenig does not stop there. He continues by exploring Paul's theology of the cross. "Power and suffering constitute two aspects of knowing Christ. But this suffering... is not just ordinary hurt or illness but the ongoing experience of being molded together with Christ's death.... The difficult question of how to distinguish between suffering with Christ and suffering which is altogether senseless or self-inflicted cannot be answered from these verses alone, although Paul's use of the word *koinonia* and its compounds strongly suggests that for him the sufferings of Christ are those that serve to build up communities" (pp. 165-7).

Shortly after writing Philippians, Paul composed his brief letter to Philemon, which Koenig entitles "A Graceful Persuasion to Justice." Koenig illumines the ancient practice of slavery and manumission and pays close attention also to the playful rhetoric of Paul in this altogether charming epistle. In contrast to the unfortunately common picture of Paul as a demanding, authoritarian figure, Koenig portrays Paul more accurately as one who always attempts to convince and persuade with good arguments. And in contrast to the Stoics, Paul "seldom attempts to convince his readers of anything without telling them how he feels about it" (p. 198).

Don Juel shares the widespread assumption that 1 Thessalonians is an example of an ancient "letter of exhortation" and that once we recognize the category to which it belongs, much in 1 Thessalonians is illuminated: structure, imagery, certain moral topics. Paul used the conventions of ancient moral exhortation. Juel goes on to ask how Paul then distinguished his own ministry as an apostle of Christ from the work of contemporary moral philosophers and how he distinguished his ethical admonitions from theirs. How did he make the connection between his ethical advice and the gospel he preached?

Chapters 1-3 constitute an extended thanksgiving. The exhortation proper opens in 4:1 with the use of the verb: "I appeal to you" (*parakalo*). Paul speaks of pleasing God in their ethical life (sexual conduct and social responsibility), founded on their faith and hope.

Christian faith and hope "is invested in a God with a name and a history." Confident living and consolation in the face of dying "can be found only through knowledge of that history and that God, in whose hands lies the future of creation" (p. 246).

With this volume the Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament takes one more long stride towards completion. The year 1989 should see all 14 volumes of the series in print, and that is good news for preachers, teachers, and students.

Robert H. Smith

GOD AND HIS PEOPLE: COVENANT THEOLOGY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Ernest W. Nicholson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. xii and 244 pages. Cloth. $36.00.

This work is divided into three parts: study of the covenant in the century since Julius Wellhausen; investigation of key texts dealing with the origin of the covenant between God and Israel; and a description of the distinctiveness of Israel's faith.

Wellhausen believed that the covenant was the result rather than the presupposition of the prophetic movement. While many scholars had reversed that judgment by the end of World War I, it came under sustained attack in the 1950s with the comparison between the biblical covenant and the Hittite treaties (especially George E. Mendenhall), a comparison designed to show the antiquity of the biblical covenant. Nicholson rehearses the subsequent work of Dennis McCarthy and Lothar Perlitt, however, which has shown that there is little of permanent value in this analogy. Nicholson believes it improbable that the treaty relationship was ever used to describe Israel's relationship to God. After McCarthy and Perlitt, the status of the argument has returned to virtually where it was a century ago with Wellhausen.

Nicholson's study of key texts (Exod 19:3b-8; 24:1-2, 9-11; 24:3-8; 34:10-28; Josh 24:1-28; and the covenant texts in Hosea) involves him in a running discussion with Perlitt, with whom he basically agrees, though Nicholson believes that Exod 20:22-23:33 and 24:3-8 are pre-Deuteronomic evidence for the covenant idea in Israel. In his view two passages from the prophet Hosea (6:7; 8:1) are also old attestations for the covenant, but covenant as a full-blown theological concept originated only in the second half of the monarchical period.

For Nicholson the prophetic religion of Israel served as a delegitimating agent, whereas other religions, ancient and modern, tend to legitimate the social order and social institutions. The world is not merely to be sustained, but to be transformed; the prophets in fact denied that the permanence of Israel's life was divinely guaranteed. Covenant theology expressed this desacralization of society. Religion is based on choice: God's choice of his people and their "choice" of him, that is, their decision to be faithful and obedient to him.

While one could quibble with the interpretation of individual passages, Nicholson is basically correct in my judgment, and this book is a clear and convincing description of what the faith of Israel was and of when it emerged in its fullest "prophetic" form.

Ralph W. Klein

HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH 1-8. By Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers. Anchor Bible 25B. Garden City: Doubleday, 1987. xcv and 478 pages. Cloth. $20.00.

The prophecies of Haggai (520) and Zechariah 1-8 (520-518—or a little later) molded the early Post-Exilic period in essential ways. Haggai announced that the fulfillment of Israel's expectations would be delayed until the end time and so distanced himself from those who thought that the monarchy would be restored with the dedication of the temple. In any case, he rallied the people to work on the temple. Zechariah believed that the temple and the province of Judah could be considered legitimate even without the presence of a king. He offered divine sanction for the expanded power of the high priest and justified a Davidic civil ruler while delaying the monarchic restoration to an eschatological moment. The two prophets helped the people make the transition from national autonomy to an existence centered on God and his moral demands, under the canopy of the Persian Empire.

The authors of this volume—a married couple who are also well known archaeologists—propose that Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 can be viewed as a combined work, that was completed before the rededication of the temple in 516 or 515. They call attention to many literary features such as the repetition of key words and phrases, chiasms, and the use of formulaic language. They

dub the language "oracular prose," noting both its prosaic character and the flair of the writer who occasionally imitates a poetic style. The authors differ sharply from Paul D. Hanson and his proposal that Haggai and Zechariah were part of a hierocratic party in a time of social unrest, when hierocrats and visionaries were competing for the soul of Israel.

The commentary follows the usual Anchor Bible format: a fresh translation, very extensive historical and philological notes, and a section entitled "Comment," which provides a synthetic analysis of the meaning of the text. This excellent Jewish commentary can be set alongside the recent commentary by David L. Petersen in the Old Testament Library series to provide the Bible student with some of the most detailed and up-to-date exegetical helps for any book in the Hebrew canon!

Ralph W. Klein

TO LOVE AS GOD LOVES. By Roberta Bondi. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. 112 pages. Paper. $5.95.

Subtitled "Conversations with the Early Church," this book is a dialogue between Bondi and early church personalities such as St. Anthony the Hermit, Ireneaus, Origen, Athanasius, Dionysius the Areopagite, and others. Bondi gives insight into love, humility, passions, prayer, and God primarily by comparing the old with the new. The quotations focus intentionally on the nature of the Christian life.

The longest section, the chapter on prayer, offers some practical suggestions from the early church on how we can improve our prayer lives by looking inside of ourselves, being humble, using prayer in worship, wrestling with the psalms in our private prayer, and showing reverence for the unknowableness of God. She writes, "Each of us can take time during prayer, whether only a few moments or much longer, just to sit and be there quietly in the presence of God, asking for nothing, saying nothing, thinking about nothing in particular, but just aware of God's presence."

