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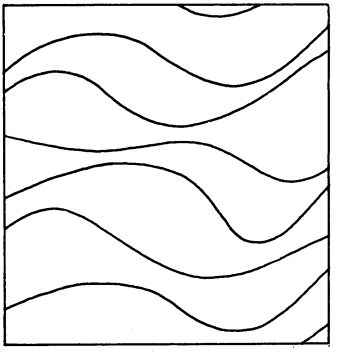
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Here I Stand!

With these resolute words Martin Luther supposedly summed up his testimony at Worms. One of his vacillating heirs in the twentieth century reportedly added, as he moved to the radical right, "But I can also stand *here.*" Where we stand determines who we are and what we see and experience. The authors in this issue are guides to new perspectives as they beckon us to come here—and then over here—to see our calling in wholly new ways.

Gail R. O'Day recognizes that we face twin temptations: autonomy and stoicism, trust in ourselves and resignation to our fate. Life in Jesus calls us to yield our lives, in groaning, to God, just as the Gerasene demoniac and the woman with a hemorrhage did in New Testament times. To entrust one's life to Jesus is to accept the risky possibilities offered by God. We yield to one who offers health and wholeness through his brokenness. God embraces our pain through the cross and through that embrace offers us hope.

A brochure in the mail recently announced a "Benevolence Hotline" that would help churches combat "benevolence abuse." This service requires less than two minutes to determine if an individual has a record of having received benevolence from a neighboring church in the past. **Stephen Paul Bouman** acknowledges that there may come a time when the church must say no to a handout, but that its first response to strangers is always to offer aid, not to check them out on a computer list. The knocks on our doors prevent us from practicing a disincarnate theology. The church can link people to resources for help in the community and to the power of God, to the networks that provide relief and to the sustaining community of Jesus. When the church organizes for power in the community it tries to be present in a concrete way for people in need for whom Christ died.

Robert J. Grosch provides a lively metaphor to show how people bring problems from their family of origin into the new family of marriage. We recreate in our marriages the dysfunctional aspects of the families in which we were born. The author shares how his own upbringing as a middle child often made him feel left out, and how these old resentments come back when duties today keep him away from the fun the rest of the family is having. Even one's spiritual life

can be distorted by the "roars of the dragon from our childhood family." People who recognize the source of their conflict can learn to control it and to use the energy that comes from such control to empower their life for useful service.

The larger reality that stands behind the weird imagery of apocalyptic is the good news of God's certain victory over every tyranny. **Ben Asen** affirms that a book like Daniel is not only for those who were oppressed, but for all those who are oppressed today. The world and the human community are worth protecting at all costs because they are destined by God for full redemption from their present bondage to sin and decay. The world need not, and dare not, end with nuclear destruction, overpopulation, or famine. To stand with Daniel is to confess the divine justice that humbles the proud and uplifts the lowly.

To the degree that we *hate* nuclear weapons we have already let ourselves be nuked. With these startling words **Vernon J. Jahnke** calls our attention to a "playful perspective," that has more to do with responsibility than lightheartedness. Love of the enemy is such a playful perspective; it responds to and anticipates the kingdom of God. The article calls attention to alternate viewpoints about the enemy in world religions, and it points out the alternate ethical options that result from these viewpoints. Since "God works under the sign of the opposite" (Luther), we should not be surprised that God can operate through Eastern religions or through our enemies.

Roger W. Uitti proposes that we need a seven year lectionary. This would permit serial or continuous readings of the Bible and far greater exposure to the Old Testament, which is roughly three times longer than the New Testament. While the proposal is more heuristic than realistic, it offers some intriguing possibilities. Every seventh year would be climactic with readings from John, Daniel, Revelation, and the Song of Songs! Every 49th or 50th year—a once in a lifetime experience!—would be a kind of Jubilee.

Have this mind among yourselves, the apostle urged, as he pointed to the self-emptying Christ. There—in and through him—it is possible to stand with the same mind, the same love, in full accord, counting others better than ourselves.

Dare we stand anywhere else?

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Hope Beyond Brokenness: A Markan Reflection on the Gift of Life

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In Romans 8:22–23 Paul writes, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we

wait for adoption as God's children, the redemption of our bodies." What was true for Paul remains true for us: we live in a broken world, waiting for healing. Yet we spend much of our time trying to convince ourselves that that is not the case, that life is fine, that we have things "together." Even when things are not "together," when the brokenness of our lives and our world becomes visible, we tend toward two responses. We reckon either that our present condition is a momentary lapse, which can and will be rectified by our own efforts, or that this is as good as life will be and we cannot hope for anything better. We say either, "I can change it," or "it cannot be changed."

The first response, "I can change it," is a response of *control.* We pride ourselves—as individuals and as a culture—on being in control. We will not groan and acknowledge the need for healing, because to groan would be to admit weakness, to validate pain, to abdicate control. The attempt to control results in forms of *autonomy.* We will not acknowledge our dependence on anyone or anything.

The second response, "it cannot be changed," is a response of *fate.* We will not groan and acknowledge the need for healing, because to groan could not possibly make any difference anyway. This response results in forms of *stoicism.* We must endure that which we have been dealt. It is not incidental that "Grin and bear it" is one of our most popular cultural adages.

While these two responses to the brokenness of our lives may breed integrity and strength of character, they stand diametrically opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's words in Romans 8 are a faithful embodiment of that gospel. Jesus knew—and lived out of the knowledge—that God's kingdom would not come to fulfillment as long as the individuals who live in that realm are broken and unredeemed. In the Gospel of Mark, therefore, Jesus engages in two concurrent activities: he preaches the coming of the Kingdom and he heals the sick and the broken. Over and over again in the Gospel of Mark people who can no longer "grin and bear it" come to Jesus—the blind, the deaf, the epileptic, the leper, the possessed, the outcast, the dying. All come to Jesus and "groan together." Jesus heeds their groans and offers life in the midst of death. These people have no claim on Jesus, save through their brokenness. Their brokenness makes them vulnerable, but they do not run from their vulnerability. Instead they allow their groans of pain and despair to be heard by Jesus, and in their groaning open up their lives to God's healing presence.

Not everyone in the Gospel of Mark welcomes Jesus' offer of life and healing. The Pharisees plot to destroy Jesus (3:6). The rich man will not sell his possessions (10:17–22). Jesus' neighbors think he is out of his mind (3:21). Even Peter denies Jesus rather than implicate himself and destroy the orderliness of his life (14:66–72). The people who do not stand with Jesus are those who long to control life or those who see no recourse but to "grin and bear" life. They will not open their lives to Jesus, and so remain enmeshed in the death-dealing ways of control and fate.

By maintaining either "I can change it" or "it cannot be changed," we, too, close ourselves off from the amazing possibilities of life offered to us through the God we have come to know in Jesus. We have constructed systems of survival and coping through which

we are able to manage and which enable us to get from one day to the next. The cost of such coping, however, is that we close off the pain, attempt to hide from despair, and try to convince ourselves either that we do not need Jesus with his offer of health and a new way of life, or that the hope of the gospel is for someone else, not me. In hiding from pain and despair, we also hide from God.

In hiding from pain and despair, we also hide from God.

If we groan, however, if we bring to speech our pain, brokenness, and need, then it will be impossible to continue to hide behind the facade of management and coping. In groaning, we are forced to confront the places of brokenness in our lives and in our world. In groaning, we acknowledge that there is a sovereign one who is there to receive our pain and tend our wounds. In groaning, we yield to this sovereign care.

We are called to yield our lives, in groaning, to God as known to us in Jesus. In the Gospel of Mark, the healing stories vividly portray the transformation and newness that is possible through this yielding. These healing stories offer contemporary Christians a way out of the stoicism and autonomy which in reality rob our lives of the only source of hope.

I.

To explore this alternative to fate and control, I will focus on two healing stories in Mark—Mark 5:1–20 and 5:21–43. Each of these stories embodies the yielding to Jesus that provides a way out of brokenness. Each is an example of "groaning in travail," and as that groaning metaphor itself suggests, out of such groaning new life emerges.

Mark 5:1–20 is the story of the Gerasene demoniac. The opening verses of this story, in which the man's condition is described, establish the pathos and pain of his life. This man, possessed by an unclean spirit, has been forced out of his society, abandoned to live among the tombs. But there is no life in a burial ground, only death. This man, who still lives and breathes, has in effect been buried alive by his community. He has been given up for dead and denied his right to life. There could be no more poignant metaphor for hopelessness than to be forced to live out one's days among the tombs.

The man has been abandoned to death because his society has used up all its resources in trying to control him. This man is forced to sojourn among the dead because the chains and fetters in which his brothers and sisters bound him could no longer contain him (vv. 3 and 4). The man's suffering evokes acts of imprisonment, not acts of compassion. The chains and fetters are a way to silence the groaning, to bring the man into line, to deny his torment. But chains and fetters, no matter how much cultural and societal consensus they bring with them, are no match for the groaning of creation. The man breaks his chains and fetters, and "no one had the strength to subdue him" (v. 5).

Banishment does not end pain, however; it merely shifts its locus. The man's groaning persists. His suffering is unabated. Night and day he is always crying out, and more than that, he now tries to punish himself. In contemporary jargon we would say the man has "suicidal tendencies." One might legitimately ask, why shouldn't he? He has been told by those around him that he is not fit to be in human company, that he is as good as dead. If he is already in essence a dead man, why continue the charade of life? His self punishment is a way of saying, "it cannot be changed." No one will listen to his groaning, no one will validate his pain. He is left only his rage and his despair, "sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Jesus comes into this scene of death. The man with the unclean spirit, who to this point in the story has been a study in hopeless despair, runs to Jesus and worships him. Everything—his pain, his ostracism, his demonic possession, his groaning—is handed over to Jesus. When the man relinquishes his groaning to Jesus, the move from death to life becomes possible. His colleagues could not bring life through their chains and fetters. The demoniac could not bring health by bruising himself with stones. Only Jesus can bring life and health by distinguishing the demons from the man.

In yielding his life and his pain to Jesus, the demoniac acknowledges his dependence on God's grace and his place in God's creation. Jesus receives this act of yielding gladly. Jesus knows that rage and despair are neither to be silenced nor controlled, but are to be heard and exorcised along with the demons. Rage and despair are to be met with mercy (v. 19), not with chains and fetters and silencing acts of social control. One can "live" with rage and despair, among the tombs, bruising oneself with stones, or one can run to Jesus and find one's right mind (v. 15). One can remain among the tombs or one can go home (v. 19).

II.

The story of the Gerasene demoniac is followed immediately in the Gospel of Mark by another healing story, a double healing story in fact (5:21–43). When Jesus leaves Gerasene, he returns by boat to Galilee. No sooner has he disembarked, than Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, approaches him, begging assistance because his young daughter is dying. Jesus accompanies Jairus, but before he can proceed very far, their journey is interrupted. It is this interruption to which we shall attend.

In the crowd surrounding Jesus as he proceeds to Jairus' daughter, there is a very ill woman. She has been hemorrhaging for twelve years. As with the account of the Gerasene demoniac, the story goes into great detail about the woman's plight. The Bible is not afraid to bring us face to face with concrete pain. Not only has the woman suffered from the disease itself, but she has also suffered under the "care" of the physicians to whom she has turned for help. Her money has poured forth from her just as her blood has, yet for all that she has spent, she is worse, not better (v. 26). The woman tried everything that her society told her would produce healing, but she still bled. She tried everything, believing "I can change it."

This woman, debilitated and destitute, worn to the brink of despair by the wound to her body that would not heal, moves along in the crowd behind Jesus. She has heard

reports about Jesus, and those reports have given her hope for new life. In a bold move, born out of a desperate refusal to accept the fatedness of her condition, she reaches out and touches Jesus' garments. When she touches Jesus, "immediately the hemorrhage ceased," and the woman knew that her nightmare was over. She had touched Jesus—and she was made well.

> The Bible is not afraid to bring us face to face with concrete pain.

The healer, however, is not immune to the act of healing. Jesus senses that he has been touched and that "power" has gone out of him. Jesus searches for the person who touched him, despite the size of the crowd and his disciples' insistence on the futility of the search (v. 31). In perhaps the most surprising turn of the story, the woman responds to Jesus' searching and presents herself to him. She had received what she sought, the cessation of her hemorrhage, and she could very easily have disappeared back into the crowd, her body and her anonymity intact. Instead, like the Gerasene demoniac before her, she submits herself publicly to Jesus.

This meeting between Jesus and the woman demonstrates the yielding that leads to life. Mark tells us that the woman came to Jesus "in fear and trembling." Why, after the healing, is the woman still afraid? She is frightened because now she is called to accountability for her healing and her life. She must acknowledge her dependence on the healer. Her touch of Jesus' garments had been furtive, and perhaps she had hoped it would go undetected. Perhaps she had hoped for cost-free healing. To look healing—and the healer—in the face is frightening because to do so is also to confess what is preventing life. Yet the woman, in the face of this fear and trembling, offers herself to Jesus. Her twelve years of disease and despair have taught her what the alternative to life and health is. She knows the cost of living death; she will therefore risk the cost of healing.

The cost of the woman's health is this: she tells Jesus "the whole truth" (v. 33). The phrase "the whole truth" seems a bit out of place in a healing story. What does the whole truth have to do with a twelve year flow of blood? One would expect the woman to say to Jesus, "I am the one who touched you," or "I am the one for whom you seek," but the woman does not hide behind such partial truths. By telling Jesus the whole truth, she yields her whole self to Jesus and holds nothing back. Only in the stark honesty of such whole truth is healing possible. The woman renounces self-control and subterfuge and entrusts herself to Jesus.

As the story of Jesus and this woman reaches its conclusion, we discover that *this yielding* is the source of full healing, not the furtive touch. The woman's faith—in Jesus, in the possibility of transformative healing, in the power of life over death—has made her well. In response to her faith, Jesus sends her away in peace to a life of health. Not only has

the bleeding stopped, but all the torment and suffering that accompanied that draining wound are healed as well.

Jesus has not even finished speaking with this woman when he is recalled to the original object of his journey, Jairus' daughter. His announcement of fullness of life to the woman is now set in the context of the death of this young girl. The human reaction to the announcement of death is to turn away in resignation ("Why trouble the Teacher any more?" v. 35), but Jesus will neither listen to nor abide by such voices of resignation and defeat. Instead he issues a challenge of promise and hope to Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe." These words provide a commentary on the preceding healing of the woman and on our contemporary recalcitrance. Do not fear what? Do not fear the possibility of life and healing. Believe what? Believe that, overcoming fear, *you will be healed.* Believe that there is someone to whom you can entrust your life, who will bring you to health and wholeness. Jairus is asked to do what the woman has already done—to yield and trust. Life does come out of the midst of death, if we renounce our fears and believe.

> Only in the stark honesty of whole truth is healing possible.

III.

The situation of the hemorrhaging woman is in many ways the obverse of that of the Gerasene demoniac. The society of the demoniac attempted to "heal" him by controlling him with chains and fetters, but such efforts at control failed. The woman, by contrast, sought on her own the "healing" of society. Through her unending trips to physicians, she sought to place herself in society's control, but again, such efforts at control and compliance failed to bring health. These two stories place hard questions before us. Will we attempt to manage and control our pain and groaning, living lives of fear, self-preservation, and lack of trust? Or will we allow the groans of creation-in-travail to be expressed fully and freely and lead us in faith from despair to hope?

The Gerasene demoniac and the woman found the way to life, "the redemption of their bodies," only when they allowed their groans to override the voices of fear, resignation, and despair. The two of them could no longer be seduced by control, although they had spent most of their lives adhering to that "solution," because the honest depth of their pain moved beyond the reasonableness advocated by their peers. Instead they gave in to their experience of pain and groaned through travail into new life.

We may be tempted to protest, "But it was easy for those two people to groan. They had no other alternative because they had bottomed out." There is some truth in that protest, but there is also this wonderment: do we have to wait until we have bottomed out before we can trust and believe and be healed? Do we have so little faith in God's hopes for us—and so much "faith" in our

own plans for us—that we cannot trust God to lead the way until there is no way left? Must we continually refuse to validate pain until we have neither strength nor will left even to groan?