Bondi's style deliberately targets the people of the parish. It will benefit all who want to learn more about the history of their faith, including pastors who will find many good sermon illustrations. Precious few books introduce our congregations to church history, and herein lies the greatest value of Bondi's work. As Bondi relates the Christian life of the past to the present she at times oversimplifies the comparison and idealizes the past. However, she gives an inspired analysis of women who have been neglected in such studies. The struggle to live the wisdom of the past in the present can help us *To Love as God Loves.*

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

Briefly Noted

WRITING DOWN THE BONES. By Natalie Goldberg. (Shambhala Press, $7.95.) This is a delightful book on writing which offers the reader many different angles on why writing is so difficult and many different exercises to render the act less difficult. Although aimed primarily at writers of fiction and poetry, the book offers interesting anecdotes and insights which would be of use to all of our readers who write and who are in the market for a few books beyond grammars and dictionaries and Strunk and White which will enable them to write with more verve, vitality, and clarity. Heartily recommended. JCR

THE NEW WESTMINSTER DICTIONARY OF LITURGY AND WORSHIP. Edited by J. G. Davies. (Westminster Press, $29.95/$16.95.) What makes this Dictionary new are many articles rendered necessary by the intervention of fifteen years between editions. The first edition was published in 1972 and became immediately indispensable for any working sacristy or church library and has sold well for pastors' libraries. The new edition takes in what has happened since 1972; hence there are articles relating to women and liturgy, feminist liturgies, and the ordination of women. There are articles updating the resources of churches whose new worship books have come out since 1972 (Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Methodists in particular). There are articles that deal with ritual in gesture, dance, and movement-prayer, all of which recognize the renewal of interest in the body at worship. There are articles which relate to children at worship, the handicapped at worship, and so on. More traditions of worship are covered than in the first edition. This is an important book to own, and it is now available in a paperback edition for about half the price of the hardback. JCR

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY. VOLUME II: HIGH MIDDLE AGES AND REFORMATION. Edited by Jill Raitt in collaboration with Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff. (Crossroad Publishing Co., $49.50.) George Tavard leads the book off with an essay on Apostolic Life and Church Reform which sets the stage for medieval and reformation spirituality by dealing succinctly with the transitional period from 1150-1215 (IV Lateran Council). Tavard shows this period to contain the shift from monastic to scholastic theology and, culturally, from agrarian to commercial life. The two sections which follow deal respectively with schools and movements and then with themes. The period is well covered by expert scholars from an international field. Ms. Raitt ends the book with an exploratory essay about the meaning of spirituality in the sixteenth century. The cost is prohibitive for personal libraries, except for those truly interested in the field, but the book is of great importance. There is so much junk on the market that comes into church libraries that a few healthy volumes like this, if they could be introduced to members, would go a long way toward overcoming that juvenile spirituality. JCR

DOCUMENTS OF THE BAPTISMAL LITURGY. By E. C. Whitaker. (SPCK, $12.95.) This book is quite simply the best piece on the market as a compendium of early baptismal rites in translation. It covers the period from the materials in the Ante-Nicene Church (Didache, Justin Martryr and others) through the Missals (9th C). The Sarum rite is included in full, which is logical since this is a book for a principally British audience. One finds slightly tedious that the dates of the materials are couched in notes at the begin-

ning of each chapter and not repeated with the manuscript evidence itself, but that is a minor detail. There is a good, succinct discussion of the distinctions between eastern and western rites and the special peculiarities of the Syrian rite, which has become of importance in the discussion of initiation in recent years. A definite must for libraries of pastors who are attentive to liturgical history. JCR

NEW TESTAMENT HOSPITALITY. By John Koenig. (Fortress Press, $8.95.) This exceedingly helpful book begins by uplifting the themes of hospitality and partnership in the biblical witness, then moves on to discuss the specifics of hospitality as taught by Jesus, Paul, and Luke, and concludes with a discussion of the frontiers of hospitality today. Koenig's book weaves together materials from his own life with the biblical data and gives us insights into pastoral ministry. It would be a mistake to buy this book as a biblical study alone, because the implications for ministry in general and liturgical ministry in particular are evident throughout the writing. In a time of renewed emphasis on the eucharistic assembly and the celebrant as host, Koenig's book has lessons for liturgy. It would make a good study volume for adult classes. JCR

TABLE AND TRADITION. By Allisdair I. C. Heron. (Westminster Press, $11.95.) I discovered this book through a number of lay people who advised me of its usefulness in grass roots dialogues with both Roman Catholics and the Reformed. The book clearly presents the issues involved in the medieval development of sacramental theology and the reformation critique thereof, from both Calvinist and Lutheran perspectives. The book is quite good for what it does. Omitted is any reference to the radical reformers, and no connection is drawn between initiation and Eucharist—as if the latter lived on its own, outside the whole ritual complex. But the issues are clearly presented, and I accept the decision of various laity that this is a good book for dialogue. JCR

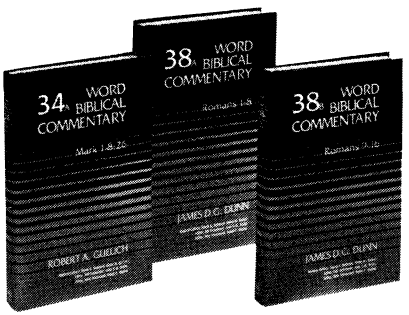
SHARING THE EUCHARISTIC BREAD. By Xavier Leon-Dufour, S.J. (Paulist Press, .$16.95.) Most readers will be familiar with the original thesis of Lietzmann that there are discernible in the NT two principal strains of interpretation for the Eucharist, one of which (located chiefly in Paul and Luke-Acts) focuses on Eucharist as communion, the other (located chiefly in Mark and Matthew) on Eucharist as sacrifice. The thesis has since been superseded, though the distinctions remain helpful for basic interpretation.

Leon-Dufour's work is the result of 25 years of musing on his own thesis: namely, that the NT contains two fused traditions, one on the 'cultic tradition' motif and one on the 'farewell discourse' motif (also called the 'testamentary tradition'). This thesis allows Leon-Dufour to focus not merely on the eucharistic action itself but to expand the concept of eucharistic action to include service of one's fellow human beings (under the latter motif); he thus also renders an interpretation of the data which remains in solidarity with the Jewish background, while recognizing the movement into a new age with Jesus and, specifically, the church. Hence the book begins by assuming the importance of the eucharistic setting in the Christian assembly with its various ministries, of which leadership at the meal is one.

In some ways the thesis complements that of Lietzmann, since it affords us a backward look to the life and work of Jesus which is remembered in the Eucharist; but he moves beyond Lietzmann by taking with renewed seriousness the assembly where Christ takes form anew for the life of the world. Rather than focus on different eucharistic theologies one might cull from different NT writings, Leon-Dufour takes the route of moving through the various stages of production involved in the writings; so he moves from praxis to gospel, and only in the end does he deal with the separate traditions. John's incarnational theology forms the backdrop for the whole study. The Jewish background is incorporated throughout the book. Comprehensive survey. JCR

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Preaching Helps

Advent One—Third Sunday after the Epiphany, Series C

Jubilee

Impatience with the present is the hallmark of Advent. The season invites us to examine our present in the light of the future, but at the same time to pass in review our hopes for the future to see whether they measure up. Are our hopes good enough? Are we impatient for the right stuff?

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany can have a very narrow focus: my soul, my spiritual condition. The quality of one's inner life is no small thing, and any churchly season is a good time for checking the health of the deep wells from which spring all speech and action. But the three seasons treated in this issue can also throw light on our corporate life, on our political vision and our economic behavior. These seasons can help us place our hope in the power of God's all-comprehending grace.

Back in the early sixth century when Advent was just beginning to make its way as a separate season of the church's year, Caesarius of Arles (d. 542) delivered a sermon on how to observe Advent. He called his hearers to "abstain from conjugal endearments, invite the poor frequently to your banquets, rise early for vigils, stand in church at prayers and singing, utter no idle or worldly speeches yourself and reprove those who do, keep peace with all, and bring back to concord those whom you see to be at odds." His words have an old-fashioned ring, and yet Caesarius pictures a rich mix of the inner and the outer, the individual and the corporate. In his advice he links pious exercises with economic assistance and reconciliation of enemies.

The lessons are rich fare, and we are fortunate to have a trio of savvy friends mulling over these scriptures. Carl Graesser, Jr., Professor of Old Testament at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, comments on the high

hopes of Isaiah and his fellow prophets. As he worked with the lessons Carl found himself questioning the wisdom of *lectio continua*, dumbfounded that any lectionary committee would let Isaiah 62:10-12 stand as reading for Christmas Day, for example. Whatever the difficulty, Carl always struggles with the text until he finds the gospel in the historical word. Susan Nachtigal, one of the pastors of St. John Lutheran Church in Sacramento, California, shares her meditations on the Gospels. Susan has a gift for discovering hidden depths in ordinary human gestures and for connecting them to events in the life of our Lord as narrated by Luke, jolting us by the juxtaposing.