If the answer to those questions is "Yes," then the prospects for human life are frightening. We need only read the morning paper, and note the despair of mothers in Chile, Central America, and South Africa, to sense the death that we bring to God's creation when we attempt to control and legislate the cries for redemption. We need only look around our own circles of neighbors, family, and friends to note the moral exhaustion that comes from grinning and bearing—and silencing—the pain and brokenness of our lives. By silencing our private and public groans, by refusing to yield "in fear and trembling," we also silence God's hopes for the world.

One of the most poignant examples of the deathly impact of silencing and controlling the groans of creation can be found in the character of Benjy in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy's life and treatment by his family and peers is not far removed from that of the Gerasene demoniac. Benjy is sentenced to a life of home imprisonment, because "no one had the strength to subdue him." One of the few public places where Benjy is allowed is the graveyard which contains the memories of those he loved. Benjy knows no words, he cannot coherently articulate his pain. All that is left to him is to groan, and when he groans, one hears the painful echoes of Romans 8:

> Then Ben wailed again, hopeless and prolonged. It was nothing. Just sound. It might have been all time and injustice and sorrow become vocal for one instant by a conjunction of the planets (vintage edition, p. 359).

Benjy's bellows are "the grave hopeless sound of all voiceless misery under the sun." Benjy groans the groans of creation-in-labor, but the world of order, control, and stoicism does not listen. The last image of *The Sound and the Fury* is that of Benjy's brother, Jason, beating Benjy into silent submission.

We must return to the Gospel of Mark in order to find a way out of this pain and despair into life. In Mark 9:14–29 we have the story of a boy not unlike Faulkner's Benjy. The boy is deaf and dumb and tormented by epileptic seizures. Jesus' disciples have tried their hand with this boy, but have been unable to provide any relief. The boy's father, desperate and frightened, comes to Jesus himself to ask for help (9:22). Jesus' response to the father in v. 23 is the key to moving from despair to hope, "All things are possible to those who believe." The way to healing in this encounter is the same as it was with the woman ("Your faith has made you well"), the same as it was with Jairus ("Do not fear, only believe"). To the one who trusts, to the one who will yield control, to the one who will imagine another way of life, all things are possible.

How does the father respond? "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!' " (v. 24). The father's response is a crucial paradigm of yielding. He acknowledges his faith ("I believe"), but he also acknowledges his human frailty and the difficulty of that faith ("help my unbelief"). The hemorrhaging woman came to Jesus in fear and trembling because she knew the courage required to

"tell the whole truth" in honesty and vulnerability. The boy's father comes to Jesus with a petition for help, because he, too, knows the courage that is required to yield control of one's life in faith. There is no choice but to find the courage, however, because without that yielding there is only death. Without the courage to believe there are only the endless groans, rattling in a vacuum with no hope of redemption.

In offering our pain to God, we affirm the reality of the cross.

The father in Mark 9 admitted what most of us will not admit—that we are afraid, that we are terrified we will lose our known world if we yield to God, that we are frightened by the fullness of faith. The father's words, like the acts of faith of the Gerasene demoniac and the woman, provide the only way out of the situations of brokenness in which we find ourselves today. We cannot heal ourselves, no matter how competent, talented, and in charge we think we are.

The healing stories from Mark 5 and 9 are acute examples of the world's suffering and pain. Yet in each of them, we see that turning to Jesus in vulnerability, honesty, and in stark confession of desperate need opens the way to new life. To trust one's life to Jesus is to trust oneself to the risky possibilities offered by God. In groaning travail, we entrust both personal pain and public pain to Jesus. In offering our pain to God rather than denying it before God, we affirm the reality of the cross. In the cross God demonstrated decisively that pain, suffering, and weakness matter to God and will be transformed, because they have already been transformed. Through the cross of Christ, pain and suffering have been denied their power to victimize. There is a whole new way of ordering the world. The cross gives us a new language to speak. Our slogans can no longer be "I can change it" or "it cannot be changed," but "I believe; help my unbelief."

Healing only comes through yielding, through admitting our pain, brokenness, and dependence to the one who offers health and wholeness through his own brokenness. It is not surprising that we face the Healer with fear, trembling, and resistance. The risk of being vulnerable enough to be embraced by the one who invites us to groan is great. We are empowered by the Gospel, however, to move through these fears and enter new life, because the cross shows us that God has already embraced our pain and through that embrace offers us hope.

The Kindness of Strangers

Stephen Paul Bouman
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Down and Out

For the first time in twelve years I said "no" to someone asking for help of some kind from the church. Of course I was ridden with scruples about turning away Jesus. Never mind that Jesus this time was taking the form of a woman wanted in several North Jersey towns and cities for fraud and larceny; never mind that she was already into me for more than one hundred dollars over the past several months; never mind that one Debbie Goldman (a.k.a. any moniker you choose) had made the rounds of North Jersey's finer—and not so finer—churches. I finally told somebody no. Even given the fact that the request I refused came via collect call from



Bergen County jail and asked me to deposit funds into her prison account, a vocational crisis was clearly just around the bend. I was trying to put as much distance as possible between me and that "no." But like Jonah of old, my "no" caught up with me, the big fish taking the form of a member let out of jail with no place to go, and then a widow (age 26) and her daughter (age 3) out of luck and out in the cold. For over two weeks I have been living on the merry-go-round with these children of God, and the need for theological reflection on my "yeses" and "noes" has taken on concrete urgency. Because I take my ministry, the poor, and Jesus with utmost seriousness, what follows is some of my wrestling with the issue of the stranger at the door with his or her hand out.

Strangers at the Door

Each of the communities to which the Holy Spirit has called me in ministry has been in the midst of human need. That is true wherever there are churches and people. A kaleidoscope of characters stands in front of the doors of my life. . . .

In the church of my vicarage in the Fan District of Richmond, Virginia (the underside of this neighborhood was a combination of skid-row and the ragged edge of the Age of Aquarius), the parade to the door included:

—A bummed out sax player who once played with Les Brown's Band of Renown, now living in the street;

—Drifters with every story in the book—"Hey, Rev, my ma just died in Lynchburg and I need carfare to get to the funeral," "Gosh, Mel, that's the sixth time she died this month. . . ."

—Spaced-out hippies like Fred, who got beat up every time he was thrown out of another room onto the streets.

In a Queens, New York City neighborhood, with the poor, working class, immigrants, and undocumented aliens all on each other's laps the bell kept ringing:

—An undocumented Jamaican woman with two children seeking not only food, but also someone to marry her long enough to establish legal residence;

—A Haitian woman who led me to a fourth floor walkup where I put several bags of groceries down on the middle of a bare floor with absolutely no furniture and seven small children;

—A small enclave of Russian immigrants (presumably legal), the adults riddled with illness and bad luck, living three families to an apartment a block from the church;

> These knocks at the door have prevented me from practicing disincarnate theology.

—A family burned out by a fire, with several children, one with sickle cell anemia; their call came on Christmas Eve, the first I spent apart from my family. After several

weeks of being supported by our parish—trips to the hospital, medicine, rent at a local motel, food, Christmas gifts—they simply-vanished, leaving behind them many debts for us to settle, and a parish which had learned how to mobilize itself to care for a neighbor;

—the eccentrics came, too: one young lady carrying all her things in three shopping bags stopped by for food, came back for counseling, and ended up mailing me some of *Hustler* magazine's more interesting photographs, always in the name of some other area pastor. She was addicted to pastors' offices, and sent a few pictures to other pastors in my name;

—A Korean immigrant and her daughter, abandoned by her husband; both received Christian baptism on Easter Sunday a year after the first knock at the door.

In New Jersey, just across the Hudson, the pounding has not ceased.

—Many people are now out of work in this old smoke-stack town surrounded by an area going high-tech;

—The housing crisis in northern Jersey has led five homeless people in the past two weeks to ring our doorbell—one elderly, one just out of jail, one just out of a de-tox center, and the aforementioned mother and child;

—A Marielito (a Cuban refugee from the recent Mariel boatlift) comes again and again. He is somewhat retarded but a proud, good soul who goes from odd job to handout to odd job to. . . .

There have been so many others. I cannot get near this issue without getting particular about turf and human beings. These knocks at the door have prevented me from practicing disincarnate theology. And sometimes I feel that these interruptions, these needs, these wayward lives, these characters, these children of God are the only reason I will not, when I "shuffle off this mortal coil," go to my Good Shepherd empty handed.

Toward Eucharistic Hospitality

When you do this often enough you begin to think maybe some kind of strategy would be helpful. Herewith are a few tactics I use, in about as random an order as the comings and goings of the strangers at my door.

Well, first open the door. Always open it. Maybe of all the charisms of ministry the one with which we wrestle most is the gift of being available in the Name of Jesus.

Invite the person in. Offer coffee, a chair, whatever. You are the person who stands before the family each week grasping a ciborium full of bread and inviting all to the Family Meal. See this as a continuation of the Meal, as Eucharistic Hospitality.

Ask and listen. Everybody has a story—some of it made-up, some of it true. All of it matters to the One in whose Name you opened the door. Invite the stranger to tell her story or sing for you her blues. There is dignity and an opening for ministry in the hospitality which invites a person to be known, perhaps a small breaking of the downward spiral of a human life. It can also be risky. If the person scares you, don't hole up in your office with him. Go together to a diner or sit on the front step of the church. In fact I have come to prefer a public place with which to chat with my neighbor-in-need. Good for the church's image. It's about time the world accused us with the charge, "This person drinks coffee with sinners!"

Respond. The first time someone comes I always give some form of aid—no matter how repugnant the person, how outrageous the spiel. My initial goal is to establish some kind of basis for ministry, some semblance of accountability with the stranger. If at all possible I try to find out where the person is staying and offer to deliver some form of aid to them. Inside a person's house or room more possibilities emerge: verification of the need, more insight, a second encounter in which trust may begin to emerge (after all, you have just shown up with the groceries as promised).

Many people who come, of course, don't want to know you, have already done their level best to erase their own story from memory, have dealt in make-believe so long it begins to be true for them. All they want from you is the price of the next meal, bottle, fix, bus ticket, utility bill, rent, you name it. Fine. Once I help.

Remember who you are. As a Christian pastor I am not a free agent or lone do-gooder. I am not primarily called to make my neighborhood a little better. I am called to build up, through Word and Sacraments, an eschatological community of Jesus in my corner of the world. I am a public leader of such a community and one who proclaims the gospel of peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, and eternal life. I believe in the power of this gospel and its embodiment in Christian community to turn around any and all wayward situations in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Invite people to move to the root of the problem. Do you want to change your life? (or, do you want long-term help to cope with your situation?) If you do, come back and we will keep on helping you as we take steps together to change things. Here is where the community gets a piece of the action and the many contacts of pastor and parish come into play: local and state agencies, members and neighbors with jobs or rooms to offer, shelters, AA, lawyers who do *pro bono* work for the poor, social workers, counselors, those good souls in the parish and neighborhood who keep pressing fives and tens into your hand "for someone who needs it" (and they expect you, pastor, to know who these people are), food pantries, family court, whatever it takes to truncate a downward spiral. You are the connection to sources of help, and through the community of Word and sacraments and prayer and encouragement of the gospel you are the link to the power of God to say, "Rise, take up your own bed and walk."

Invite people to move to the root of the problem.

Invite again. I must always make a clear, loving invitation to be a part of our congregation, to worship, to receive the one square meal a week which is Life itself. For too long we have separated the love and charity of our Christian witness (counseling centers, Lutheran Social Services, shelters, etc.) from its genesis in communities of Word and sacraments. People do come, when invited. Or allow you to keep coming to them with bread and wine and food and the comfort of the

gospel. And as long as they come, or stay in contact, we will carry them as they struggle toward dignity and freedom from their crushing needs.

It is mystifying to me that the churches can speak volumes about "getting the church into the world" and then fail to at least invite the frail and fragile of the world into their midst. I am a minister, on behalf of the entire community of faith, of baptism and Eucharist. In the rendering of our charity we dare not neglect the offer of baptism and Eucharist as we exchange our stories and our invitations.

Along the way we come to know our limitations. One parish or pastor cannot save everybody or respond to every human need. I have seen some try, and have seen them neglect or lose their parishes of Word and sacraments in order to keep open a shelter or soup kitchen. This is what my church and I can and will do.

—Help the first time. No one gets turned away initially.

—Two invitations: one into networks that provide long term relief or change; one into the sustaining community of Jesus.

If people do not wish to take you up on your invitations, then make it clear that no more can be done for them. (By the time I finally said "no" to the woman at the beginning of this piece, I had already been a part of her pathology for much too long.) I try to make every instance of help, especially monetary, in the form of a loan, payable "when you get on your feet so we can help someone else." There is a bit of hope in this future orientation and the dignity of sidestepping the power equation of beggar and provider. Some make a point of paying you back, a sign of health and providence not unlike the injunction in Jesus' time to "show yourself to the priest in the temple" as a sign of a return to wholeness.

Finally, make a promise. I write down the name of every stranger at the door (whatever name they give you). I keep a list. I promise, and I do, pray for these people. "I will pray for you, my friend. *Vaya con Dios.* Go with God." Some of them you are happy to see go. Some you will cry about. Your prayer becomes ministry to yourself also. There is comfort in putting these strangers (and always, yourself) into the hands of the One who promised through the Psalmist that even if the journey reaches the depths of Sheol, the Lord is already there, answering the door.

The Blanche DuBois Factor

When you have seen enough of a certain type of need at the door, then the next logical step is to begin developing a political analysis of the means to stop the creation of victims. This is called grass-roots community organizing and was the subject of my article in the October, 1985 issue of *Currents* entitled "Your Feet, Your Coat, Your Shoes." Here in New Jersey we recently won a fight with the gas and electric people who wanted to raise their rates twenty-four per cent. We uncovered the fact that the proposed hike was to cover the costs of a cost overrun on a nuclear plant which is still not in operation. By organizing the people power of the working class and poor church people in our multiracial organization in northern New Jersey, we were able not only to prevent a rate hike of unprecedented proportions, but even to win a reduction in rates of five per cent. I would like to believe that we were able to

keep some people off the streets by such Christian social action.

Yet the knocks of the stranger at the door are important for activists like your author. We organize for power not to gain heady pleasure by nailing a cynical politician or a greedy utility to the wall, but to be present to people in need for whom Christ died.

> The church is to incarnate communities of Jesus in the world.

As we make a study of ministry for six years in the life of the new ELCA, wouldn't we be wise to remember the ministry of deacons and deaconesses when the doorbell rings? What a gift it would be to the new church to move into the center of its one ordered ministry a diaconate with an obsession for the poor.

Pastors and people ought to have sustained presence with the poor. I believe that it is a holy art to uncover the poor in the midst of communities. Regular, disciplined walks through a parish neighborhood ought to be on every pastor's agenda. A pastor friend of mine volunteers one day each month doing intake at a local shelter. Our members collect and deliver food and money and volunteer their time at local pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters.

The way of the world is to be wary, not to allow anyone to take advantage, to outwit the con. And when the church hardens its heart it may indeed be the sensible thing to do. Except that the church is to incarnate communities of Jesus in the midst of the world, vulnerable alternatives to the wisdom of this often harsh and troubled world. Let the church be conned, foolish, open to those whose lives are being torn apart.

I have learned to thank God for the strangers, the eccentrics, those who slip into the church quietly and wait in the back pew for the liturgy to end so they can tell their story and make their pitch to the pastor; those who sit in the front pew and mutter or cry out during the liturgy; the bum, the weirdo, the yeses and noes. In the end, I think Luther got it right. We are all beggars looking for food. Until the kingdom comes.

But let's give Blanche DuBois the last word: "I've always depended on the kindness of strangers."

The Use of Metaphor in Marital Counseling

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Once upon a time there was a little boy named Jack. Jack grew up in a much-respected middle-class family where everything seemed to be the way it should be. His family lived in a large house in the suburbs, and all the members of Jack's family got along well with each other. Jack's dad was advancing in his company, the children did well in school, and the family rarely missed church. Everyone in the community said to themselves, "My, but Jack has a nice family! Everyone should be lucky enough to have a family like Jack's family."

Jack knew that his family wasn't perfect. In fact, every once in a while Jack became *very* uncomfortable in his family life. At these times Jack would hear a roaring in his head, experience a tightness in his neck and shoulders and a queasy feeling in his stomach. He didn't know exactly what this was about, but he did know that these signs showed that there was something seriously wrong in his family.