Don Prange is at it again, speaking about justice for the economically oppressed, and doing it in the context of liturgy. He is provoked by the images of Luke's Gospel and would provoke all the rest of us to celebrate the Jubilee, God's time of liberation, by practicing justice and mercy. It may help to keep in mind that Don uses the *Jerusalem Bible* as he plays with images and words in the texts. Don is Program Director of Appalachian Ministries in Economic Justice, working out of a small mountain community in Dickenson County, Virginia. He has developed a program called "A Pedagogy for Justice," designed to help church folks develop a vision and mission of economic justice in the context of biblical theology and liturgy. He conducts retreats and workshops for colleges, seminaries, and congregations. You can get details from him at Box 311, Nora, VA 24272.

Luke is our evangelist in Year C, and he was himself a profound commentator on the impatience of Israel for a new and better world. During Year C we will hear a lot about the theme of Jubilee, taking off from the programmatic sermon of Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21). Luke displays the ministry of Jesus (Gospel) and the life of the early church (Acts) as the fulfillment of hope and as the pattern for our own hoping and living.

Impatiently yours,

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor

Advent One
November 27, 1988

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

A FIRST READING

Jeremiah 33:14-16. Troubled people hope; the more hopeless their situation, the more daring their dreams. So it was that ancient Israel in exile dreamed, daring to hope for God, for the "days coming" of God's reign (kingdom), when things would be as they "ought."

The fuel that fed this hope was God's promise, literally "the good word which God spoke." That "good word" promised there would always be a son of David on the throne—and thus, more importantly, God's perennial favor and guidance through that son.

A king to rule us! Perhaps not so grand a promise to egalitarian, independence-loving Americans. But Israel treasured the Davidic throne, believing it to be, finally, Yahweh's throne. The king was God's agent, the very channel of Yahweh's blessing. The king was Commander in Chief, assuring God's peace from enemies without. The king was Chief Justice of the supreme court, assuring God's justice within, freedom from oppression. Peace and Justice, that is what the son of David meant to Israel! A king like that might be acceptable, even for our day and age!

Of course, Israel had had kings before, many not worthy of the name. So they yearned all the more for a righteous, or better translated, a *genuine* branch of David's stock, one genuinely God's agent of peace and justice.

In days to come, when God reigned once more, through the son of David, exiled Judah would again dwell securely in Jerusalem. In praise of the author of their new-found security, they would rename the royal city "Yahweh is our Rescue." (Righteousness = rescue: Is 45:8, 46:13, 51:6, etc. This name is a transparent pun on the name of the weak king Zedekiah, "Yahweh is [my] Righteousness/Rescue," which likely dates the earlier version of this oracle at least [Jer 23:5-6] to his pre-exilic reign.)

In our Advent yearning we identify with Israel and embrace these words. Indeed, no less than they we dream of God's reign and peace and justice. Our one hope is no less in God's agent, the genuine branch of the lineage of David. And as we wait (im)patiently, we work for a foretaste of peace and justice. We become the very channels of those blessings. As it has been well said, "If you want peace, work for justice." CG,Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Road trips are fun, but they're best when you are traveling with a "like" companion. There are a variety of traveling styles: organized and unorganized, spontaneous and planned, plodders and pack-ratters, stoppers and get-in-the-car-and-goers. Among the stoppers, there are those who never miss a beat. "Oh, an overlook, next exit. Let's stop!"

Pulling up to the overlook, it becomes obvious that not only are there a variety of traveling styles, but that there are also a variety of ways to take in an overlook. Some, shoes off and comfortable, prefer not to move from the car: "I can see it from here." Some get out of the car, lean on the front bumper, and then get back into the car. Still others, in an almost strategic manner, take in the overlook from every angle. Everyone sees an overlook differently.

When we imagine Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, we often think of a well-organized ride down main street with a fairly orderly crowd lining the way. Their palms are in hand and their "hosannas!" are readied.

Luke, however, presents a much less organized venture that keeps Jesus only "drawing near" to Jerusalem. One might wonder if it was disconcerting for the disciples when Jesus said, "Pull off—next exit—near Bethphage and Bethany. Then go into the village opposite and find a colt. I'm going to stay here and take in the overlook."

When the colt was brought to Jesus he started out again. But it wasn't long before the party stopped for a second time. Surrounding multi-

tudes broke forth in praise and adoration while the Pharisees grumbled, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." Not yet in the city but still overlooking all, Jesus started out toward Jerusalem for a third time.

Relieved to be on their way, the disciples began to believe they might soon reach their destination. But then the party slowed to a stop again. Those in the front, unaware of what was happening, yelled out, "Now what are we stopping for?!" Bickering broke out among them. "Just wait a minute, would ya?" Then the grumbling died down. Whisper . . . whisper . . .

"...He's crying..."
"...Why is he crying?..."
"...Maybe because we *won't* wait."
"...Maybe because he *can't* wait."

St. Paul writes, "...so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father" (1 Thess 3:13).

Everyone sees an overlook differently. SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

Luke would be at home with those who speak of contextual theology today. "The way" (Ps 25:5) of Yahweh is never isolated from historical realities and conditions, and the contextual reality for Luke is the Roman Empire and the imperial pretentions of Jerusalem and the Temple. It's a context of oppression for the underclass in that world of imperialism; and however implicit that may be as we read Luke today, it was a very explicit contextual reality for Luke's original readers—no less explicit than for blacks in South Africa today or for others in a variety of parallel contemporary contextual realities.

But we cannot do justice to Luke's theology without analyzing the imperialistic context today—a subtle or even offensive bit of rhetoric when identified by the oppressed of today as "U.S. Imperialism"—but a reality for those who are its victims. The Spirit of God is at work among the oppressed when they name the oppressor, but the same Spirit inspires the hope of an advent of liberation (Jer 33:14) and a new day of "honesty and integrity in the land" (33:15). These are watch-words (cf. Lk 21:36-36) for those who claim to be followers of the Christ; watch-words for those anticipating the coming of the Christ "with all his saints" (1 Thess 3:13). Liberation with justice is surely coming (Lk 19:38), and not even "the stones" (Lk 19:40) are so oblivious to reality that they will not "cry out" in celebrative protest if we remain silent. DP

Advent Two
December 4, 1988

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

A FIRST READING

Malachi 3:1-4. This text is an exemplar of a core paradigm of the faith, of law and gospel, of sin, repentance and grace, of the forerunner and God's presence.

Malachi (perhaps a cipher, meaning "my messenger," for an unnamed prophet?) upbraids the post-exilic priesthood for dishonoring God and God's temple. They have offered imperfect, cheap animals for sacrifices; they have shown partiality in their instruction; they have faithlessly divorced the wives of their youth. (These accusations sting, coming very close to home. Analogies abound, both for clergy and laity.)

The Great Day of God's coming was indeed approaching. But the temple, polluted by the very guardians of cleanness, was not ready for God's presence. First the forerunner, the messenger/angel, must come and purge the priesthood. Thus sanctified, the priesthood will offer proper sacrifices, the temple will again be pure, a fit dwelling for God's presence.

Purging leading to the Presence—this is no less the paradigm of God's advent into our lives; each day in the remembrance of our baptism, each week in the rhythm of confession and the absolv-

ing Word and Sacrament, each Church year in the cycle of observing our Lord's life, each of these replicating the history of the advent of St. John the Baptizer before Jesus of Nazareth.

God also comes in those darkest of times in our lives, in grave sickness, profound loss, and death. In God's hand these bitter trials become the medium both of purging and of God's coming—ah, that blessed Advent!! Here is the measure of both the hardness of our hearts and of God's Love. How often it is just in such dark times that God is present most tellingly and dearly, in ways that uniquely and lastingly transform us and our faith!

Only folly seeks such trials. But blessed is the Fire after which, yea *in* which, the Lord comes to make our hearts a temple. CG,Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

You've heard it many times. "The Messiah." "And all flesh shall see it together." Just in reading the words you can hear Handel's incisive music asserting the stature of this proclamation. You can hear the male voices and the female voices alternating in praise, and culminating in one grand and harmonious "for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!"