Around the age of eight or ten, whenever Jack heard the roaring in his head he would look around the house to see what it was, but he could never quite locate it. It was as if there were a wild animal in the house, hiding, threatening Jack's very existence. Jack came to associate that roaring with the tightness in his shoulders and the queasy feeling in his belly. Eventually he came to call the sound of the roaring in his head "the sound of the Dragon."

Jack said to himself, "When I grow up, and when I have a family of my own, there will be one rule by which I will abide, and that will be: "There will be no Dragons allowed in *this* house!"

On the other side of town there was a girl named Jill. She too came from a nice middle-class family, where Mom and Dad loved each other, where all the siblings were above average in school, and she too—it was said—lived in a very wonderful family. Yet she also would on occasion hear a roaring in her head, experience a tightness in her shoulders and neck, and have queasy feelings in her tummy. She too said that when she grew up and started a family of her own that there would be one rule by which she would insist all abide: "There will be no Dragons allowed in *this* household."

In their separate high schools Jack and Jill each began to date a little. It was then they began to realize that there are a lot of strange people in the world. They met people neither of them would ever consider spending the

rest of their lives with: people with different values, people with completely different ways of living, and even people with totally different views.

At college (and as luck would have it, they went to the same college) Jack and Jill relearned what they had first learned in high school, namely, that the world is full of people they would never even *think* of spending their lives with, people with whom they just didn't fit at all.

All of this changed one night when Jack and Jill met each other at a school dance. Suddenly things were different. They realized that they had a "fit" for each other that they had never experienced with anyone else. "This is the person I've been looking for," each of them said to themselves. Whenever they were in each other's presence they heard in their ears what they thought to be the tinkling of bells! What they didn't know—what they couldn't know—is that when two Dragons roar simultaneously, it sounds not like two dragons roaring, but rather like the tinkling of bells!

Jack and Jill dated one another throughout their college years, and after graduation they were married. They were deeply in love and lived happily the first year or two. Then one night Jill thought she heard a roar—the old, familiar, dreaded roar of the Dragon. She awoke with a start and said to herself: "O No! It couldn't be that the Dragon is here in my very own house!"

During the nights that followed she would wake with a start more and more often to what she was sure was the familiar roar of the Dragon. Finally, there was no longer any possibility of sleeping through the night, for the roar of the Dragon would always startle her from her sleep, and when it did she had a tightness in her neck and shoulders and the old queasy feelings in her tummy. By now, Jack could hear it too. Bedtime became a nightly dread.

Jack and Jill each recognized the roar of the Dragon for what it was, and soon each was blaming the other for bringing *their* Dragon into the marriage.

Finally one night after being startled awake they looked under the bed and actually found the Dragon, sticking his ugly head out from under the bed slats. "Look!" said Jack, "Here's your Dragon!" "And here's yours!" replied Jill, eyeing yet another dragon head protruding from under her side of the bed.



What they had found was not really two Dragons, but one. The Dragon had become a two-headed monster! Filled with panic each of them exclaimed, "What shall we do?"

Dreadfully frightened, they dragged the unwelcome monster out from under the bed and examined its immense proportions. "Maybe we can domesticate it; maybe we can train it; maybe we can learn to live with it," Jack said.

Eventually it was decided to build a sturdy cage for the family Dragon. Jack and Jill put

the two-headed Dragon into the cage, and thought, "Well, Dragon manure will surely be a nuisance to clean up, but maybe if the Dragon stays in its cage we can at least share the house with it and still get by. At least it's safely confined."

However, the Dragon continued to roar incessantly and to grow larger and larger, until it threatened to break the very bonds of its cage. The cage was always between them; it always separated them; it always prevented intimacy.

Problems of the family of origin are often exaggerated in the marriage family.

Finally they said, "We have no choice; we can't go on living like this; we are going to have to split up." But then they realized that this Dragon which had followed them from their families of origin into this marriage and had become a two-headed Dragon, might then divide into two once again and follow each of them wherever they went, even into a new relationship.

"If we cannot train the Dragon, if we cannot cage the Dragon, if we cannot live with the Dragon, what shall we do with it?" Jack and Jill each asked the other. Then they knew: the Dragon had to be slain. So that's what they did.

Beyond the Story

This is a true story of what marriage is like, and of what much marital therapy is about.

Often when I work with couples who are having problems I hear this familiar complaint: "I thought things would be different," one of them says, "but my marriage is just as bad as the family from which I came."

Couples coming for counseling find that the problems of the family of origin were not only not solved in their marriage family, but are often exaggerated there as well. Inevitably they blame their partner for this reality, and find themselves at war with the very person they thought they loved.

Whenever the marital issue is the re-creation of the dysfunctional aspects of the family of origin, I gently remind the couple that the problem is one they had long before they met their partner, and so they can stop blaming the partner for the problem. In fact, I always remark, "I'll bet the very thing about your partner that is now a problem was once a reason for attraction to this particular person as a potential life-mate." With this speculation I always get full agreement, for this is the way it is with all of us.

I then illustrate from my own life how I have re-created my own Dragon of my family of origin. In my family I was the middle child of three. I had an older brother and a younger sister. The older brother got all the benefits of our German upbringing: all the honor of the "eldest son," and all the privileges of being "Daddy's little man." I got my brother's hand-me-down clothes and in addition, the message that I was the "other son." My younger sister, however, became the idol of my mother who had waited

through three pregnancies before being rewarded with a little girl. Sis got doted over a lot. Family gatherings began with remarks by the adults about how "grown up" my older brother was, and how "cute" my sister looked. Finally the big people of the world would get around to asking, "And how are you, Bobby?" [1]

I grew up feeling gypped, left out, having only the short end of the stick on almost any occasion. I learned what injustice is on the experiential level, and resented it.

How have I re-created this in my marriage family? Well, to this day if my ministry and my counseling profession keep me busy on a weekend and the woman I love comes into the study and says, "I see you're busy; the kids and I are going to the show. We'll see you later," I feel resentful. "There they go again, having fun, getting all the attention, getting all the goodies of life." I get left out, just like in the family of origin. It is then I hear the Dragon roar.

This is of course irrational. My overly busy lifestyle is after all a choice I have made. Nevertheless my emotional response is quick and potent. No matter how illogical I recognize the situation to be intellectually, on the *emotional* level I feel the dynamics of the family of origin have been recreated.

After sharing with couples this simple neurosis of mine, they are usually more willing to look at their own. I then tell them the story of Jack and Jill and the Dragon with which we began this article.

This parable of the Dragon has several things to recommend it for those engaged in marriage counseling:

1. The parable is disarming. People who come for counseling need some lightheartedness in the first session so that they begin to have a sense of humor about themselves.

2. Telling of the parable (with some self-disclosure on the counselor's part) reminds the couple that they are not alone in their struggle, and therefore are not to put themselves into a class of people labeled "bad," or "failures."

3. When couples learn to identify their problem as that of the "Dragon," they can more easily join forces with each other to slay the Dragon rather than each other. The enemy is now outside of the partner rather than identified with him/her.

Metaphors give the marital problem both definition and boundary.

4. The parable gives the couple a new vocabulary they can use to describe their difficulties, allowing them to discard an older, more dysfunctional vocabulary. For instance, "You're just like my mother!" becomes "When you said that in that way I

[1] It may sound as if my family was made up of insensitive and unloving people. This is far from the case. Rather, what passes in our society for the best of child-rearing practices is often short of the child's needs. Hurts experienced in early life become the stuff out of which we shape all our attitudes, emotions, and perceptions.

heard the Dragon roar, just as it did at home."

5. This new vocabulary is one shared with the therapist, creating a bond and rapport necessary to successful counseling.

6. Like all metaphors, the metaphor of the Dragon gives the marital problem both definition and boundary. This makes things more manageable than does a generalized attitude of marital unhappiness. This gives confidence that the problem is manageable.

To help couples identify the nature of their Dragon I ask them to reflect upon those times in the family of origin when they had the tightness in the shoulders, the roaring in the head, and the queasy feeling in the belly. "Who was doing what?" I ask, "and what were the feelings being felt whenever the Dragon roared?" I then ask them to do the same for their marriage family.

I have yet to tell this story to a single couple that could not identify with it, and even if they could not apply it to themselves immediately, they did so very effectively during the next several weeks.

As therapy progresses and the Dragon is painstakingly slain, I warn couples that although the Dragon is slain, it has a ghost. However, I stress, this ghost can be befriended, and actually become a best friend to the individuals in the marriage, provided that they stay in charge of the ghost.

I illustrate this from my own life. When I entered adulthood I felt a particular sensitivity to the injustices of life, having suffered what I experienced as unfair treatment as a child. Because of my emotional history, so to speak, I found tremendous power within myself for fighting injustice, especially as I experienced it in the Black community and in the lives of the Black parishioners I served for nearly ten years. As I look back on those years of intense social and political activity, I often wonder at the high energy level that accompanied my ministry. The energy, of course, was from the ghost of the Dragon. When one becomes in charge of that energy, one is empowered in a most creative way.

I often say to my couples, "Find the useful side of the Dragon's energy, for the ghost of the Dragon is still within you and available to you."

Finally, I do not consider the therapy complete until I examine with my couples how the problem in the family of origin or the same problem in the marriage family is also most probably the major problem they have in their personal spiritual life.

For myself, I felt gypped, left out, and not in control in the family of origin. In my more neurotic moments with the family I now love and live with I still feel the same way. And my most frequent argument with God is one of control, recognition, wanting to "get my due," of course!

How can this be so, if I have devoted much of my professional life to Dragon-slaying? One can explain it many ways, I suppose, but St. Paul said it best: "The good that I desire to do I do not do, but the evil that I would not do is the very thing I do. . . . Who will deliver me from this dead [Dragon]?" (Loose translation of Romans 7:19, 24).

Reflections on Daniel and Apocalyptic

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It was a Sunday morning adult education class at a local church. I was asked to lead six sessions on Daniel and apocalyptic literature. I began by discussing the meaning of the word "apocalyptic," distinguishing as best I could between apocalyptic eschatology and the literary form of the apocalypse. I continued by mentioning some of the generally accepted marks of apocalyptic and said that in the weeks ahead we'd talk a little about the history between 200 B.C.E. and 100 C.E., the importance of a tyrant named Antiochus Ephiphanes IV, and at least portions of the Book of Daniel. "Any questions?" I asked. "Yes," said someone sitting way in the back, "what do you think about the idea that the African nations are the kingdom of the south and Russia is the kingdom of the north mentioned in Daniel 11?" I said I would be happy to answer the question, if we took the time to supply background history and context to the Book of Daniel. "What about the beast," someone else asked, "are you going to talk about who it is?" "I heard Jerry Falwell say on TV that the Russians will attack on horseback with wooden spears, because these weapons are mentioned in the Bible. Only after that will they turn to nuclear weapons and then the end will come."

I was prepared to discuss the present state of Danielic studies, the recent work of J. J. Collins, W. Sibley Towner, John Gammie, Klaus Koch. (The April 1985 issue of *Interpretation* is entirely devoted to the Book of Daniel and contains some excellent articles by the above mentioned authors.) It wasn't that I didn't anticipate questions about kingdoms, beasts, and the end. But so quickly, so enthusiastically!

I began to wonder, not only about the next five weeks, but about how one generally takes the results of contemporary scientific exegesis seriously, and at the same time answers people's real questions about kingdoms, beasts, and the end. People who go to bookstores in our large malls and shopping centers do not find books by Collins, Towner, and Koch, but by Robertson, Robison, and Lindsey.

I've shared these concerns with others but I've been told they are greatly exaggerated. While there are some who continually ask questions about kingdoms, beasts, and the end, they are really in the minority. "Anyway," someone recently said to me, "no one with any sense really takes apocalyptic literature seriously anymore." And then I came across Margaret Atwood's recent book,

The Handmaid's Tale (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986). The publisher states that the book is a "forecast" of what may happen in the very near future. A stand-off will have been achieved vis-à-vis the Russians, and our own country will be ruled by right-wingers and religious fundamentalists, with males restored to the traditional role of warriors and females to their "place" as wives, breeders, etc. In her review of the book Mary McCarthy says that despite Atwood's prognostications she sees no cause for alarm, and

Maybe the best thing to do is call for a moratorium on apocalyptic writing.

feels no "shiver of recognition" from the 1986 scene (*The New York Times Book Review*, February 9, 1986). Perhaps she's right, I thought. Perhaps they're all right. Maybe the best thing to do is call for a moratorium on apocalyptic writing, talk, and research. But something Margaret Atwood says struck me: "Anyone who wants power will try to manipulate you by appealing to your desires and fears, and sometimes your best instincts."

In an article in *Interpretation* (April, 1985), James Lindenberger best sums up my overall feelings about Daniel and apocalyptic when he says:

> "Woe is me, for how can I preach from such a book?" The contemporary interpreter is likely to approach... Daniel with feelings ranging from reticence to sheer panic. Daniel, like Revelation, has long been a happy hunting ground for the theological lunatic fringe, and the temptation is simply to leave it to them (p. 181).

While I share Lindenberger's woe, I would caution against saying that Daniel is the "happy hunting ground for the lunatic fringe." Those questions that were asked me came not from the fringe, but from a mainline Christian congregation; not from lunatics but from people who wanted answers to difficult questions, people whose desires, fears, and sometimes best instincts are often manipulated.

I am comforted by the fact that others seem to struggle with the same difficulty. Some things W. Sibley Towner says in his 1983 article "Were the English Puritans 'the Saints of the Most High?' " have proved helpful to me. Having climbed, rejoiced, and chuckled his way over mountains of commentary on the Book of Daniel he began to ask himself:

> What, after all, is wrong with some of these appropriations of the imagery of the Old Testament? Pass muster with the findings of twentieth century scientific exegesis they will not, but most represent respectful and authentic exchanges between the text and faithful believers anchored in their respective cultural milieux. Their response to the text does not differ in kind from what we ourselves did with the Bible in our youth, before we took up the urim of

> philology and the thummim of critical method . . . (*Interpretation* [Jan. 1983], pp. 46–63).

A text is truly interpreted, according to Towner, when both text and interpretation are understood in an analogical relationship to a larger reality. In the case of the relationship of the "saints of the Most High" in Daniel 7 to their descendants, that larger reality is a goad and a stimulus, "encouraging others to represent in unprecedented and dramatic ways the good news of God's certain victory over tyranny of every kind" (p. 63).

What Towner said was reinforced in Sol Liptzin's 1985 book *Biblical Themes in World Literature* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House), especially chapter 27 "Belshazzar's Folly."

Liptzin traces the literary history of the Belshazzar theme in Daniel 5 from Chaucer, through Calderón, Goethe, Byron, and Heine. Liptzin ends the chapter by saying:

> the fiery symbols of the Book of Daniel—Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin—have been hurled by literary spokesmen at tyrants and tyrannical systems, and have brought hope and comfort to oppressed groups and national entities, including Jewish communities under the heels of brutal conquerors from Belshazzar to Hitler. These symbolic words remain an eternal affirmation of divine justice that humbles the proud and uplifts the lowly (p. 281).

If one looks for a paradigm, a larger reality, out of which to answer questions about kingdoms, beasts, and the end, it can perhaps be found within the proclamation of Towner's "good news of God's certain victory over every tyranny" and Liptzin's "eternal affirmation of divine justice that humbles the proud and uplifts the lowly."

According to Lindenberger, all kingdoms and powers, past and present, are, to a greater or lesser extent, "bestial" because they are all more or less motivated by self-interest. "To some extent and in some ways, all nations stand in opposition to basic human values and are destructive of human dignity and even life" ("Daniel 12:1–4," *Interpretation* 39:2 [April, 1985], p. 180). Furthermore, all kingdoms—south, north, west or east—are destined, sooner or later, to fall. God's promises, though firm, are not always fulfilled the way we want or expect. Daniel 7:18 itself is evidence of this: "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, for ever and ever." The author here expected the overthrow of the Seleucid empire and the transfer of power to the "saints of the Most High." Partially at least these expectations were fulfilled. Antiochus did die. Jewish independence did become a reality—but not forever and ever and ever. Even the Maccabees at their best were not the true kingdom of "the saints of the Most High." This may, according to Klaus Koch, partially explain why the first Rabbinic Bible in the 16th century of the common era placed Daniel not among the Nebiim (Prophets) but the Kethubim (Writings). By so doing the rabbis changed the emphasis from eschatology to teaching so that it would not appear that God's promises had failed. Now Daniel's conduct (e.g., his obedience to the Torah) appeared as the decisive point ("Is Daniel Also Among the Prophets?" *Interpretation* 39:2 [April, 1985], pp. 117–30). Perhaps

the rabbis were right. And really, for Christian and for Jew, such a shift in emphasis is not new. "The form of the hope is constantly being shattered in order that the substance of the hope may constantly be revived" (William O. Walker, Jr., "Daniel 7:13–14," *Interpretation* 39:2 [April, 1985], p. 181).

Through times of failure and frustration from Daniel until now, God's people have continued to believe and proclaim that God's "dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:14b).

Thus, it should not be surprising, nor should it be regretted, that early Christians, anchored in their time and culture, would find in Daniel the inspiration for an image of a coming Son of Man who must suffer and die, be raised up, and finally appear in glory as God's exalted king. In revising the form of the expectation, they remained true to its larger reality. Nor is it to be regretted that people today ask about kingdoms, beasts, and the end. What is to be regretted is that people's desires, fears, and best instincts are being manipulated; that we do not encourage each other "to represent in unprecedented and dramatic ways the good news of God's certain victory over tyranny of every kind" and to "affirm the divine justice that humbles the proud and uplifts the lowly."

Daniel is not simply a book for those who *were* oppressed, but for those who *still are* oppressed. The historical Antiochus is also a symbol of a larger reality: the powers of chaos, bondage, racism, sexism, terrorism, and poverty that threaten us all. We can hear Daniel speak to us, says Lindenberger, because he speaks of enemies we all know. Daniel is not a map of future history but an affirmation about the meaning of that history and the name of the One who ultimately controls it. The battle for God's kingdom in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures reveals that fulfillment not only means what has already been attained, but also hope for that which still waits attainment. The Apostle Paul says that "all the promises of God find their yes in Jesus" (1 Cor 1:20), but he does not proclaim that God has *already* fulfilled all through and in Christ–"the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19). Thus,

> The world and its human community are worth protecting at all costs because they are destined by God for full redemption from their present bondage to sin and decay (Rom 8:18–25). Do not listen to the siren song of those who say it is hopeless and that the world must surely end with the bang of nuclear exchange or the whimper of overpopulation and famine. The world surely must not, and you who call yourselves "saints" can make common cause with other persons of good will to seek the safety of the world and its creatures (W. Sibley Towner, "The Preacher in the Lion's Den," *Interpretation* 39:2 [April, 1985], p. 168).

This is a paradigmatic reading of biblical apocalyptic, one which allows us in our time and place to be drawn into the future with a lifestyle that refuses to allow its desires, fears and best instincts to be manipulated. It is a reading of the future that calls us not to self-fulfilling prophecies of doom, but to lives of proclamation of the "good news of God's certain victory over kingdoms and beasts of every kind" and lives of praxis which—to the end—"affirm the divine justice that humbles the proud and uplifts the lowly."

"Love Your Enemies": The Value of New Perspectives

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Introduction

The imperative of Jesus to "Love your enemy" is an utterly serious injunction upon the world which rejects him, the church which claims him, and upon each of us who don't know what to do with him. It is a serious concern for personal life. In Matthew, Jesus qualifies the enemy as the one who "persecutes you" (5:44). In Luke, the enemies are those who "hate you" (6:27), those that "curse you and insult you" (6:28), those who "strike you on the cheek" (6:29), and those who "take away your coat and shirt" (6:29). These words conjure up modern images like the secret police agent, the slanderer, or the armed robber stalking in the night. None is friendly. All imply the threat to the quantity and quality of life. The command of Jesus is a serious concern for faith. José Miranda calls it "unsurpassable" in his discussion of faith and dialectics.[1] It is his contention that one cannot believe in God without practicing the moral commands of God in social relations. He raises the question of whether or not we can even be "children of God" without loving our enemies.[2] The exhortation "love your enemies" is a serious concern for the life of the world.

In *Sojourners* magazine, Walter Wink agrees with Miranda that this love commandment is key to the life of faith, but goes on to suggest the ramifications of it for the life of the world:

> I submit that the ultimate religious question today should no longer be "How can I find a gracious God?" but "How can I find God in my enemy?" What guilt was for Luther, the enemy

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[1]Jose Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974), 275.

[2]Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, 275.

> has become for us: the goad that can drive us to God. What has formerly been a purely private affair—justification by faith through grace—has now, in our age, grown to embrace the world.[3]

He suggests that since we tend to become what we hate, projecting "the evil within us out onto the world," we need to embrace "this dull job, that disgusting colleague, the bomb." "Even the bomb?" he asks. "Yes, even the bomb," he answers. To the degree that we despairingly and hopelessly hate nuclear weapons, "spiritually, we have already let ourselves be nuked."[4]

To take the enemy with utter seriousness is necessary if humane social intercourse is to continue. Post-Holocaust Jews like Dennis Prager[5] remind us of this. Yet seriousness carries with it potentially destructive consequences. In his book on family process, Rabbi Edwin Friedman writes: "The seriousness with which families approach their problems can be more the cause of their difficulties than the effect of their problems . . . seriousness is more than an attitude, it is a total orientation, a way of thinking embedded in constant and chronic anxiety. It is characterized by lack of flexibility in response, a narrow repertoire of approaches, persistent efforts to try harder, an inability to change direction, and a loss of perspective. . . ."[6] "Seriousness presents a paradox," says Friedman. "The antidote to seriousness is the capacity to be playful, which is not to be equated with making jokes . . . it is ultimately more connected with responsibility for others than with lightheartedness . . . it can break the vicious feedback cycle that is keeping a problem chronic."[7] The task of this paper is to see what kind of playfulness is appropriate to loving one's enemies.

Exegetical Considerations

An exegetical plunge into Jesus' moral teaching at Matthew 5:44/Luke 6:27, turns up a higher "playfulness" than we might first suspect. Western eyes will read a moral injunction that calls for a volitional heroism. Certain rabbinic investigations of the law of love (Leviticus 19:18) had concluded that "love your neighbor" meant "hate your enemy" (Matthew 5:43). Against such an interpretation, Jesus extended love of neighbor to include the enemy. Sensitive Western emotions will pick up on the divine imperative and ask themselves, "Can I really love someone who threatens me?" Western voices will debate whether it is more loving of one's neighbor to treat the enemy with the equanimity of God (who "sends rain to fall on both the just and unjust," Matthew 5:45) or to keep the certainty of retaliation ever before the enemy.

There is a deeper level to the teaching, however. At the bottom lies not some blanket rule to be accepted, rejected or debated. (Jesus, for example, never suggested that one should love enemies like devils, demons,

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[3]Walter Wink, "We Have Met the Enemy," *Sojourners* (November, 1984), 15.

[4]Wink, "We Have Met the Enemy," 18.

[5]Dennis Prager, "The Immorality of Pacifism," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (Sunday, December 4, 1986), pp. F-2 and F-4.

[6]Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 50.

[7]Friedman, *Generation to Generation,* 50.

or sin, for that matter.) What then do his words call for?

Allen Verhey points out that the imperative of Matthew 5 is "not primarily concerned with morality per se . . . the ethic of Jesus is not remembered in the form of either moral code or systematic ethical treatise, but rather in the form of wisdom."[8] Love of the enemy is in response to and in anticipation of the kingdom of God. "It is an eschatological wisdom that has experienced God's grace and judgment already operative in Jesus Christ and so perceives the world, the older wisdom tradition, and moral conduct and character in a new way."[9] Verhey seems to suggest that there is a certain "play" to ethics. Under a new perception of reality, the community of Jesus comes at ethics differently than Jewish tradition was accustomed to. The text before us suggests the value of alternative perceptions of reality for social ethics.

> Jesus extended love of neighbor to include the enemy.

How does the enemy appear to us when our perceptions are altered? What options for response become open to us when we look from a different angle? Eastern religions can help us explore these two questions (playfully of course).

The Playfulness of Buddhism

In his book, *What Would You Do?*[10] John Howard Yoder includes a story that symbolizes a difference between Western and Buddhist thinking. A young American schooled in the martial arts is riding a bus one day in Japan. He and the other passengers are suddenly threatened with a drunken, cursing, knife-wielding man who has gotten on at the last bus stop. The American recognizes in the situation a long-awaited opportunity to battle a real live enemy and prepares to neutralize the man. But as he positions himself to strike, an old Japanese man pushes past him. He smiles warmly at the man and softly asks what is causing so much hurt in the man's life. Disarmed by the old man's compassion, the other begins to sob. Between his sobs he tells of how his wife has died and the loss has left him beside himself. His body goes limp as the old man puts his arm around him and the knife drops. As the young American leaves the bus at the next stop, he sees his potential opponent lying down on a seat with his head in the old man's lap. The old man is telling him of how he has also recently lost his wife and of how bad he also feels.

While the story never suggests that the Japanese man was a Buddhist, he operates out of a Buddhistic perception. The young American had instantly objectified the knife-wielder as an enemy self who threatened his own self security. The elderly Japanese saw

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[8]Allen Verhey, *The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 43.

[9]Verhey, *The Great Reversal,* 43.

[10]John Howard Yoder, *What Would You Do?* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983).

the man as a part of himself. The apparent dichotomy between them was overcome in the realization that each of them was suffering under the attachment to what was mortal. In Buddhism contemporary selves ride on the flux of impermanence. Under the law of *karma* each self ignorantly clings to what it cannot possess. Before the goal of *Nirvana* is reached each self attempts to free itself from its attachments and from the ignorance of seeing one's self as separate from the rest of creation. Early Buddhism generated an attitude toward the enemy which is morally the equal of Jesus' ethic. In the *Mettasutta,* love is described as follows:

> "Let no one deceive another, let him not despise in any place, let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another. As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, her only child, so also let everyone cultivate a boundless mind toward all beings. And let him cultivate goodwill towards all the world ... unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity."[11]

In the *Majjhima-Nikaya* the Buddha is portrayed as saying to his disciples:

> "Bhikkus, even if bandits brutally severed limb from limb with a two-handled saw, he who entertained hate in his heart on that account would not be one who carried out my teachings."[12]

These ethical principles of the Buddha are for both the layman and the saint. At the karmic level the layperson realizes that to wish evil on another will only bring evil on the self. At the Nirvanic level the saint seeks the life of spontaneous compassion and sympathetic joy which will realize enlightenment for the self and through the self to all others.

It might be argued that Jesus' ethic is higher than the Buddha's with regard to the enemy. Jesus' ethic is validated deontologically. One is to love the enemy as God already does. The Buddhist ethic seeks a reward for itself. One could characterize the Buddhist ethic as more selfish, but we should be careful here. Since the self is not separate from other selves but is one among many expressions of the universe, the reward of Nirvana one seeks for oneself is also sought for all selves.

The Playfulness of Hinduism

In Mohandas K. Gandhi's practice of *satyagraha* we discover a high Hindu ideal of ethics. *Satyagraha* (literally "firm grasp of the truth") is the principle of non-violent resistance which Gandhi developed in South Africa and employed most fully in relation to British colonial rule of India. In practicing it, Gandhi embraced British secular authority and would not release his hold on this enemy of his country. Gandhi saw the reconciliation of conflict as a cooperative inquiry into the truth of a given relationship. In other words, the opponent was not rejected as a threat but

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[11]David Little and Sumner Twiss, *Comparative Religious Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 232–33.

[12]Winston King, *In the Hope of Nibbana* (La-Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1964), 125.

seen as a necessary ally in arriving at truth. In a real sense, the British were loved into submitting to the truth of their oppression.[13]

In his discussion of Gandhi, Richard Lannoy asserts that *satyagraha* is a "modification (by Gandhi) of the *guru-shisya* relationship."[14] This relationship symbolizes the Indian understanding of ultimate reality and authentic interaction between two subjects. The guru is the detached seer of the interconnectedness of all things. The *shisya* is the anxious, confused one hoping to gain from the *guru* what he cannot give. In this state of opposition spiritual revelation comes to transcend the two and both are enlightened.

The opponent was seen as a necessary ally in arriving at the truth.

The *guru-shisya* relationship serves as a paradigm for a fundamental principle of Indian religion. "According to the Indian religious systems, the transcendence of opposites is a state which can be attained by a human being and is indeed the goal of human life."[15] In the Indian perception of reality the opposites are transcended. Under such an epistemology as Indian philosophy suggests, one is pushed to consider the value of opponents for further enlightenment before one simply rejects them as threat.

The Playfulness of the Tao

Chinese and Japanese religions also attend to the opposites in existence. The accent is significantly different from Hinduism, however, especially in Taoism. Where the Hindu notes the far poles of truth, Taoism considers the flow between opposite expressions of reality and the harmony between them. The doctrine of *yin* and *yang* is especially enlightening to a consideration of the enemy. Interacting energy modes of activity and receptivity or brightness and darkness keep nature in balance. Human life can express balance in flowing with the Tao rather than resisting it.

In her science fiction work, *The Left Hand of Darkness,* Ursula LeGuin imagines a planet where all people are androgynous.[16] In cycles of many months the inhabitants of this world move from being physically female to being physically male and vice versa. LeGuin is most fascinated by the possibility that under such a full expression of *yin/yang* a person could be mother of one child and the father of someone else's child through succeeding cycles. Though she does not attend

[13]Richard Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 382. Lannoy writes: "As Erik Erikson pointed out, Gandhi's greatest innovation was building up his opponent."

[14]Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree,* 380.

[15]Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree,* 343.

[16]Ursula LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Ace Books, 1983).

to this particular feature, I was equally fascinated by the lack of misogyny and misanthropy in her imagined society. No one seemed to fear or hate homosexuality either.

Under the Tao, self-hatred is called into question. Each of us humans has parts of our self that we fear, hate, repress, and suppress. These features we hate are only one side of the dynamic of who we are, however. Taoism encourages a full picture of the self and the other, and objectivity is a high principle. In the Tao Te Ching the sage says:

> I treat those who are good with goodness.
> And I also treat those who are not good with goodness.
> Thus goodness is attained.
> I am honest with those who are honest.
> And I am also honest with those who are not honest.
> Thus honesty is attained.
> The sage has no subjective viewpoint.
> His mind forms a harmonious whole with that of his people (Chapter 49).[17]

Again the sage says:

> Whether it is big or small, many or few, repay hatred with virtue (Chapter 63).[18]

This last passage is in direct contradiction to Confucius who suggested that partiality was common sense.[19] The objectivity or impartiality which the sage, Lao Tsu, encourages, may fall short of the sacrificial love that Jesus suggests toward the enemy. Yet the sage encourages us away from sentimentality and toward clarity in considering the enemy with positive regard.

Luther contended that God works under the sign of the opposite.

Conclusion

Since the object of this study has been to learn of ethical options made possible by differing perceptions of reality, we have sought to entertain these alternatives rather than to critique them extensively. The ethical options are pure options, never fully realized in practice by any of the religions presented. But they may, at least, represent tendencies which have validity given the perspective behind them. If the Dominion of God represented a new perspective and introduced a new shape to the ethics of some first century Jews, can we not learn from the differing perspectives and their attendant ethical systems in other world religions today?

A major criticism of the effort of this paper might be that it has relativized the God of the Bible in its openness to other religious

[17]Wing Tsit-Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 162.

[18]Wing Tsit-Chan, *A Source Book,* 169.

[19]Wing Tsit Chan, *A Source Book,* 42. "When asked, 'What do you think of repaying hatred with virtue? [Confucius] replied, 'In that case what will you repay virtue with?' "

ideals. Have we left the God of the Bible behind? I'm not sure we have at all. Martin Luther contended that God works under the sign of the opposite. His study of the biblical tradition encouraged him to look for God where he would least expect to find God. Mature Christian faith encourages us to do the same. Goethe once asked, "What sort of God would it be who only pushed from without?"[20] My reply would be, "A God far more serious than the one I know." While I was an enemy of God, God befriended me in Christ. When I think of God as "my exclusive pal," God needs to become an enemy for the sake of bringing me to understanding. I shouldn't wonder that God can operate through Eastern religions which intrigue me or through enemies I consider threats to my well-being.