The last time I heard a performance of Handel's *Messiah* was in the Sacramento Community Center, downtown Sacramento. Walking into the building, it was difficult to ignore the fact that we all were taking a step from one world into another.

The world outside was overrun with hunger, homelessness, and hopelessness. Families lived in their cars; children didn't go to school. It's a world of panhandling, cart-pulling, mental illness, oppression, and alcoholism. It's a world in which there is little to prepare for, for most know not where they are coming from or going to.

By way of contrast, the world inside the Symphony Hall was and is beautiful, truly beautiful. Everything and everyone looked and sounded great. Acoustical perfection and intermission cocktails were available to soothe all. Plush seats and dim lights added an aura of quiet celebration, relaxation, and peace.

Upon hearing "and all flesh shall see it together," one might have had the feeling that the people in that room were experiencing the salvation of God more than others. The people outside, the alternating voices of men, women, and children asking for help, seemed to be coming up short.

In the midst of complexities and sadness, it was difficult to see any hope. That is, hope for the downtrodden, that they might know relief; hope for the overindulgent, that they might gain a sense of equity.

Two worlds to be made one only through Christ Jesus our Lord. For now, we heed his voice and prepare his way. We prepare through prayers for one another, much like Paul's prayers for brothers and sisters. We prepare through repentance, much like the turning around and the call to action John cried for at the Jordan. And so we wait, believing that in the fullness of Christ all flesh shall see the salvation of God. We do not lose heart, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

"Even the pagans (Ps 126:2) sense the moment of celebration and seem to know and understand "the salvation (liberation) of God" (Lk 3:6). So Advent is a crucial time for "improving knowledge" and "deepening perception" about "what is best" (Ph 1:9,10) in the present context of imperialism and oppression in the world. Malachi suggests it's a time for doing some refining and purifying (3:3) of what it means to practice justice.

We too easily miss the material realities in the advent of Jubilee (so clearly evident in Luke's theology of the Christ) if we relate John's call to repentance only to a narrow understanding of "the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3). But if we recognize the Jubilee reality of the forgiveness of *debts*, then what needs to be "filled in... laid low... straightened [and] made smooth" (Lk 3:5) relates to a celebration of economic justice—and with an internationalist (Lk 3:6) perspective. DP

Advent Three
December 11, 1988

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

A FIRST READING

Zephaniah 3:14-18a. "The great Day of the Lord is near!" But its sound is bitter, it is a day of wrath. Judah will be devastated and Jerusalem, that oppressing city, will be swept away! Such was Zephaniah's message just before the exile.

This text is likely a final hopeful paragraph added to Zechariah's words by sacred compilers sometime after Jerusalem suffered exile. They added this text, but not because they felt this doleful book "really must end on a note of hope," as is sometimes suggested.

The exiles kept and treasured Zephaniah's words, not to rub salt in their own wounds, but because they now recognized them to be genuine words from God—well worth saving! However, as the compilers handed them on, they knew that these pre-exilic words of judgment did not exhaust God's message to the generations *after* Jerusalem's fall. To these people in a new situation, chastened by years in exile or in a devastated Jerusalem, God's contemporary prophetic word also challenged them to hope in God.

Yes, read Zephaniah's words; reflect seriously on God's judgment. But rejoice too, singing the eschatological hymn (vv. 14-15)! The promise of God's forgiveness and renewed presence in the midst of Jerusalem is so sure that you can, you ought, celebrate it *now*, proleptically. Technically, the oracle in 16-18a is one addressed to a future age, "on that day." Of course it is meant to encourage and bring good news now! to those still awaiting God's rescuing action. (In line with this, we prefer to read the imperfect verbs in v. 17 with present continuous sense, not future.)

How very similar to our situation today. We are called to preach judgment *and* grace. Our task, happily, is more like that of the compilers than that of Zephaniah. God's last Word to us and through us is Good News. We minister to people who, having no continuing city, look forward to the new Jerusalem, to our Lord's Advent. Emboldened by that promise we too challenge the faithful to join in the eschatological hymn! "God has taken away the judgments... God is in our midst." CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"You brood of vipers!" A mother probably wouldn't say this to her children, but she might be justified in doing so. The cookies that were in the freezer, doing what they were supposed to be doing—waiting for Christmas!—were eaten by children who just *couldn't wait.* The big Tupperware container, originally brim-full, had diminished to less than half. None of the five children admitted to sly dealings. "Wasn't me!" three children said. And the other two? They said they didn't even like cookies!

What happened? How did she find out? Each had covered so well, placing the tub back in its exact original place!

Mother says again, "Cookies don't just disappear!" "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" One child breaks down. "I did it only because Dad wanted one. So, I took one and I gave him one." "Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,'" she replied.

Sensing no way out and knowing that their mother knew the very truth about each of them, they hesitated for a moment. They knew she knew, that not only were they lying, but that they *actually had believed* it would help to shake the cookie tub up and down in an attempt to reestablish the haven't-been-touched-look. She knew the truth that their sneaking had become a rule rather than an exception. And so finally, all they could say was, "What then shall we do?" Prepare. Wait. SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

Advent's call to a celebration of justice (Is 12:2-6) presumes the necessity of some radical—getting at the roots (Lk 3:9)—analysis and action. "What must we do then?" (Lk 3:10) to get to the roots of radical change in our own economic system? It might begin with a confession that the so-called material blessings of the rich and middle classes of the U. S. are not necessarily the blessings of God that popular national piety would have us believe. Implicit in Luke's confessional question is that wealth, in the sense of a surplus and having more than we need (Lk 3:11), represents an injustice needing correction; and John does not suggest charity as we normally understand it as the corrective.

God's advent demands radical change, and the three sets of questioners (Lk 3:10-14) suggest areas of contemporary concern: 1) If wealth (as surplus) does represent an injustice, how do we begin to divest by creating a system with more equitable distribution to meet life's necessities? Or, at least, how do we begin to divest where surplus wealth (i.e., "capital") is invested in processes which exploit labor, land, or the environment—or where obvious systems of political repression (e.g., South Africa) are in place? 2) Can we tolerate a tax system exacting 10% of the income of a family of four earning $13,000/year while many of the wealthiest corporations pay no income tax? 3) When U. S. foreign policy, with its application of military force, pursues the maintenance of U.S. economic domination (a.k.a. "U.S. imperialism" to many) through intimidation and what is tantamount to extortion (Lk 3:14), can we be silent?

Some will say, "This isn't the concern of the church; our business is evangelism and gaining more church members." John the Baptist might respond: If God wanted more church members God could create them out of stones (3:18). If evangelism doesn't include the good news of economic justice, it is not *the Gospel according to Luke*... DP

Advent Four
December 18, 1988

Psalm 80:1-7
Micah 5:2-4
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

A FIRST READING

Micah 5:2-4. Pregnant women people our texts today. Anticipation is still the keynote, not yet the birth. The Gospel celebrates Mary's joy at God's marvelous way of turning the tables and of using the lowly to do it. Very differently, the future birthpangs of the pregnant woman in the OT lesson punningly symbolize the *travail* God's people undergo until that birth. (Compare Micah 4:9-10 and Is 13:8, Jer 4:31, 30:6, and often, for the common metaphor of birthpangs = panic at enemy attack.)

That travail, Micah suggests, is already underway, for 5:1 describes the current ruler of Judah as under siege. Micah counsels hope, not in this ineffective ruler, but hope in God. God's aid will come mediately, in the form of a different ruler.

It is striking how throughout this announcement of a coming ruler, God is the prime mover, not this ruler. God is the speaker of this prophetic promise. The ruler will come "for me"/God. Judah's troubled situation is under God's control (and hence not hopeless), for God "shall give them up" (and so can take them back!) Both the strength and the majesty of this ruler are God's, not his own. What good news: we need not depend on humans, so often frail. Our hope rests in God.