Postscript

With this paper finally drafted, I had the chance to attend to other important concerns like the temper tantrum my son Joey was having because his mom told him to clean his room. Since parent meant enemy to him temporarily, I wondered how best to relate to him before he damaged something in his room. Insight came when I grabbed two big pillows and laid them on the floor in the midst of his mess. We sat down opposite one another each with a rubber overshoe for a club. I selected a piece of debris from the floor around us, placed it between us, and gave it a good pounding with my rubber shoe for cluttering up Joey's room. Joey was invited to select another item and do the same. One after another, we struck at, yelled at and objected to a piece of paper, an old shoe, and the floor itself. Soon we were so caught up in fits of laughter that he could not continue the tantrum. When I left the room, Joey was busy cleaning it up and humming to himself. In this case at least, playfulness and a new perspective saved the day. I wonder if the same approach could work in U.S./Soviet arms talks?

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[20]Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company, 1983), 89.

A New Lectionary for a New Church?

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I can imagine reactions to this opening title. "Crazy!" "Impractical!" "Unnecessary!" "We are just getting accustomed to the present three-year lectionary!" "I'm not even willing to read on!" I mentioned the idea of a new seven-year lectionary to a respected former teacher, colleague, and friend. He suggested that such an idea might be something for the individual pastor/congregation to try, but not the entire national church! So be it. So we proceed with much anxiety and trepidation. The lectionary, like our Bible, is at the heart of our ongoing worship life. It is a most delicate and sensitive area.

A look at Paul W. Nesper's *Biblical Texts* (1st ed., 1923) illustrates our former predilection for a one-year lectionary system. Indeed, European Lutherans still would rather revise their one-year series of historic pericopes than adopt any three-year system patterned after the revised Roman Catholic lectionary for the mass (*Ordo Lectionum Missae*, 1969). However, with the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978), North American Lutherans, together with other North American Christian churches, are increasingly committing themselves to a three-year lectionary. The idea of a three-year lectionary, of course, is not new to Lutherans. I am reminded of the three-year lectionary of the Church of Sweden and that such a pattern was likewise urged as an alternate system for the old American Lutheran Church. Some time ago the recognition of the limitations of a one-year system prompted some churches in Great Britain to begin moving in the direction of a two-year cycle (cf. *The Calendar and Lectionary: A Reconsideration*, 1967). But so far as I am aware, no church has yet begun work on a seven-year lectionary.

Both the one-year and three-year systems, like so much of our Christian worship, are indebted to synagogal practice. In the early Jewish worship service, selections from the Torah or Pentateuch were read. Ultimately the Pentateuch was divided systematically into lections to be read aloud through a fixed period of time. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Meggillah 29a and 31b), the Pentateuch was read in Palestine over a three-year period in weekly sections. Later, the Babylonian one-year cycle was adopted.

It is strange, though, that neither Jews nor Christians ever picked up on the idea of a seven-year lectionary, especially when the number seven proved so determinative in the Law and the Prophets. Thus Jacob worked

seven years each for Leah and Rachel (Gen 29:20, 27, 30). Seven times around the city on the seventh day plus a shout by the people led by seven priests bearing seven trumpets brought down the walls of Jericho (Josh 6:1–21). Seven rawhide bowstrings were not enough to hold Samson while he still had his seven locks of hair (Judg 16:7, 13, 19). One could go on.

In addition to the significance of a lectionary system based on the number seven, there are also weaknesses in the one-year and three-year lectionaries. For one thing, the present lectionary pattern does not encourage a holistic reading of Scripture. Secondly, the integrity of individual texts is seriously compromised when OT/NT texts are cut into atomistic bits and pieces to serve the church calendar.

Not even a three-year lectionary, much less a one-year lectionary, can cover the OT adequately. The OT is more than three times the size of the NT. If the A/B/C pericope system cannot accommodate all the texts of the NT (and there is a double opportunity to do so through both an Epistle and a Gospel Lesson), what is to be said for the representation of the OT in this series? Over the three years (including the special festival texts and commemorations) the top ten OT books are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, 1 Kings, Hosea, Amos, and Proverbs. Only one psalm (Psalm 118) is ever used as a lesson, and that is as an alternate reading for Easter; 34 of the 150 psalms are never used even liturgically. Also not used anywhere in the lectionary are the books Obadiah, Nahum, Haggai, Song of Songs, Esther, and Ezra; and in the regular A/B/C series, Judges, 2 Chronicles, and Nehemiah never appear.

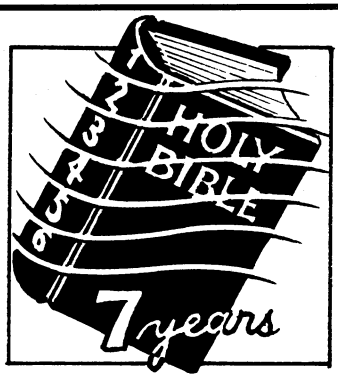
What is more, during the seven Sundays of Easter plus Ascension and in a couple of lessons for lesser festivals, the place of the OT lesson is given to the Book of Acts! This helps explain the use of the convenient title "First Lesson" instead of "OT lesson" throughout the three-year pericope system.

Moreover, what is included in the three-year cycle from the OT is misleading. The OT pericopes chosen seem to reinforce two false assumptions: (1) that the OT essentially contains "law," and (2) that the OT is full of predictions of the coming of Christ. Moreover, the rich diversity of OT genres is lost as is the basic OT story-line. Should we continue to presuppose that our hearers know the OT to the degree that the NT writers (2 Tim 3:14-17) could assume their audiences did?

The treatment of the NT in the three-year lectionary is not without its problems. Compared with the 214 (30%) pericopes chosen from the OT, there are 494 (70%) selected from the NT: 230 (46.5%) as Epistle readings, 240 (48.5%) as Gospel Lessons, and 24 (almost 5%) in the place of OT lections! The majority of Epistle texts come from 1–2 Corinthians (23%), Romans (16.5%), Hebrews (8.69%), Ephesians (8.26%), and Philippians (5.21%). The Gospel percentages are: Luke (31.25%), Matthew (25%), John (25%), and Mark (18.75%). Nowhere represented in the lectionary are the NT books 2–3 John and Jude.

What happens to the Book of Acts is particularly lamentable. It is unclear whether it is an Epistle or a pseudo-OT Lesson. In reality Acts is an extended Gospel, the story and rearing of a second child, the Church. But even more lamentable is how the Gospel of John is treated. A three-year lectionary

built upon the synoptic Gospels simply cannot give the Fourth Gospel its rightful due. Inevitably John's Gospel ends up supplanting the other three Gospels (23 times), helping out the shorter Mark (17 times), or supplementing both Matthew (12 times) and Luke (8 times). If not a seven-year lectionary, we should at least be working on a four-year lectionary where the fourth year could be devoted to the structure and unique contribution of John's Gospel.



Luther observed that the Church is less concerned with the report of the historical miracles of Jesus than with the witness to the Word which creates faith and the saving power of this faith. Consequently, Luther cited John's Gospel, which he believed put more emphasis on Jesus' words than his miracles, as "the true, genuine, and chief Gospel . . . to be preferred over and more highly valued than the other three" since, as he noted, the synoptic Gospels tend to do just the opposite. Retrospectively, John's Gospel might just as well have been placed first in the Gospel canon in view of its conspicuous attempt to parallel Gen 1:1ff. in its Prologue. John's present position, at any rate, disturbingly separates Luke's Gospel, his first volume, from the Book of Acts, his second volume, likewise addressed to Theophilus!

But it is so easy to criticize. The challenge is to offer something constructive, such as what a seven-year lectionary might look like. Well, such a lectionary might simply be a sevenfold enlargement of the type of lectionary we already have, with perhaps more emphasis placed on the independence of each of the three lessons by subsuming all three under a particular Sunday theme within a more general, special but changing yearly emphasis (cf. *Social Themes of the Christian Year,* 1983, ed. by D. T. Hessel). Or in the interest of fairness to all three lessons, each lesson might take its own determinative turn at the controls. Thus in the pre-Christmas season, the OT lesson might be the thematic pericope; from Christmas to Pentecost the Gospel Lesson could take over; and for the entire post-Pentecost period of the church year the Epistle Lesson might take the lead. Such a procedure would reflect something of the impact of the Scriptures upon the people of God historically.

I personally would opt for another approach: a more holistic approach, characterized by serial or continuous reading of OT/NT books, slotted and arranged along a historical axis. Such an approach, I believe, would best protect the context, integrity, continuity, and individuality of all the scriptural lessons chosen. It would also foster a more theocentric reading of the Bible (alongside the Christocentric) and lessen the likelihood of any tyranny of the church year over the Bible.

Such a lectionary might find its seven-year climax in John's Gospel, Revelation, and Psalms, the very books somewhat neglected

in the present lectionary, but books worthy of more scriptural time in church. If all the scriptural material were laid out for several years upon a historical axis, for OT and NT, it might look something like the following:

YEAR 1
- **OT Lessons:** (selections from 206 chs.)
  - Genesis-Numbers (Priestly history)
  - 8th century prophets Amos, Hosea
  - Proverbs
- **Epistle Lessons:** (14 chs.)
  - 1–2 Thessalonians, Galatians
- **Gospel Lessons:** (16 chs.)
  - Mark

YEAR 2
- **OT Lessons:** (selections from 225 chs.)
  - Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings (Deuteronomistic history)
  - 8th century prophets Isaiah (1–32), Micah
  - Lamentations
- **Epistle Lessons:** (29 chs.)
  - 1–2 Corinthians
- **Gospel Lessons:** (28 chs.)
  - Matthew

YEAR 3
- **OT Lessons:** (selections from 159 chs.)
  - 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah (Chronicler's history)
  - 7th century prophets Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah
  - Esther
- **Epistle Lessons:** (16 chs.)
  - Romans
- **Gospel Lessons:** (52 chs.)
  - Luke/Acts

YEAR 4
- **OT Lessons:** (selections from 213 chs.)
  - Genesis-Numbers (Priestly history)
  - Exilic prophets Ezekiel, Obadiah
  - Ecclesiastes
- **Epistle Lessons:** (15 chs)
  - Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians
- **Gospel Lessons:** (16 chs.)
  - Mark

YEAR 5
- **OT Lessons:** (selections from 204 chs.)
  - Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings (Deuteronomistic history)
  - Exilic prophet Isaiah 33–35, 40–55
  - Ruth
- **Epistle Lessons:** (13 chs.)
  - 1–2 Timothy, Titus
- **Gospel Lessons:** (28 chs.)
  - Matthew

YEAR 6
- **OT Lessons:** (selections from 155 chs.)
  - 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah (Chronicler's history)
  - Post-exilic prophets Isaiah 56–66, Haggai, Zechariah 1–8, Malachi
  - Job
- **Epistle Lessons:** (23 chs.)
  - Hebrews, James, 1 Peter
- **Gospel Lessons:** (52 chs.)
  - Luke/Acts

YEAR 7
- **OT Lessons:** (selections from 183 chs.)
  - Psalms
  - Late Persian/Maccabean prophetic/apocalyptic books Jonah, Joel, Zechariah 9–11, 12–14, Daniel
  - Song of Songs
- **Epistle Lessons:** (33 chs.)
  - Jude, 1–3 John, Revelation, 2 Peter
- **Gospel Lessons:** (21 chs.)
  - John

One notes that on the way to the seventh year the three histories of the OT (the Priestly, the Deuteronomistic, and the Chronicler's) and the synoptic Gospels plus Acts (Mark, Matthew, and Luke/Acts) are repeated (Years 1–3 = 4–6). The intention behind this recurrent pattern would be to underscore the historic story-line of both the OT and NT for the regular church-goer. From the overabundant chapters available for lec-

tions from the OT a committee would have to make careful selections to ensure that the OT would be properly represented every Sunday morning. Readings from the Latter Prophets and Kethubim in historical progression might fittingly climax in a seven-year concentration upon the Book of Psalms, OT apocalyptic, and the enigmatic Song of Songs.

On the other hand, because of the smaller number of chapters involved in the Epistles and the Gospels, all the chapters available in these books would most likely have to be used as assigned in each lectionary year. Whereas the first year of Epistle and Gospel readings might be devoted to the earliest books of the NT, successive years could be directed to those NT books next in line in terms of their date of composition, and the seventh year could concentrate on the most recent writings of the NT, primarily those associated with the Johannine circle. As a seventh year book, Revelation would fit in well at this point, with its explicit fondness for the number seven.

To dream but a little more, every seventh or sabbatical year and every forty-ninth and fiftieth year might take on added, climactic importance. We need not advocate the cancellation of all ELCIC or ELCA debts in each Jubilee year, or that synodical indulgences of some sort be sold during every sabbatical period, but, seriously speaking, these special occasions might culminate in some truly laudable effort in keeping with the spirit of Isaiah 61:1–3. In such a lectionary, in a lifetime of three score and ten years (Ps 90:10), each person would have had ample opportunity to hear more of God's Word, and the joyous Christian Year of Jubilee might prove a memorable and liberating experience for all.

The present three-year lectionary has notably served to bring Christians of North America together. Realistically any immediate departure might imperil this new-found unity and create more misgivings for those still not on track. But the lectionary, as the congregation's Bible, is surely something to continue to improve. Anything we as church leaders may do to raise the level of Biblical literacy and faith is worth pursuing.

The liberating power of the gospel frees us from enslavement to any one liturgical past (Gal 4:9–11; Col 2:16–17). By God's grace Canadian Lutherans in the ELCIC have been the first to finalize the step toward oneness among Lutherans in North America; perhaps our American sisters and brothers can take the lead in the creation of a better lectionary. The best potential candidate for the first Jubilee Year, the year 200 C.E. rapidly approaches.

Book Reviews

CHRISTIANITY AS PSYCHOLOGY: THE HEALING POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE. By Morton Kelsey. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 143 pages. Paper. $7.95.

In this book, Kelsey tells how the Christian message transforms persons' lives spiritually and psychologically. He argues that Christianity offers the hope not merely of salvation in a world to come but of healing and wholeness now. He seeks to ascertain which psychological schools respect the whole gamut of human experience, including a transcendent transpersonal realm. Kelsey describes the full Christian drama and indicates how helping professions might step into this drama and share in its healing, transforming dimensions. He concludes by delineating implications of Christian life, practice, and belief for psychologists and psychotherapeutic practice.

He assails the narrowing influence of both Aristotelian rationalism in the scholastic movement and that of Thomas Hobbes and Eighteenth Century Enlightenment. These movements narrowed our understanding of the Christian message and the practice of Christian ministry. He says that religion was left with only a shadowy soul-spirit, and secular thought even cast doubt on the existence of that. He concludes that Western culture has created a religious vacuum wherein persons have been cut off from meaning and God, and lack any sense of vitality in their religious life and faith.

For Kelsey, Carl Jung integrated religion and religious experience into psychological thought more fully than any other psychologist. Jung developed a philosophical framework in which the experience of God was integrated into a sophisiticated world view and psychological theory. Jung wrote that the main interest of his work was not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but rather with the approach to the numinous. The approach to the numinous, he believed, was the real therapy. Kelsey spent nearly ten years in Jungian analysis to overcome his materialism and realize that knowledge is not confined to the five senses; people share in spiritual reality and so many have experience of God.

Kelsey posits an open universe wherein both spiritual as well as material entities are real and in which God and evil are realities. He indicates how many persons in the West have come to realize the futility of their view of reality and have turned to Eastern religions. Kelsey questions this alternative, stating how Jesus held to two interacting dimensions of reality, physical and nonphysical, both created by God and both good. In numerous ways, Western culture has sought to limit contact with the spiritual world. In fact, we have only one word which points to that contact, and that is mysticism.