And yet God chooses to work mediately, and through lowly people at that: the little clan of Ephrata, the teenage virgin Mary, the fisherman disciples, the ordinary people of the congregation, even a spouse or the children! Yes, hope in God, but look among such as these to find God at work for us.

But it's such a mess, such a painful struggle. Travail! All the more reason to look for a hope in

God's action. Not just because we now see our need so painfully clearly, but because it is precisely in trouble that God is likely to act. God promises to send this ruler—*after* handing them over to travail! CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

There are some moments in life that are simply and profoundly too much. "Life is good if you can stand all the excitement," someone once said.

Think of Mary and Elizabeth, probably the youngest and the oldest of the family, the not-old-enough and the too-old-to-be-pregnant two. Think of their meeting and their greeting of each other. They didn't discuss the fact that there they stood... both pregnant! Not even a "you, too?" Not even an "I can't believe it!" Only joy at seeing one another and at sharing in this inexplicable gift.

With that, as if her own pregnancy wasn't enough excitemente, Elizabeth has another weighty revelation to reckon with—for the mother bearing the long awaited Messiah was on her doorstep! "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Blessed are you among women!" More than a pious outburst of humility, Elizabeth clearly "disbelieved for joy" (Lk 24:41). For, what does one Jewish woman do with angels descending and ascending, husband struck dumb, the Holy Spirit moving and the babe in the womb leaping? ...all of this "in her old age." What do two Jewish women do upon realizing that the salvation of the world is unfolding within them, between them, and all around them? "Life is good if you can stand all the excitement."

Considering the realities of Mary's and Elizabeth's situations, Luke presents a celebrative but poetically calm exchange between these kinswomen. It seems so understated it's overstated. There is a noticeable lack of enthusiasm over the signs, wonders, and miracles, almost as though such workings were commonplace—that which would be typical of Almighty God.

For Luke, far more attention and far greater intrigue centers on the matter of *whether one believes!* Zechariah's unbelieving response is set alongside Mary's and Elizabeth's believing. The angel announces, "And you shall call his name John... and he shall make ready for the Lord a people prepared." "And you shall call his name Jesus... the Son of the Most High." Believing was more than a home-bound or time-bound matter. For Mary and Elizabeth to believe what had been told them about the new life growing within each of them also meant that they believed new life was making its way into all eternity.

As God used Mary and Elizabeth to deliver the Savior and his forerunner, God still uses Mary's and Elizabeth's faith as a birthing place for our believing.

Throughout the generations the good news moves "from faith to faith." It traveled from faith to faith between kinswomen, and now it travels from faith to faith between kindred spirits, that is, those kindled by the same Spirit.

"Life is good if you can stand all the excitement." SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

Because of a disobedience to the way of justice, slavery, exile and imperial domination characterized much of the ups-and-downs history of Abraham and his descendants as the prototype 'people of God.' If not oppressed by external forces (disobedient to the way of justice), they demonstrated a capacity for their own internal kind of oppression, so it's no wonder looking to God for liberation is a familiar motif in their faith pilgrimage. They were a "holy people," but much of their history reflects either their disobedience or their failure to understand the "will" (Heb 10:7) of God and what it meant to be a "holy people."

But with Luke's inclusion of the story of Mary and her song (1:38, 39-55), it is clear the advent of both understanding and obedience had arrived and that a theology of liberation was emerging to celebrate "the power of Yahweh" (Mic 5:4). So this is the theology of Luke, that in Jesus of Nazareth and the community he called into being (if we move into Acts) we discover what it means to be the people of God in contexts of oppression crying out for liberation. But Luke's

theology goes deeper. It is a theology of praxis: Jesus is the Liberator, and those committed to his praxis are the liberating community in whom Jubilee becomes a reality. It is the fulfilment of a praxis in which God is mindful of mercy (Lk 1:54), a mercy producing empowerment—a power to understand and act on the way of God, the way of justice! DP

Christmas Day
December 25, 1988

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

A FIRST READING

Isaiah 62:10-12. Soon after the return from Babylon, "Third Isaiah" challenged the discouraged band in Jerusalem to hope in God, indeed to look forward to the day when God's full salvation would become evident. The prophet urges them to fling wide the gates, no longer needed for safety. They are to go forth and prepare a highway, not for God (as in 40:3), but for the crowds coming to Jerusalem, guided by the flag set up to show the way. Some see these new arrivals as the rest of exiled Israel ("the people," 10a). We join those who see them as the nations ("the peoples," 10b; cf. "ends of the earth," v. 11) now streaming to Jerusalem.

What has effected this remarkable procession? God's glorious salvation (of Israel) has been proclaimed throughout the earth. This announcement causes the nations to acknowledge Yahweh's Lordship, to give God the "reward" of their worship. These foreigners, now in a new relationship to Yahweh, are given the honored titles, "The Holy People, Redeemed by Yahweh." Since the nations flock to her and Jerusalem is no longer ignored, she is named "Sought Out, Not Forsaken."

How full the churches are this day! Why? We, the nations, stream to worship because we have heard the proclamation, "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." Not only Israel, but now we too, the nations, are the "redeemed of Yahweh." We are no longer outsiders. We have become part of God's sacred assembly, the "holy people." The news is good! We rejoice and worship God.

We also identify with Jerusalem in this text. On Christmas we focus on celebration, but tomorrow we would do well to go forth, preparing the road for the rest of the nations to join us.

Yes, this is a strange Christmas text, without any birth-talk. Equally problematic for a high feast, the text tends to focus on *our response* to the announcement of salvation, to *God's saving act*, which preachers rightly stress on Christmas. Yet, if the sermon centers on the joyous announcement as the empowerment of our response, this text may well be preachable on Christmas. CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"...and wrapped him in swaddling clothes..."

Do you know what "swaddling clothes" are? I don't, exactly. As a matter of fact, I can't even think of a time when I have heard or read the word "swaddling" apart from its appearance in the Christmas story. No doubt, they weren't the well-fitted, elasticized, plasticized wonders we use today. Nor did they include the many fashionable items now available for infants 1-12 months. It is clear that this infant was not dressed—he was wrapped. And knowing what we know, and believing as we do, it would be true to say that not only was the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, but even more, he was, he is, wrapped up in our salvation.

Wrapped up in our salvation. One could make a case for this.

Remember "the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years and could not be healed by anyone"? She touched the fringe of Jesus' garment "and immediately her flow of blood ceased" (Lk 8:43-44). Maybe swaddling clothes has something to do with power.

Remember the story of Jesus before Herod? "And Herod with his soldiers treated him with

contempt and mocked him, then arraying him in gorgeous apparel, he sent him back to Pilate" (Lk 23:11). Maybe swaddling clothes has something to do with obedience.

Remember also the story about Joseph of Arimathea? "This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid" (Lk 23:52-53). Maybe swaddling clothes has something to do with death.

And remember the story about the third morning? "Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body, and they came back saying that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive" (Lk 24:22-23). No body, no clothes.... Maybe swaddling clothes has something to do with resurrection.

Most of all, remember the story of Jesus commissioning his disciples? "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Lk 24:49). New body, new clothes.... Maybe swaddling clothes has something to do with you.

Unwrap the gift—and put it on. SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

Notions of "Keeping Christ in Christmas" to combat the secularized festival can easily become romantic and sentimentalized rituals if there is not a celebration of Christmas as God's incarnation in a solidarity with the oppressed. And even that may be irrelevant without a praxis of solidarity with the oppressed in the various contexts of imperialism by which a contemporary "Pax Romana" too often means stabilization for oppressors and destabilization for the oppressed.