In a final chapter, "What Christianity Can Offer Psychology," Kelsey offers two admonitions to the church. First, the religious community needs to integrate the knowledge of depth psychology into its view of human beings so that the understanding of the depth and complexity of our psyches and how we develop by stages into mature human beings is available to ministers and lay people; and secondly, the church would also do well to put into practice the discoveries of the humanistic psychologists who point out the creative and healing power of love (p. 112). Psychotherapists should think in terms of accompanying people on the way to maturity, wholeness, and human fulfillment. He refers to his friend John Sanford, a professional analyst and counselor, who reports that many of the people who come to him professionally for help stop their therapy when

they are no longer suffering. Yet this may be the very moment when real steps toward integration, wholeness, and religious meaning might be achieved.

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REINHOLD NIEBUHR: A BIOGRAPHY. By Richard Wightman Fox. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. xii and 344 pages. Paper. $10.95.

JUSTICE AND MERCY: REINHOLD NIEBUHR. Edited by Ursula M. Niebuhr. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. x and 141 pages. Paper. $6.95.

These two volumes are a contribution to the current revival of interest in the life and thought of Reinhold Niebuhr. As Richard Fox points out in his biography, today's would-be Niebuhr disciples vary, including liberals and left-liberals, who identify with "the zealous antagonist of business hegemony, the angry critic of the consumer culture," as well as neoconservatives, who draw strength from the "vehement opponent of Soviet communism, the persistent adversary of left utopianism." The work edited by Ursula M. Niebuhr is a reissue of the volume of sermons and prayers by her husband, originally published in 1974, three years after his death.

The Fox work is a first-rate biography, appreciatively recounting the life of a complicated person and theological thinker but faithfully recalling the blots and blemishes of the man whom many hailed as a contemporary prophet but who nonetheless came to be described as America's "establishment theologian." Niebuhr's life reads like a history of the United States from the first World War to the Vietnam era, so embroiled as Niebuhr in the affairs and the politics of the nation. At the same time his life recalls the major theological developments in America because Niebuhr was always close to the eye of the theological storm.

Out of Niebuhr's early commitment to socialism emerged his advocacy of "Christian realism" in national and world affairs, a Christian view of the reality of evil in society which enabled Niebuhr to be an interventionist in World War II and a vigorous opponent of Communism in the cold war era. There is much that Lutherans can learn from one so committed to social and political activism precisely because biblical faith was the foundation for his active life.

For all of his involvement in social and political issues Niebuhr thought of himself first and foremost as a preacher of the Word. *Justice and Mercy* provides a sample of sermons and prayers from his later years. Two sermons are worth the price of the book. "The Providence of God" presents his sublime trust in the meaning of life grounded in the Christian faith over against a too-simple confidence in the triumph of good over evil. "The Hazards and Difficulties of the Christian Ministry" calls for a ministry committed to biblical faith in order to cope with "the practical difficulty of maintaining the uniqueness of the truth of [the] gospel against the claims of the world, and the intellectual problem to maintain it against the legitimate preoccupations of a scientific age." The prayers in the volume exhibit his passion for social responsibility but are sometimes ponderous and replete with the sexisms of a previous time.

John H. Tietjen
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DEATH AND LIFE: AN AMERICAN THEOLOGY. By Arthur C. McGill. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. 108 pages. Paper. $7.95.

The late Arthur McGill, professor at Harvard Divinity School, made a strong impression on those who knew and heard him.That impression, however, is shared in only a small way by

others, for McGill published very little. The present volume is a reconstruction of lectures given at St. Olaf College in 1974. The editors have produced an eminently readable book while preserving the oral tone of the original.

McGill contrasts the typical American attitude to death with Jesus' attitude. For American culture, death is a mutilating power to be avoided when possible and resisted when avoidance fails. Since death can finally be neither avoided nor resisted, our culture despairs in relation to death and seeks to escape from it in illusion.

In Jesus, we find a different attitude to death. Jesus freely accepts death because of his understanding of life. Life is never possessed but is to be received anew in each moment. Our lives are thus inherently needy. Jesus does not try to overcome neediness by holding on to the life he has been given. He gives it away, knowing that in the resulting neediness God will give yet again. The American mistake, reproduced too often in the social ministry of the churches, is the attempt to remove the neediness essential to life. Christian love is not sufficiency seeking to realize ever greater sufficiency for others, but neediness shared with neediness out of trust in the nourishing of God.

No summary can capture the power of McGill's presentation, especially his masterful use of the images we use to describe death. The book abounds in "aha" moments, when McGill turns an image or sentence in a way that both illuminates and disrupts. This strength is also the book's weakness. The persuading power of the book does not derive from argument but from the presentation ringing true as the reader's perspective is shaped by McGill's art. There is little here to convince the reader for whom the "aha" does not come.

A deeper theological problem is the relation between Jesus and the transformation of the self. McGill says that the new, neediness-accepting self is a gift of Jesus and only possible through his death. Yet such statements remain oddly abstract compared to the rest of the book. More concrete is the presentation of Jesus as the exemplar we are to imitate. Even the editors in their afterword paraphrase McGill: "To be transformed into an identity constituted by death, we would have to do the impossible: mimic Jesus' *choosing* to die. It would take courage. But the steps are already charted before us and, perhaps, dimly known" (p. 104). To use Lutheran shorthand, that is law, law beautifully put, but law nonetheless.

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THE BARMEN CONFESSION. PAPERS FROM THE SEATTLE ASSEMBLY. Vol. 26 in Toronto Studies in Theology. Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1986. xi and 362 pages. Cloth. $59.95.

The International Symposium of Scholars and Church Leaders held at the University of Washington from 26 to 29 April 1984 under sponsorship of the William O. Douglas Institute provided its over 600 participants the opportunity to hear eye-witnesses of the German Church Struggle interact with an array of expert commentators in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Barmen Theological Declaration of May 1934. The twelve papers presented include contributions by witnesses and survivors of the Church Struggle (Heinrich Vogel, Eberhard Bethge, Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann, and Franz Hildebrandt), American veteran commentators on the Church Struggle (Franklin Littell and Paul Lehmann) and recent interpreters of the theology of Barmen working out of a variety of contexts (Martin Stöhr, Wolfgang Gerlach, Bertold Klappert, Karl Dietrich Bracher, Dorothee Sölle, and John de Gruchy).

These papers provide a broad spectrum of both historical assessment and fresh theological discourse provoked by Barmen's enduring witness of the church's faith in crisis. The

volume thus serves a good introductory function. The essays by Vogel, Bethge, Zimmermann, and Hildebrandt will now form part of the written legacy of the Church Struggle, together with the 1983 volume of reflections by ten Confessing Church theologians edited in celebration of the Barmen year by Rainer Stürig, *Dann werden die Steine schreien. 50 Jahre theologische Erklärung Barmen* (Bielefeld: Kirche und Mann, 1984, Second Ed.).

In a single year, Edwin Mellen has published three works devoted to the German Church Struggle. Profound gratitude is in order, despite the prohibitive price. Editorial control remains a problem for Mellen, however. This is true of both typography and style in the present volume. Some attempt to compensate for the linguistic deficit of some of the German contributors would have been graciously in order (short of actually inviting them to present and publish in the mother tongue, something U.S. conference organizers ought to try just once!). Wanting also is a biographical key or any overall account of this historic convocation. These editorial additions would have been a considerable help to those unable to be among the Seattle 600. That, presumably, was the purpose of publishing the papers in book form.

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LUTHER IN CONTEXT. By David C. Steinmetz. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986, 160 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Here is an outstanding book of interest to theologians and students of theology. While no American has as yet written an introductory survey on Luther, this comes closest. David C. Steinmetz has done careful research and it shows in this book of lectures. He is both a student of the period preceding the Reformation, and he is regarded as one of America's leading Luther scholars.

Instead of giving a standard Luther lecture at each university and celebration to which he was invited during 1983, the Luther year, he spoke on various subjects to which he has given years of careful preparation. The essays, though nearly all previously published, are gathered here into a single volume.

Steinmetz admits that he is not attempting to present a comprehensive introduction to Luther through the essays, but he does introduce the reader to the heart of Luther's theology. The book has no boring Luther cliches.

While Luther interpreters sometimes specialize in Luther's biography or his polemical treatises, Steinmetz focuses on Luther's interpretation of the Bible, and this comes through in each chapter. This approach is fresh and valuable. The book not only brings to the surface well-known Luther themes, but explores Luther's relationship to other medieval and sixteenth-century theologians.

Steinmetz avoids broad generalities. He finds unpolished gems hidden in Luther's writings and polishes them for us. In his chapter on Abraham and the Reformation, for example, he examines and compares interpretations of Abraham, as well as interpretations of Paul's interpretation, by three figures: the fifteenth-century Tübingen scholar, Wendelin Steinbach; prominent Roman Catholic and papal legate at the Council of Trent, Girolamo Cardinal Seripando; and Martin Luther.

For another example, in his chapter "Luther and the Drunkenness of Noah," he studies the work of a fifteenth-century commentator, Denis the Carthusian, a man who is unknown to Luther, and compares his work to Luther's three comments on the story. The rationale is that both commentators had the same sources available before them. What does each come up with? How does this compare to modern studies? Luther and Denis thereby are brought into comparison with the comments of Gerhard von Rad.

His chapter on the Two Kingdoms, while brief, is easy to read and in spite of the vast literature on the subject, seems to cover the theory adequately. Unique, again, is that Steinmetz does not leave his studies in the past, but revolves his questions around the comments Reinhold Niebuhr made on Luther and the Two Kingdoms.

Other subjects covered in the book are a comparison of Augustine and Luther on Romans 9, Luther and the Hidden God, Luther against Luther, Luther among the Anti-Thomists, Luther and Hubmaier on the Freedom of the Human Will, Scripture and the Lord's Supper, and Luther and Calvin on Church and Tradition.

Luther research is steadily gaining influence within the total theological world of today. This book offers something for the specialist, and is also a fresh and current contribution which can help make this body of research useful for other theological disciplines. In spite of Steinmetz' modest claim, it is useful as an introductory guide for the beginning student.

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LIBERATION AND HUMAN WHOLENESS: THE CONVERSION EXPERIENCES OF BLACK PEOPLE IN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM. By Edward P. Wimberly and Anne Streaty Wimberly. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986. 143 pages. Paper. $10.95.

The author states in the introduction of his book that the intention of his study is to examine the conversion experiences of Black Christians from within the psychological, theological, and sociocultural aspects of their world view as slave and ex-slave. The assumption of this approach is that personal experiences point to a wider social environment, and considering this social environment enables hermeneutics to be more inclusive and holistic.

The material is contained in the following seven chapters:

1. Introduction
2. The Need for Salvation: Themes and Images
3. Psychological Needs and the Conversion Vision
4. The Role of Community in Conversion
5. Sustaining Religious Experience
6. The Psychosocial World View and Conversion
7. The Implications of the Slave Conversion

Tradition for a Postmodern Age argues very convincingly the conversion experiences of slaves and ex-slaves which challenges ourhermeneutical task to become more interdisciplinary. The value of the study for the theological enterprise is that it should contribute to the hermeneutical task of pastoral counseling.

The material in this book has implications for the way theology will be carried out in a postmodern age, i.e., a theology in dialogue with the disinherited and culturally dominated sectors of society. More studies can provide direction for making folk piety and religio-symbolic images available to the whole church today.

The final value of this book is in its contribution to understanding the role of women in postmodern theology.

The book is a must for instructors of theology, seminary students and Christian leaders.

Albert P. Pero
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WHO WROTE THE BIBLE? By Richard Elliott Friedman. New York: Summit Books, 1987. 299 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

When a book on JEDP gets feature treatment by *U.S. News* and the *Wall Street Journal,* you know that the author must have an "angle" or an aggressive literary agent—or both.

Friedman writes a kind of detective story, informing the non-specialist about the sources of the Pentateuch and about his own, somewhat idiosyncratic, hypotheses. Though I have taught this material for 20 years, Friedman hooked me, too, with his style and verve and scholarly chutzpah.

He concludes that J (who may have been a woman) wrote between 848 and 722, while E was a male Shiloh priest, who probably wrote between 747 and 722. J and E were combined into JE shortly after 722. In his telling, Jeremiah (or Baruch) wrote not only the book named after him, but also Deuteronomy and both versions of the so-called Deuteronomistic History (Joshua—2 Kings). The priestly document(P) was composed during the reign of Hezekiah as an alternative to the JE document. It defended Aaron and denigrated Moses. As part of his defense for this early date for P, Friedman proposes that the Tabernacle was stored in the first temple, in a space measuring exactly 20 by 8 by 10 cubits formed by the outstretched wings of the cherubim. Ezra put together the JE, D, and P documents, though this is ironic since JE and D were products of Shiloh priests opposed to and opposed by the Aaronic author of P.

Exciting as it is, this book has two serious flaws. First, Friedman seems unaware of the tenuousness of many of his observations. It is crucial to his argument that Gen 15 be J and Exod 32–34 be E and J, but both identifications are seriously questioned today. A deuteronomistic hand is probable in Exod 32–34 and at least possible in Gen 15. Many scholars would deny that there ever was an E, and they find it quite inappropriate to divide the Joseph stories up into separate sources. Too often (e.g., pp. 146–147, 177, 186) Friedman clinches an argument with a rhetorical question, which could be answered in a quite different way than he suggests.

Secondly, his conclusions are dubious, sometimes clearly incorrect. One would never know from his discussion that his date for J is highly controversial. Most scholars date J to the 10th century and a few to the exile—almost none to the 9th–8th centuries. His perception of the book of Jeremiah as a unity glosses over the clear distinction between the earlier Jeremianic tradition and the deuteronomistic redaction of the book. The fact that the book of Jeremiah in its present form is so silent about Josiah's reform makes it extremely unlikely that the author of Jeremiah was responsible for the books of Kings, in which the reform of Josiah is the great climax. He claims that Deut 1:39 alludes to P and therefore was written after P, but the words in question in Deuteronomy are absent from the Septuagint and probably themselves secondary. It is doubtful that the Tabernacle was shoved in the Holy of Holies, or that such a tent would have survived after more than 200 years in the land. He makes it fit the available space by having its frames overlap. Without this conjecture, it would be much too long to fit into the Holy of Holies!

Ralph W. Klein
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JEREMIAH. By Robert P. Carroll. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986. 874 pages. Cloth. $38.95.

JEREMIAH 1. By William L. Holladay. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. xxii and 682 pages. Cloth. $44.95.

JEREMIAH. VOLUME I. Introduction and Commentary on Jeremiah I–XXV. By William McKane. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986. cxxii and 658 pages. Cloth. $36.95.

1986 seems to have been the year of Jeremiah! These three commentaries published in that year total more than 2300 pages, and two of them (Holladay and McKane) only cover the

first half of the book. But while all three commentaries are long—and expensive—they differ considerably from one another.

Carroll represents a radical stance vis-à-vis Jeremiah. While many commentators spend much time retelling the life and struggles of the prophet, Carroll believes there is very little that can be said with confidence about the man Jeremiah. It is only the redactional framework, in his judgment, which attributes the poems to Jeremiah; without these redactional notes, even the poems are anonymous and from many sources.

Carroll finds no need to associate the "confessions" (those famous laments in which Jeremiah quarrels with God about his calling) with the prophet. The anti-Judean stance of 24:4–10 and 29:10–19 in his judgment reflects the struggles between the exilic and Palestinian communities at the time of Ezra-Nehemiah; the polemic against Jehoiachinin 22:24–30 is in fact a blast against Zerubbabel, leader of the early post-exilic community; the salvation oracles in chaps. 30–31 stem from the 5th or 4th century.

While there is much learning in this book, I suspect that those who read Jeremiah primarily for parish ministry will be disappointed. Carroll believes that the notion of a new covenant in 31:31–34, for example, represents the fundamental *weakness* of biblical prophecy. He holds that the utopian society characterized in this passage does not and cannot exist.

Holladay presents the reviewer with a different kind of frustration: he may attribute too much to Jeremiah! He assigns much of the prose to Jeremiah and denies its connection with a deuteronomistic redaction (with Helga Weippert against Winfried Thiel). Also frustrating is a lack of an introduction to the commentary (it will come in volume 2). Holladay has published voluminously on Jeremiah in the past, but his opinions are in a constant state of flux. One constant: he holds that the 13th year referred to in 1:2 is not a reference to the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry, but to his birth. Strangely, this major departure from the standard chronology is not defended in detail but only asserted. Even in his own wooden translation, it is hard to see in these words an allusion to the prophet's birth.

Holladay believes, with many, that the book of Deuteronomy was first discovered in 622, but goes on to hold that it was also recited every seven years thereafter (615, 608, 601, 594, 587), and that some of the prose passages in Jeremiah are responses to these recitals of Deuteronomy. The new covenant passage in 31:31–34, for example, was a response to the recitation of Deuteronomy in 587. The basis for this conclusion escapes me (perhaps it will be better supported in volume 2), but it is also hard to see how he knows that 23:5–6 (Yahweh our righteousness) was spoken in 587. He also identifies what was in the "first scroll," which Jehoiakim burned, and the second scroll prepared in 601–unconvincingly, in my judgment.

McKane's is a third approach. He discounts both Weippert and Thiel and identifies instead a Jeremianic core which was supplemented in a kind of hit or miss fashion over the years. Just as the LXX shows that there were numerous small glosses to the text, McKane argues that the whole book was a rolling corpus, which gradually expanded—I was led to think of a rolling snowball. He speaks of the untidy and desultory nature of the aggregation of material which comprises the book of Jeremiah. Thus, there is no comprehensive framework or theological system within which the parts of chapters 1–25 are fitted together. McKane shows how the vocabulary in the poetry served as a lexical reservoir for those who expanded the text, though I disagree strongly when he asserts that to describe passages in Jeremiah as compositions is to accord them a degree of planning and thoughtfulness which they do not possess. In his view small pieces of pre-existing text triggered exegesis or commentary. The Masoretic Text, therefore, is a series of commentaries built on pre-existing elements. The rolling corpus, in his view, rolled over a long

period of time and was still rolling in the post-exilic period. The most intriguing part of McKane's proposal is that the overall redaction of Jeremiah was much like the ad hoc glossing that can be detected via the LXX.

Both Holladay and McKane make very frequent references to Hebrew readings; Carroll's references to the original language are only a little less frequent although his citations are always in transliteration.

I am a fan of Winfried Thiel and his notion of a comprehensive deuteronomistic redaction of the original Jeremiah, which none of the commentators under review shares (on this point Carroll is closer to me than the others). But Carroll otherwise is very nihilistic and does not really appreciate the value of deuteronomistic theology. If I had to rate these books it would be 1. McKane, 2. Holladay, 3. Carroll. But in my view, 1986 was not really the year of Jeremiah after all.

Ralph W. Klein

NAG HAMMADI, GNOSTICISM, AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY. Edited by Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986. xliv and 332 pages. Paper. $14.95.

Questions about Gnosticism and early Christianity will take decades to answer. It took over thirty years for the fifty-some Gnostic texts discovered near the Egyptian village of Nag Hammadi in 1945 (and then peddled about and inaccessible for years) to be collected, edited and translated in their entirety. Thus the process of interpreting and relating these sources to early Christianity including the New Testament has just begun, relatively speaking. This volume presents papers by fourteen leading scholars who took part in the 1983 Springfield, Missouri Working Seminar on Gnosticism and Early Christianity. It begins with a large bibliography for the specialist and a short simple introduction for the beginner, by Charles W. Hedrick, the editor and conference host along with Robert Hodgson, Jr.

Gnosticism can now be studied not simply as a Christian heresy, but as a belief system with its own prayers, creeds, and worship, yet intimately inter-related with Judaism, Greek philosophy ("underground Platonism," as John Dillon has called it elsewhere), other near East religions, and especially early Christianity and the New Testament. This collection will be especially provocative for Johannine studies, as expected, with major essays on the Gospel of John in general (by George W. MacRae, to whose memory the book is dedicated) and on its eighth chapter (Helmut Koester) and the Beloved Disciple as Thomas (Hans-Martin Schenke). The strong section on the New Testament concludes with detailed discussions of the "Q" source and the Gospel of Thomas (James M. Robinson) and of the F. C. Bauer thesis (Frederick Wisse). Strongest among the other essays are Pheme Perkins' study of Irenaeus and Elaine Pagels' survey of Gnostic interpretations of the Genesis creation accounts.

Already of decisive importance, the book's value is further enhanced by photographs and indices of the Gnostic texts and modern authors. Yet for all its comprehensiveness, this collection does not include the views of David Wenham or Oxford or the literature long known as the Apocryphal New Testament, as other reviewers have pointed out.

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THE ROOTS OF EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANITY. Edited by Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. xxix and 319 pages. Cloth. $39.95.

This large and impressive collection of essays on the earliest history of Christianity in Egypt is a first, in two ways. It is the first

publication under the direct auspices of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity (Claremont, California), in a series entitled "Studies in Antiquity and Christianity," James M. Robinson, Editorial Board Director. It is also the first phase of "a comprehensive history of Christianity in Egypt from its beginnings until the Arab conquest" (xvii), Birger A. Pearson, Project Director. Since Egypt was so important for the development of Christian monasticism and major theological tendencies, a comprehensive history would be welcome indeed, although not at these prices.

Based on a 1983 conference in Claremont, the volume contains seventeen authoritative essays by such familiar names as James Robinson (on the cloak-and-dagger stories of the Nag Hammadi and Bodmer discoveries), Robert Grant (on theological education at Alexandria), and Charles Kannengiesser (on Athanasius and Arius as Alexandrian Egyptians), as well as scholars from around the world. The five section headings provide the best summary: Greek, Coptic, and Arabic Sources; The Environment of Early Christianity in Egypt; The Emergence of Christianity in Egypt; Theological Speculation and Debate; and Monasticism. The editors and authors are eager to stress the particularly Egyptian, i.e. Coptic, context of this material, starting with Alexandrian Judaism.

This is an exceptionally important collection of essays, handsomely produced, with great significance for the future of early Christian studies. The first section, on sources, charts the way for future research: Coptic and Greek inscriptions by S. Kent Brown, Coptic papyri by Leslie S. B. MacCoull, Coptic literature through the tenth century by Tito Orlandi, and Arabic sources by Khalil Samir, S. J. Progress in understanding ancient and early medieval church history belongs not just to Greek and Latin specialists but to those who work in Syriac, Coptic, and even Christian Arabic.

Paul Rorem

WORKING THE ANGLES: THE SHAPE OF PASTORAL INTEGRITY. By Eugene H. Peterson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. 137 pages. Paper. $7.95.

The title makes this sound like a primer for con artists. Nothing could be further from the truth. The author, a Presbyterian parish pastor from Bel Air, Maryland, urges integrity in pastoral work, understood two ways—matching words with actions, and working toward making the various aspects of pastoral work hang together.

He uses a triangle as a visual image, arguing that the three "sides" of pastoral ministry—preaching, teaching, and administration—are held together at the corners by three "acts of attention"—prayer, Scripture reading, and spiritual direction—each of which has as its goal nothing other and nothing less than an encounter with God.

Does that sound commonplace? Obvious? Again, nothing could be further from the truth. Peterson delivers a salutary slap in the face right away: "The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers . . . preoccupied with shopkeeper's concerns—how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will lay out more money." That, to me, identifies the true cause for the widely noted, loudly lamented epidemic of burnout among clergy. In turn, the accurate diagnosis points toward the effective cure—a return to disciplines neglected and even scorned.

He provides more of substance in envisioning spiritual direction (both giving and receiving it) than I have encountered before. It is a great good that cries out for reclamation.

Peterson's reading is broad, his thinking clearly unhurried and deep. His writing is tough, terse, bracing, impassioned—just plain exciting! Some paragraphs contain one quotable aphorism after another. It bears repeated reading. I plan to read, mark, learn, and in-

wardly digest it. I will even dare to be categorical: Everyone involved in, or concerned about, the shape of pastoral ministry today—bishops, pastors, seminarians—needs to read this book.

My sole complaint is that Peterson declines—quite specifically and consciously—to offer specific tools for "working the angles," on the ground that "these have been and are being done well by many others." If so, a select bibliography would, it seems to me, have been a logical and necessary addendum. The fact remains that this slim book is a most important one that deserves a wide and attentive readership.

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CIVITAS, RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CITY. Edited by Peter S. Hawkins. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. xix and 133 pages. Cloth. $20.95.

The history of Christianity could be presented as *urban* church history, from St. Paul's travels and the rise of Constantinople through medieval Rome and Paris and the Reformers' cities to revolutionary Paris, industrial London and the modern witness of inner-city churches around the world. The sources are plentiful, and the specialists are hard at work.

Peter S. Hawkins (with Ann C. Lammers) has divided the papers read at the 1982 Yale "Civitas" symposium into two parts: first, biblical and patristic perspectives on the city, and second, its medieval and modern interpretations. Part One has more coherence: Robert R. Wilson on the Old Testament, Wayne A. Meeks on St. Paul, Jonathan Z. Smith on Jerusalem, Rowan A. Greer on the Christian's alien citizenship before and after Constantine, and John Baldovin on Constantinople. Part Two jumps from medieval literature and art (Peter Hawkins on Dante and Duncan Robinson on Sienese iconography) to the modern literature which invokes urban themes (James Dougherty and Burton Pike).

All of these essays are learned and eloquent. Each contributor appreciates the long legacy of St. Augustine as well as the recent work of Lewis Mumford and others. Such splendid studies and numerous other investigations of specific cities during particular periods will document the formative role of major cities for the history of Christianity. Thanks to Hawkins and these essayists with their many colleagues, we may even see a standard introductory textbook on church history as urban church history.

Paul Rorem

MODELS OF GOD: THEOLOGY FOR AN ECOLOGICAL, NUCLEAR AGE. By Sallie McFague. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. xv and 224 pages. Paper. $10.95.

Models of God extends the argument of Sallie McFague's last book, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982, 1985), into a suggestive and constructive interpretation of the Trinity. The metaphor of God as friend is now developed into a three-fold model of God as mother, lover, and friend. She combines motifs from liberation, feminist, and process theologies in a "remythologizing" of the God/world relationship. The fundamental image from which she develops the trinitarian model is the world as God's body. But the book is not process theology proper. It has a distinctive style and contains many original proposals for picturing the reality of God in an age plagued by ecological plunder and the threat of nuclear disaster.

Her book is addressed to "white middle-class American Christianity," that is, to those with money and power, and on whom she pins the responsibility for the present ecological and nuclear crises. She seeks a change in consciousness which may occur if we dare to

rethink the dominant hierarchical images of God as king, father, imperial ruler, and judge, which she claims no longer enchance life, but threaten its continuation and fulfillment.

The first chapter argues for a new vision of reality which is holisitic, ecological, and evolutionary in perspective. Also, humans must accept the responsibility for eating the apple of nuclear knowledge. Chapter two sets forth the essence of the Christian gospel as a "destabilizing, inclusive, nonhierarchical vision of fulfillment for all," especially for those on the margins of society. Chapter three introduces the notions of God as mother (parent), lover, and friend and contrasts the metaphor of the world as God's body over against the prevailing image of the world as a king's realm. The remaining three chapters develop the trinitarian formula. God the Mother creates the world with *agape* and demands justice for all. God the Lover saves the world with *eros* by healing the division between people and overcomes the separation from nature. God the Friend sustains the world with *philia* and offers companionship and fulfillment for all.

A short review cannot convey the power of her arguments which are built upon theories of symbol and metaphor. Her reasoning demonstrates continuity with and not merely criticism of the received tradition. This is first and foremost a work of constructive theology. It should be included in seminary and graduate courses on systematic theology.

One final caveat: if McFague is correct, then so is Feuerbach. If theology is mostly fiction, the imagining of our deepest held desires, concerns, and hopes, then it is anthropology. These models of God are metaphors for the ideal set of human relationships and humanity's relation to the cosmos. But perhaps this is precisely what our age needs.

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HELPING WOMEN IN CRISIS. By Kay Marshall. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986. 170 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Kay Marshall has provided a very practical help for "spiritual leaders" who work with women, addressing topics such as alcohol and drug abuse, child abuse and molestation, incest, infidelity, rape, and suicide. She takes women seriously and resists blaming the victim. She provides concrete "do's" and "don'ts." Her approach is compassionate and responsible.

Although Marshall's suggestions are not simplistic, the book avoids discussing the basic systemic societal and theological problems of sexism and oppression. It therefore encourages the woman in crisis to place faith in "the authorities" even though those authoritative officials and agencies may be part of the oppressive situation.

Although a helpful guide for ministry, the illustrations suggest all women with problems will come to our office door. Lacking in the book is a compassion which leads us out into society, to the streets and homes and offices and schools where such crises are happening.

The author places proper hope in prayer and forgiveness. Theologically, however, her emphasis primarily on the sovereignty of God rather than the incarnation bypasses both Christ's suffering with and in us and the power of the resurrection for new life and liberation from oppressive conditions.

This is indeed a "Handbook for People-Helpers." It can be a good beginning, particularly for those who need the authority of a "Christian" book to address the issue of women's oppression.

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WOMEN–CHURCH. By Rosemary Radford Ruether. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985. xii and 306 pages. Cloth. $16.95.

Women–Church as a phenomenon represents the first time that women collectively have claimed to be church and have claimed the tradition of the exodus community as liberation from patriarchy. Ruether's book describes this phenomenon, grounds it biblically and historically, and provides four chapters of outlines of liturgies to celebrate this concept.

Ruether reminds us that the history of Christianity shows a continual tension between two models of the church: spirit-filled community and historical institution. The institutional church has often tried to make itself the cause of grace and the means of dispensing the Spirit, while the spirit-filled community deludes itself by imagining that it can live without historical structure. At best, historical institutions create the occasion for the experience of the Spirit. Ruether's belief is that feminism will develop much more powerfully if it secures footholds in existing Christian churches, working to change them, than if it chooses separatism.

She rejects patriarchy, which has taught contempt for women and which contempt women internalized, thus dividing them one from another. There is, therefore, a necessary separatist stage, in which women in their exodus from patriarchy gather as women. They delegitimize the theological myths that justify the ecclesiology of patriarchy and begin to form liturgies to midwife their liberation from it.

Included in the book are liturgies for New Naming, for Baptism, for Covenanting and Reconciliation, for Healing from Violence, and for Rededication. The liturgies, written by many women, hallow the life cycle, so Women–Church reclaims menstruation as the end of one cycle of female potency and the beginning of another, as well as menopause and croning, which mark new types of creative energy and the time of becoming a wise, old woman. Included in the year cycles are a Fall "Remembering of the Hungry" and a Spring "Good Friday Walk for Justice."

Although one might not care to use all these liturgies, one finds here possibilities for renewal for women, and for the church, alternatives that can heal the split between male and female, between mind and body, between society and nature, between races and classes.

The final goal, according to Ruether, is not permanent separatism. She sees a time when this liberated humanity would no longer be "Women–Church" but simply "Church." This book, therefore, is for everyone. Feminist theology is not a passing fad: "I would contend today that we as women can indeed speak as Church, do speak as Church, not in exile from the Church, but rather that the Church is in exile with us, awaiting with us a wholeness that we are in process of revealing."

Norma J. Everist

DIVINE IMPASSIBILITY: AN ESSAY IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY. By Richard E. Creel. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986. xii and 238 pages. Cloth. $42.50.

Richard Creel could have clarified what it might mean to speak of a passible, suffering God and how recent theologians tried to make sense of a suffering God. Instead, he has written a different book: a painstaking discussion of the concept of divine impassibility, in conversation almost exclusively with process philosophy and strictly philosophical classical theists. This book is one of "natural theology" in a traditional sense, with the virtues and vices of the discipline.

A readily apparent virtue is clarity. Creel surveys a variety of meanings that have been given to "impassibility" and finally defines it as "imperviousness to causal influence from external factors" (p. 11). Something is impas-

sible if its environment cannot change it. He notes that God can be impassible in some respects and not others. Consequently, the question "Is God impassible?" cannot be given a simple answer. Creel argues that God must be impassible in *nature* and *will.* What God is and what God intends derive solely from God. Creel carefully shows that sense can be made of these assertions. Nevertheless, God cannot be impassible with regard to *knowledge* of what actually happens in the world. God's knowledge of the range of possibilities in the world is impassible, but not God's knowledge of which possibilities actually are realized. Creel finds the traditional idea of all reality being eternally present to God to be incompatible with real change occurring in history. Although passible in knowledge, God is nevertheless not passible in *feeling.* God remains blissful, despite the knowledge of our follies.