God acts in solidarity with the oppressed "to make a way for the people" (Is 62:10). The "new song" (Ps 98:1) to Yahweh celebrates a new way, a "rebirth" and a "renewing" (Titus 3:5) of justice among the people. It means a restoration of the universal right of inheritance to "eternal life"*—that is, life on earth in which God is glorified by the highest quality of shalom among human beings—especially for the oppressed, the favored: those who are the objects of God's preferential option. DP

**"Eternal life" suggests a quality of life, something lasting—and is unrelated to the concept of 'eternity' as it relates to some kind of spiritualized space or chronology.*

The Name of Jesus
January 1, 1989

Psalm 8
Numbers 6:22-27
Romans 1:1-7
Luke 2:21

A FIRST READING

Numbers 6:22-27. They named him well this day, Jesus, "Yahweh is salvation/rescue." Not only is Jesus the focus of God's saving activity for us. It is in his face that we see God best.

If we would unthinkingly dismiss this day with a flippant "What's in a name?" Num 6:23-27 shows us how very much is in a name, especially God's name. In a manner we moderns can hardly yet intuit, the ancients saw the reality and being of a person in their name. Malevolent priests sought to curse individuals by writing their names and then burning, smashing, or otherwise effacing the inscription. Well-speaking (bene-dicting) priests pronounced the name of a deity in a blessing in order to invoke the power and favor of that deity on the worshippers. Strange as this now appears to us, we occasionally still feel "power" in a name. How we can be stirred at hearing the name of our beloved.

Thus the repetition of the divine name is not a mindless or merely euphonious series of sounds. It is a purposeful invocation upon the people of all that the deity is. The priests "set the name on the people" that Yahweh will bless them (v. 27). Can

we recapture some sense of this power today? Or is the benediction doomed to be the signal that the service is over? Most sense more power in the passing of the Peace (not all bad in itself).

Though shopworn to our ears, the Aaronic Benediction's careful structure rewards study. In each of three pairs of wish clauses, "Yahweh" is the explicit subject of the first clause, the implicit subject of the second. The latter clause of each pair is the consequence of the former. The verbs in the initial clauses are parallel in meaning (=bless), but those in the second develop to a climax. The blessing grows from the avoidance of harm (keep), to that basic positive attitude of God from which stem all good things (be gracious), to the capstone and fullness of all blessings (peace), that "wholeness" (literally) which is prosperity, health, and well-being.

Truly, "Yahweh *is* rescue." Meditating on the meaning of this benediction is really an explication of the name of Jesus. Benedictor and congregation alike will appreciate recovering some of the meaning of these words and thus this weekly rite. "Jesus is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, a shout of gladness in the heart" (St. Bernard). CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face shine on you, and be gracious unto you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."

We begin worship in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and we end in the same. Each week it's a way of helping the gathered community remember our way of being in the world. It tells us who we're living from and who we're living to. It also tells us *how* we're living, that is, within the blessing of Almighty God.

In the busy-ness, and sometimes even the chaos, of our daily routines, we often have the tendency to lose sight of our beginning and our destination, the source and the end of our being. "Running around in circles" is often said with a negative tone. But it can be said positively, too.

As we are "running around in circles" each day as well as in all our days collectively, we move from blessing to blessing. The blessing Lord who raises his wounded hands over us today empowers us and keeps us until tomorrow, when we will receive his blessing anew all over again. And, the blessing Lord who by the Spirit gave to us our first breath will be at our last, giving it all over again.

And so we never fall out of our blessedness—our continual state of being bless-ed. In our worship and in our living the circle never ends. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" said in the greeting sets our hearts toward "The Lord bless you and keep you..." at the close.

The Aaronic benediction also tells us *how* we are living. It shows us what our lives look like, and it reminds us that we live "by way of" our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ. This may not be how our lives feel all of the time. But the truth about the believer's life is that the One who "dwelt among us full of grace and truth" (John 1:1) has now "benedicted us" with the same. SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

Whatever your liturgical option for the day, God's preferential option for the oppressed remains the dominant concept to be celebrated and lived out by the people of God today. Identity and purpose related to the God of the Bible—that is, the God of liberation and justice—are moulded by the shape of our tradition, whether it is consistent with liberation or oppression, or just plain irrelevant, which puts it implicitly in the latter category. We can either go through the motions (many of Jesus' contemporaries probably celebrated Passover the way many now celebrate Christmas), just rotely carrying on our tradition; or we can with "fear and trembling" (Ph 2:12) probe the identity and purpose of what it means to be named followers of Jesus in the contextual realities of today. "The obedience of faith... in honor of his name" (Rom 1:5) will be shaped in the process of some serious listening and questioning (cf. Lk 2:46) as we aim to discover our identity and purpose in relation to the oppressed today.

To be sure, there is an emergence of a global prophetic voice of the oppressed, too often muted by confessional traditions or traditional ways of doing theology or looking at the Bible, and our solidarity with oppressed sisters and brothers calls for a sensitivity engaging us in a critique of and in an authentic dialogue with our traditions. DP

The Epiphany of Our Lord January 6, 1989

Psalm 72
Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:2-12
Matthew 2:1-12

A FIRST READING

Isaiah 60:1-6. The first exiles have returned to Jerusalem, but the hoped-for return to good times has not materialized. Judah is a backwater in the Persian empire. The energies of the small population are hardly enough for economic survival. The community is not rallying to the task of rebuilding the temple and its proper worship. Is this all there is? or dare they hope for further action by God? (The analogies seem clear between this situation and many of the disappointments we feel. If Christ brought in the kingdom, why yet this evil, sickness, hatred...? We too live in an in-between time, daring to hope for Christ's second advent.)

This prophetic disciple of "Deutero-Isaiah" calls on Zion to set aside her gloom and to hope in God. Celebrate! Rejoice! He announces the soon-to-come salvation in terms of an epiphany (=glorious, salvific advent) of the Lord. He directs Zion to shine forth, reflecting the glory and light of Yahweh's epiphany, who rises over her like the sun, dispelling her darkness.

Zion's joy grows as she views a wondrous about-face. The nations, no longer her masters, come streaming with tribute in a gigantic "offertory procession" to Yahweh's altar. They bear gifts: the sons and daughters of Zion, that is, the remaining exiles. The community is reunited! They also bring wealthy, exotic imports, such as gold and frankincense.

As we celebrate the penultimate Epiphany of God in Jesus Christ, with whom will we identify, Zion or the nations? No doubt with both! We rejoice, celebrate, and shine forth as we bask in this marvelous light. No less do we join the grand offertory procession, bringing our gifts. Both this text and the message of this day are strikingly uncomplicated and direct. Our response need be no more complicated as we appropriate that message. Celebrate, reflect the light! Bring your gifts! (Some congregations may be free-spirited enough to enact an offertory procession wherein all worshippers—or those who wish to do so—literally bring their offerings to the altar.) CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you" (Is 60:1).

In the middle of the day when all is visible and clear, these words don't mean so much. But once you've known the darkness, even the slightest light is a saving grace. It's a bit like the innocent little child who crawls into the bed at night. Lying still in the darkness, covers pulled up tight and high over head, she wonders if she dare move and call out, "Someone, please turn on the night-light!"

A twinkling star served as the first "night-light" for all the world to see. Upon seeing it, the magi journeyed to the manger, worshiped the king, and then offered their best of gifts: gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Years passed before a second "night-light" was seen by many. About 33 years, one might say. And then the second night-light appeared. It was no longer resting over the infant one, but stirring within the Crucified One.

Suddenly on the third morning the light broke forth in all its glory, leaving the night behind. Now "Day-light," it floods every contrite cavern and fills every believing tomb. What began so slight has now "filled all creation with light and life."

"Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
Present in thy holy Word;
Grace to imitate thee now
And be pure, as pure art thou;
That we might become like thee
At thy great epiphany,
And may praise thee, ever blest,
God in flesh made manifest.

(*Lutheran Book of Worship*, hymn 90) SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

There is no God-given blueprint (in the Hebrew Scriptures) for the mission and ministry of the Christ. What is manifested is the principle of Jubilee and God's concern for justice and a solidarity with the oppressed. In the Epiphany season the substance of this "glory of Yahweh" (Is 60:1) is manifested in the praxis of Jesus. We are, therefore, called to probe the "depths... in the mystery of the Christ" and to discover for our own praxis "how comprehensive God's wisdom really is" (cf. Eph 3:4, 10). The quest of the Magi for "wisdom" is ultimately a search for a pastoral authenticity (Mt 2:6)—for a quality of leadership and shepherding bringing justice to the people. And while it is more celebrative than exegetical, our journey with the Magi needs to probe more prophetically the possibilities of a different way (Mt. 2:12), a different way of economic thinking and a different way of governing which reflect the universalism and inclusiveness of "the glory" of God. DP

The Baptism of Our Lord January 8, 1989

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

A FIRST READING

Isaiah 42:1-4, the first of the four "Servant Songs," presents a wonderful basis to reflect on ministry, Jesus' and ours, as we remember the inauguration of his ministry at his Baptism. The interminable—and fascinating!—arguments over just whom the prophet originally envisioned as the Servant (Israel, or some present or future individual, or something in between), we can postpone. More to the point, this is a model for service/ministry, the very model seen in our Lord's ministry.

Point for point these four verses challenge us to reflect on the form and shape of our own service and ministry. God here introduces (to the heavenly court?) this new official, the Servant of Yahweh. The Lord identifies him as "my chosen." No pejorative connotation to this title "servant"! Second, yes, but second and close to *Yahweh*, and so honored. ("Servant" is always in possessive relationship in Is 40-55: "my, his, or Yahweh's servant.") The servant's authority and power come from nothing less than "my Spirit." The task is important, to bring God's way ("justice" here bears a very broad sense) to the earth.

The manner of the Servant's service is carefully detailed. It contrasts startlingly to that of ordinary royal officials. No herald announces his coming with hue and cry. He is gentle, concerned for the weak and despairing, not with an I'm-in-charge-here, care-less use of power. Faithfulness to the task is the hallmark of his service. He does not waver or become discouraged (!?) at difficulties. He will establish God's ways to the earth's ends.

Point for point, can we find a better model for our ministry, whether lay or ordained? I am chosen by God, but of course, for service! The

task is the main point. Status aplenty indeed, but it derives from the function I fulfill. *God's* task suffers when I give priority to issues of *my* status. Did our Lord meditate on these Servant Songs and find the pattern for his own ministry therein? Or was it NT authors who first made that connection explicit? (Coincidentally, the one text the Gospels specifically report he read [Is 61:1ff, see Epiphany 3] has been called "the fifth Servant Song.") Whatever the case, here is the image of that ministry which began with his baptism. This is Jesus' glory—he followed his calling! CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Baptisms have their ups and their downs. They bring out a sense of hope and anticipation as parents, sponsors, and shy siblings gather around the font. The people in the pews shift forward and strain a bit in order to take in all the action up front.

One Sunday not so long ago, such was *almost* the scene at a 9:30 service. The pastor walked out to the center aisle and announced, "Today we join in celebrating the baptism of Christopher John Williams. The congregation is asked to turn to page 121 in the front of the hymnal, and Christopher's parents and sponsors are invited to come forward at this time." While walking the 5-7 steps it takes to get to the font, the realization began to set in that no one was stirring. At the font a quick survey of the situation was necessary... north transept... center... south transept. Hmmm... "Is Christopher here today?" Silence. "We *look forward* to celebrating the baptism of Christopher John Williams; but for now, we will sing the next hymn." It was a no-show. From anticipation to disappointment, baptisms have their ups and their downs.

With Jesus' baptism the story was just the opposite. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus just "showed up" to be baptized by John. The one about whom John proclaimed "he who is mightier than I... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" comes to the Jordan for his own baptism. And after walking down into the water and coming back up again, "the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." Anointed with the Spirit, God's Son began his public ministry. Baptisms have their ups and their downs.

Revealing "that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34), Jesus called to himself and baptized every sort and every kind: Jew, Greek, slave, free, rich, poor, young, old, male, female, clean, and unclean. Lifting up all the lowly led to his downfall. This we know about Jesus' ministry. And so, the baptism into which we are baptized is one that leads first to death and then to new life. Baptisms have their ups and their downs.

Moved by the Holy Spirit, we bend our knees and come before God with a contrite heart, believing that God will *show up* again and again, not only to wash us clean but to raise us up! We are "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor 4:10). The biggest up and down of baptism is really a down and *then* an up! SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

Luke's theology is clearly rooted in a Christ who is doing the justice of God (cf. the Great Benefactor motif of Fred Danker in the "Proclamation Commentary" on Luke). "Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil" (Acts 10:38). With respect to baptismal covenants we cannot pursue the question, "Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises?" (cf. Baptismal rite, LBW p. 123) nor can we pursue the traditional Lutheran catechetical question of "What does it mean for daily living?" without acknowledging that our solidarity with the oppressed (in Christ) draws us into the need for some serious historical and social analysis about "the power of the devil" and "the forces of evil." To be baptized into the name of the Christ, the Liberator, requires naming the oppression and, at times, the oppressor. DP

Second Sunday after the Epiphany January 15, 1989

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

A FIRST READING

Isaiah 62:1-5. This OT lesson was no doubt chosen for its mention of light (Epiphany), its wedding imagery (Gospel), and perhaps its reference to prayer (Mary's request of Jesus).

The prophet, recently returned to Jerusalem after Babylonian exile, faced a problem: how to encourage faith in his message of imminent salvation for Jerusalem? The doubters pointed to their disappointingly unhappy situation as a struggling group of exiles just returned at Cyrus' edict. Far short of the glowing picture of the new Jerusalem which Deutero-Isaiah had painted! How can you trust the words of these prophets? Is God really running this railroad?

The prophet takes up the age-old role of intercessor. He will be absolutely importunate in prayer, nagging God about God's promises. How long? He will not cease praying until that salvation comes! and with a brilliance the nations cannot miss. Then in vv. 6-7 the prophet enjoins others—perhaps these very doubting Jerusalemites—to this same incessant prayer. Faith often grows through such wrestling with God. "Putting the Lord in remembrance" (v. 6) of the promise engenders trust in that promise.

The prophet seeks to kindle faith also by describing glowingly a) the turnabout God will fashion and b) the loving intimacy of the new relationship with God. No longer will Jerusalem and Judah bear the sting of being a byword of punishment: Forsaken, Desolation. She will become a prime example of God's delight, *Hepsibah!* (A funny name? Not if you imagine a bridegroom saying, "My delight is in her!") The land will be loved by its new population, and indeed by Yahweh, with the fervor of a bridegroom. Jerusalem will be the jewel in Yahweh's crown.

This prophet's obsession in focusing on God's love and the Good News of a rescued Jerusalem is well founded. Only the gospel creates faith. Today we may use different metaphors, but the task remains the same: proclaim so that the people may take the Good News to heart. And we have the added advantage of living *Anno Domini*, when God's goodness has been writ large and indelibly in the life, death, and rising of the Epiphany Lord. CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

It's an interesting world we live in, but certain parts of it are strange, confusing, and seemingly mixed-up. Reading the story of the wedding feast at Cana and considering Paul's words regarding spiritual gifts, one might be convinced that most of us have a blurry-at-best understanding of the spirit in which we are to employ our gifts. Sometimes it is as though we don't know what to do with the many manifestations of God's goodness that come our way. Uncomfortable with doing too well and disheartened when we do poorly, we find ourselves in an ongoing struggle. We hang between humility and false humility, between confidence and arrogance. And so, in our confusion, we end up either pushing ourselves to the forefront or deprecating ourselves right out of the picture.

In all of our groping and gasping we can learn from these two stories about how to be at home with ourselves and the gifts God has given us. A professor once said, "It just wasn't Jesus' style to do miracles for miracles' sake." This idea is clearly presented in the Gospel for today. Jesus' miracle was not performed to amaze the crowds, but rather to move the people to faith in Almighty God.

Likewise, St. Paul sets up a similar pointing away from oneself in the employment of one's gifts, so that each gift might be advantageous to all. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, "varieties of gifts," "varieties of service," "varieties of working" all are given up to the glory of God, so that God's people might be led to faith!

Knowing that it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we proclaim "Jesus is Lord," we pray each day:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor and further us with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 49) SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

John, like Luke, understood celebrations. If Luke had told the story of the "first of the signs" (Jn 2:11) he might have entitled it: "Jesus brings new life to a dead party." That's what Jesus was about, according to Luke—responding to the "forsaken" and the "abandoned" (Is 62:4) with good news and liberation. However it might have challenged those who had "religion" dichotomized from the material realities of the creation, Luke is consistent with the Psalmist that God is "the fountain of life" (Ps 36:8), and that where new life in terms of justice is being celebrated, it is a sign that the Spirit of God is at work.

The Spirit is ready to bless our created gifts, to take "the particular way" (1 Cor 12:7) we've been gifted and use it as a sign of good news and liberation, a sign of new life for the oppressed. It's that reality which leads to the theology yet to be celebrated in Pentecost, "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Lk 11:9). It's what the old Epiphany prayer is about:

"Help us to see and understand the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them." DP

Third Sunday after the Epiphany
January 22, 1989

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

A FIRST READING

Isaiah 61:1-6. The soaring poetic metaphors in vv. 1-3a (even without 3b-6) challenge us, especially in days of shorter sermons. Developing just the one or two pictures most meaningful to our hearers may be a sound tactic. But just where will we locate our hearers in the text? Are they like those in need of rescue? Or do they share the task of the prophet, to bring the good news? Will it overload the sermon to preach to them first as those rescued, and then as prophet-like, even Jesus-like witnesses announcing God's rescue?

The needy people are poor/afflicted, broken-hearted, captives, bound in prison, slaves (2a), oppressed seeking redress in court (2b), mourners sitting in ashes and fainthearted. Whose heart does not resonate to at least one of these metaphors?

What a marvelous task is the prophet's—and ours! Bringing Good News, binding up, proclaiming liberation, opening prison doors, proclaiming emancipation (2a), handing down the verdict that frees from oppression (2b), comforting, playing the clothier who supplies tiara, perfume and cocktail gown. Too great a task for us? Of course, but the same "Spirit" upon Jesus is upon us!

2a and b provide the richest metaphors. The "year of the Lord's favor" is the Jubilee year (Lev 25), with its return to the "good old days" through release of those sold into debt-slavery and renewed economic stability by return to the family farm. 2b, "the day of vindication/vengeance *by* our God" (subjective genitive) depicts a judge delivering the verdict which brings vengeance to the oppressor, but whose real purpose is the

vindication of the oppressed! (Heb. *nagam* includes both aspects.)

This text relates handily to the previous two OT lessons. It shows the prophet comforting his twice-disappointed hearers (our hearers = Jerusalem) as on Epiphany II. It also invites our reflection on the nature of the *specific* task to which God has called each of us (our hearers = the prophet), after Epiphany I/Baptism of Jesus, when we considered our calling generally as service.

What preacher can do justice even to these few verses, 1-3a? V. 4 promises rebuilding of a Judah devastated by the Assyrians/Babylonians as never before in its previous 1,500-year history. Vv. 5-6 show the nations bringing so many sacrifices to the temple that all Judah will have to be pressed into service as priests. Foreigners will take over their daily agricultural tasks, while Judeans enjoy the priestly portions of the nation's offerings. CG, Jr.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

One might wonder what it must have been like to sit and listen to Jesus teaching in the temple. Wondering too long might even make a person wish she/he hadn't missed it. Luke reports that "the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him." It seems to be one of those sure and certain moments recorded in scripture in which everything appears to be clear. "Today! ...fulfilled!" rings forth a loud "I am the One!"

It's a lot like when Jesus, hanging on the cross, said to the thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise." "Today! ...with me!" These words ring forth a loud "Together we die and live again!"

Because it seems that certainty and clarity are hard to come by in this business of believing, one hates to miss these few telling moments.

Not to worry. St. Paul won't let us.

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." With an emphasis on the "now you are" we know that we have been given our own "today." In our faithful state we are to be the body of the living Christ, boldly proclaiming to this time and to this place Christ's "I am the One"—'Together we die and live again!" Now, because we are those anointed by the Spirit, we are certain that our Lord will continue to guide us, sustain us, and teach us just as he did the faithful in the temple long ago.

We are certain that God in Christ is continuing to fulfill his purposes in and through us. so much so that we too begin to show forth the glory of God as we "bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive."

One needn't wonder any longer. We haven't missed a thing. SN

PROPHETIC VOICE

Luke lifts up the spirit of Jesus' theology, the spirituality of Jubilee (cf. Lev 25), Yahweh's "year of favor" (Lk 4:19), the spirituality of reversing injustices, of liberation for the oppressed, along with a sense of a transcending, universally inclusive Jubilee community (Ps. 113:4-6).

The church, in its conceptual and confessional kinds of theologies and in the way it functions and operates, has too often followed an *other* spirit.* The "reformations" and the proliferation of denominations might have its positive side, if it represented—and if the various church bodies recognized—a diversity of gifts of the Spirit. But there seems to be a connection between the competitiveness of nationalism (and some church/state relations) and denomi-nationalism. The essential contradiction is not a competitiveness per se, but an abdication of the mission advocated by the Spirit of liberation for the oppressed. The transcending concern for justice remains paramount, for both Church and State. DP

**The Kairos Document, a challenge to the churches of South Africa, which examines both state and church "theologies," is an extremely important contemporary contextual contribution to this concern.*

Gayflor Goes to the Seminary

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

Gayflor B. Zaza, a young Liberian African, has heard the call of God to be an ordained pastor in the Lutheran Church of Liberia. He was baptized in St. John's Lutheran Church, Zorzor, in the building paid for and constructed by the Board of Foreign Missions of the ULCA in 1952.

In his second year of training at Gbarnga School of Theology, about eighty miles up the "coal tar" road into the interior, Gayflor is one of fifty Methodist, Lutheran, and Episcopal students preparing for ordained ministry in West Africa.

The faculty who will teach this young high school graduate represent the three supporting denominations. Two missionaries (from Sweden and Denmark) are Lutherans. Nationals, some trained abroad (one at Southern Methodist University in Dallas) represent the Methodists. There is a part-time local Episcopal parish priest. The curriculum sounds like any other church seminary: theology, homiletics, evangelism, stewardship, Christian education, Bible study, church history, and such different course offerings as health care and English language.

If Gayflor were married, his wife would attend the "home arts" classes provided by this ecumenical seminary. She would learn cooking, sewing, health, child care, English, Bible study, and entertaining, which pastors' wives are often expected to do in the African context.

It's a desperate financial struggle for our future Lutheran pastor. Because neither his mother nor father is Christian, there is no support from home. St. John's, Zorzor, is several months behind in paying their pastor's salary, so it cannot help either. Gayflor has consigned one-half of his food allowance to the seminary for tuition so that he might stay in school this semester.

Our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, through the benevolence we provide, helps support this school. Its goal is to provide well-trained indigenous pastors for the mainline churches of Liberia. The national church makes up the difference in the $1,800 per year it costs for each of the twelve Lutheran students and the $500 which they must contribute toward their education over the three-year period. A rotten economy makes it nearly impossible for any help from local churches.

Taking his theological training in his second language (English) rather than his tribal Loma means long hours of study for

young Zaza and no time to work for extra income. Jobs in the nearby village are non-existent anyway.

Gayflor's eager black face in the classes I taught and attended at Gbarnga School of Theology gives hope and promise for the future of this struggling national church to become independent and to move toward interdependence in the years ahead. After another year of study and enough rice to survive, he'll be an intern for a year and then be ordained into the Lutheran Church in Liberia.

One day soon it will be the Reverend Gayflor Zaza, indigenous Lutheran pastor, preaching and caring for his people back near his home village where God called him for this special task in the church called ordained ministry.

You and I will have had a part.

Note: Dr. Schmalenberger recently spent three months in Liberia, West Africa, at the invitation of the Lutheran Church in Liberia and Gbarnga School of Theology where he delivered the Roland Payne Lectures.

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