The picture of God that emerges is a complex synthesis of process and classical theism. The detailed work of synthesis and argument is clearly developed and can be followed without too much prior acquaintance with the debate, although some knowledge of process philosophy may be needed. The problem of the book is not so much philosophical as religious. The emergent picture of God has little relation to the Christian tradition and is simply antithetical to the concerns of the Reformation. God's impassibility ceases to be an aspect of God's sovereignty. Rather, to make the idea of an acting yet impassible God comprehensible, Creel says that God has indexed divine actions to what we might do. If we do act *a,* God has predetermined to do act *b.* If instead we do act *c,* God has predetermined to do act *d.* We determine what God actually does. Our ultimate relation to God is strictly in our own hands (p. 206). In fact, God does not will our salvation, but only our freedom. In this way, God's bliss is not disturbed when we misuse our freedom to our own great loss.

The high level at which Creel is able to carry out his discussion is a testimony both to his own philosophical skill and to the vitality that presently exists in philosophical theology. Unfortunately, this book will not encourage further exploration by those for whom the issues of the Reformation matter, and that is a shame.

Michael Root

SUFFERING AND HOPE. By J. Christiaan Beker. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. 96 pages. Paper. $4.95.

The thesis of this book is that the Christian life is lived in the precarious balance between suffering and hope. Suffering without hope is tragic and ultimately meaningless; hope apart from suffering is utopian and unrealistic. Beker, a biblical theologian from Princeton, looks to Scripture for the proper balance.

Using what he calls a catalytic reading of Scripture (avoiding both biblicism and modernist prejudices), Beker chooses the death and resurrection of Christ as the key to a Christian understanding of the relation between suffering and hope. The death of Christ embraces the various forms of suffering in our lives, and the resurrection is the ground of our hope.

The Deuteronomic theology of retributive justice is the dominant Old Testament mode of understanding the relation between suffering and hope, but it breaks down when crises in individual and corporate life threaten all hope for the future. Wisdom (Job and Ecclesiastes) and apocalyptic theologies are attempts to maintain some balance between suffering and hope in the face of meaningless suffering. To his credit, Beker presents these old Testament positions in their most persuasive light rather than simply as precursors to the final revelation found in Christ.

Turning to the New Testament, Beker finds hopeful strategies for using suffering as a witness in 1 Peter. Revelation, on the other hand, is written in an environment of such intense suffering that hope is suffocated to such an

extent that martyrdom becomes the only possibility for a witness to the gospel.

Beker finds in St. Paul the most satisfactory interpretation of the relation between suffering and hope. In two separate chapters he traces first Paul's gospel of redemptive suffering and then his response to tragic suffering. Paul uses the death and resurrection of Christ to ground his theology of redemptive suffering within history as well as his eschatological hope in God's final victory over evil.

Beker makes a strong case for what he calls "hopeful suffering" as he unfolds the biblical witness on the dialectical relation between suffering and hope. Each of the perspectives he presents comes through as a convincing voice of faith within the context of the historical period within which it was fashioned. As a reader, you will be challenged to make your own faith response within the historical situation where you find yourself.

Beker's book would make an excellent text for both undergraduate and seminary classes in theology. It would work well as a basis for discussion among groups of pastors. I think its size and readability make it an option for adult lay education as well. I strongly recommend it.

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY. By Jean LaPorte. Volume 7 in Studies in Women and Religion. New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1982. 196 Pages. Cloth. $39.95.

The purpose of this book is "to explain the role and place of women in Early Christianity as it emerges from the writings of the Fathers of the Church" (p. 1). Jean LaPorte has excellently and precisely accomplished his goal with this book. He examines Women in Martyrdom, Women in Conjugal Life, Women in Contemplative Life, Women in Ministry, and Women in Symbol. LaPorte's book is interesting and establishes credibility with its reader because he includes direct quotes from original texts.

Most interesting is LaPorte's research on martyrs, widows, virgins, and deaconesses. His findings portray women in the early church as strong, faithful, humble, and self-sacrificing leaders. The section on women in conjugal life is appreciated by this reviewer because little has been written about the traditional role of women as wives in that time period. LaPorte quotes Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, and Chrysostom for his material in this section. In the section on women in symbol, LaPorte points to positive examples of "femaleness" in these early writings. The symbolical use of Woman as "good" in these writings counterbalances some of the symbols of Woman as "evil" in the Bible and even in modern-day society.

Although this book is significant in its research and consideration of its topic, it falls short in critical analysis of the material. LaPorte does not interpret his findings for the reader and one is left thinking "So what?" How does this information change our understanding of the early church? What bearing does this research have on our church and theology today? The reader is left with a lot of questions to answer for oneself, because the author has written without expressing his opinions.

This book is a significant piece of research which would give food for thought to seminarians and professors of church history and theology. Pastors in the field and laity interested in the topic would also find it informative.

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LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS. MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGICAL BREAKTHROUGH. By Alister E. McGrath. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985. viii and 199 Pages. Cloth. $34.95

This handsomely printed—if cheaply bound—volume from Blackwell's provides a handy digest of scholarship on Luther as a late-medieval theologian from Holl to the present with regard to the roots and emergence of the "theology of the cross" articulated in the theses Luther prepared for the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518. Taking God's dereliction in the Crucified as the theological point of departure is seen to be the decisive expression of a gradual break with the theological heritage of the Augustinian Hermits. Within this triple context, Luther's work as an educator and expositor of Scripture is examined in detail as that work takes him away from the "federal" or covenant theology of nominalism, in which God's justice insures the justification of repentant and non-sinning sinners, toward something quite different, a theology which points to Christ alone as the ground of hope in a gracious God. This direction, so the author maintains, deserves to be appreciated as a new insight in western theology and not merely as a continuation of the late-medieval theological ferment.

What the author has done, he has done well, but why the need for this study? No new ground is covered in what turns out to be not so much a study of the theology of the cross itself as a rehearsal of all sides of the eternal debate over when and how Luther's "breakthrough" occurred. Even at that, McGrath overlooks other contexts for Luther's development which bear close scrutiny relative to the theology of the cross, the "modern devotion" of the Brethren of the Common Life for one. McGrath sees Luther struggling with the nominalist federal (and non-Christocentric) theology throughout the book. It is a pity, then, that scant attention is paid to Luther's preference, as early as the Hebrews lectures of 1517, for a theology of "testament" rather than one of covenant, a shift documented meticulously and persuasively by Kenneth Hagen (*A Theology of Testament in the Young Luther* [Brill, 1974]), whom McGrath never cites. Surely that aspect of Luther's theological and spiritual pilgrimage, with implications which have gone largely unnoticed by Lutheran liturgiologists, belongs to a comprehensive treatment of the theology of the cross.

McGrath's book is a piece of highly polished scholarly prose, obviously written for serious and well-read students of medieval and Reformation theology, replete with Latin and German texts and phrases (and, alas, utterly devoid of any attempt at linguistic inclusivity—not so polished at that!). The author does make a sustained attempt to introduce the novice and those who are rusty in their Ren/Ref vocabulary to the discussion at every turn. A small glossary is a useful and very considerate luxury provided the reader as well as a combined name and subject index. *Luther's Theology of the Cross* may be read by specialists and included on graduate seminar syllabi. Those seeking an introduction to Luther's world of thought will profit from it, if with difficulty.

Guy C. Carter

BANKEI ZEN. By Peter Haskel. New York: Grove Press, 1984. xxvi and 196 pages. Paper. $9.95.

THE UNBORN: THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF ZEN MASTER BANKEI (1622–1693). Translated and with an introduction by Norman Waddell. Berkeley: North Point Press, 1986. 192 pages. Paper. $11.25.

As Buddhist-Christian dialogue continues in the United States, more writings of lesser-known figures in the history of the Zen Buddhist tradition of Japan become available in

English translation. Here are two more entries into the field. Until recently Bankei was known only in Japanese or through a few selected writings in volumes of writers about the field of Zen, most notably the late "apostle of Zen to the West," D. T. Suzuki. It is difficult to make a choice as to which of these two volumes is the best. Haskel's edition contains ten illustrations, Waddell's only the cover picture of Bankei. Both contain lengthy introductions on the life of Bankei. Both translators cite from essentially the same corpus of writings in Japanese (Bankei left much in the way of sermonic material, little in actual written documents) and, consequently, the differences occur in the manner of translation. Waddell's translation is slightly more formal than is that of Haskel, and Haskel has given headings to different topics in the sermons which may make his translation easier to use for one who wishes to trace through a certain thought. On the other hand, Waddell has chosen to approach the entire corpus of Bankei's work through the central principle of "The Unborn" buddha-mind. Bankei's work is worthy of reading, particularly by Christians of the Reformation, since he was in many ways not only a reforming teacher of the Zen tradition, but his style is simple and direct and, as Haskel points out in his introduction, rather subversive of the inherited tradition.

In addition one finds an earthiness in Bankei which may have eluded readers who have looked at nothing more than anthologies or writings about Zen by scholars. If Luther's aim was to drive people back to the root principle of justification by grace through faith, which allows for freedom in Christ in the present moment apart from the trappings of medieval Catholicism, Bankei's aim was to drive his hearers into the present by denying the validity of much of the teaching of the past for those who live now. He constantly returns to the theme of the unborn mind, which is Mind experienced before one enters into logical analysis and categorization of phenomena. For instance, when he speaks of the well-known practice of koan study in Rinzai Zen (a koan is a riddle whose aim is to subvert the ordinary workings of discursive logic in order that the intuitive mind may see reality directly), he says that all the teachers of the past spoke koan for their age but his sermons and conversations are koan enough for his hearers; if they understand what Bankei says, no koan study is needed. In addition, as with Luther's letters of spiritual counsel, Bankei approaches his Buddhist faith in such a way as to make it eminently practical; he does well at what we would call catechesis, driving people to reliance upon their own participation in buddha nature as ground for responsibility for their actions.

For Bankei, karma (roughly understood in the West as the cycle of cause and effect in relations between the self and the phenomenal world) is not to be viewed sentimentally (as in "I'm suffering from bad karma"—a rough analogue to some Christian references to "God's will"), but as the state of being in which one finds oneself. If you are a thief, karma did not make you become a thief (or God's will); rather, your thievery is your karma and you are responsible to examine yourself to find the way out. This is the Zen tradition at its most robust and healthy roots, presented with stunning clarity.

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Briefly Noted

THE BELIEVERS' CHURCH. By Donald Durnbaugh (Herald Press, $12.95). This is a comprehensive history of the radical reformation in Germany and Switzerland with special emphasis on the movements which developed into the Church of the Brethren, the Amish, and the Mennonites as they are known in the United States. This is a sympathetic portrayal of those movements, so often misunderstood by Lutherans, whose confessions retain anathemas against the so-called Schwärmer, or left-wing reformers. The story needs to be told among us as well; it is not a pretty history. So much suffering was inflicted in the name of religion by our Lutheran and Reformed ancestors that one marvels at the breadth and humanity of the radical reformers and their descendants. There is good material here for understanding the radical reformers' approach to the sacramental life and their focus on the imitation of the life of Jesus in the life of the believer. In an age of ongoing reapproachement, D.'s study would make good reading for a group of adults in a parish committed to various ecumenical outreachings; it will be especially helpful in areas where the above-mentioned churches thrive. It is technical without being pedantic,and reads well. JCR

APOCALYPSE OF THE WORD. By Douglas Gwyn (Friends United, $14.95). There have been three major writers on the history of the Quaker movement in the 20th Century: Rufus Jones, Hugh Barbour, and now Douglas Gwyn. Jones approached Quakerism from a history-of-religions perspective and chose mysticism as the prism for interpreting Fox; Barbour chose to interpret the movement and Fox from the perspective of radical Puritan Protestantism. Jones takes a new tack; he sees the movement and Fox's preaching in particular from the perspective of apocalyptic hopes. In Gwyn's view, Fox emphasized the Christ within or the Inner Light in terms of the apocalyptic imagery of the divine warrior from Revelation 19, who does battle on earth against false religion. In line with this, Fox read the Bible backward to unearth a radical form of church order in which the offices of Christ function in the Body of Christ, the church, and in which Christ is come to earth as teacher of holiness. For an age in which the negative visions of apocalypticism seem to have captivated whole segments of American Protestantism, Gwyn's book offers an antidote in a healthy, hopeful, joyous apocalyptic: Christ is present among us to lead us into all the truth. The book marks a new phase in Quaker scholarship, which many Quakers have seen as dissipated and wandering from its biblical roots in the last thirty years. Gwyn's thorough research roots the message of Fox's everlasting gospel solidly in the risen Christ and shows that the organization of the Quakers proceeds from this premise. JCR

DOGEN'S FORMATIVE YEARS IN CHINA. By Takashi James Kodera (Prajna Press, $12.95); **MOON IN A DEWDROP: WRITINGS OF ZEN MASTER DOGEN.** Edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi (North Point Press, $15.95). Readers of these review columns have become accustomed to finding books reviewed in the area of Buddhist-Christian dialogue, which is one of the book review editor's special areas of interest and expertise. In past reviews we have noted the importance of Dogen, considered the father of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism in Japan, to the development of that world religion. *Moon in a Dewdrop* offers the most complete translation of Dogen's considerable literary and spoken output in English to date. The translation is a team effort by colleagues at the San Francisco Zen Center, an

important teaching and learning center in American Buddhism. 24 essays are contained in the book which give us insight into all aspects of Dogen's teaching. The title comes from Dogen's image of a dewdrop which reflects moonlight; the dewdrop is analagous to the state of meditation. As the entire moon may be reflected in the dewdrop, so complete awakening to truth is available to each human being. Dogen (1200–1250), in some regards the Thomas of Japanese Buddhism, stressed the centrality of sitting meditation (Zen) as itself enlightenment, could we but realize it. His writing dances and sings; it is highly imagistic, even if the images implode in the drive of this master teacher to lead us beyond dualism into the realm where we recognize the interdependence of all reality. A 100-page glossary of Chinese and Japanese terms (in transliteration as well as in Japanese) accompanies the text and greatly expands its usefulness. For those for whom Buddhist-Christian dialogue is beginning to make some sense, this is an accessible volume of great importance. Of more limited usefulness to our readers is the technical history of Dogen's years of study in China. The book is of interest to scholars who want to understand the development of Dogen's approach to Zen. Dogen spent five crucial years in study at various monasteries in China from 1223–1228; during his period he kept a journal, the Hokyo-Ki, which was not revealed until it was discovered by his disciples after his death. The document is given here in translation, with extensive historical introduction and notes. JCR

WHAT LUTHER SAYS. By Ewald M. Plass (Concordia, $29.95). Subtitled "a practical in-home anthology for the active Christian," this compendium of Luther's thought has been in circulation for almost thirty years and remains a helpful, though conservatively produced, volume of teaching from Dr. Martin. The book is shaped to underscore such items as the inspiration of Scripture and the vicarious atonement of Christ, and includes healthy sections on the sacraments as well. No effort has been made to update the first edition in this reprint, so we read of what is now called "confession and forgiveness" in our liturgies under the heading of "absolution," but one finds winsome headings such as "feeling" and "friendship" as well. Each selection, usually brief, is cited from the Weimar, the Erlangen, and the St. Louis editions of Luther's writing. Recommended for church libraries. JCR

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. By Karl Barth (Eerdmans, $17.95). Barth's massive Church Dogmatics was left unfinished at his death. This volume is subtitled "Church Dogmatics IV, 4, Lecture Fragments," and has been edited and translated by Geoffrey Bromiley from the typescript Barth left consisting of class notes and manuscript fragments. The volume focuses on life in the world and sheds much light on the implications of the gospel according to Barth for political and social life. Barth argues from the perspective of the reverence for God's holy name in the social sphere and for the struggle to achieve order out of chaos vis-à-vis the powers and principalities in the political realm. A timely volume in light of all the material now available concerning political theology and the biblical teaching of the powers. JCR

THE MASS. By Josef Jungmann (The Liturgical Press, $9.95). Jungmann's corpus of work has led the field in Roman Catholic studies in the liturgy. One simply doesn't work in liturgy without consulting Jungmann's labors in pastoral liturgy, history, and theology. *The Mass* is his masterwork which was completed shortly before his death in 1975. Section one discusses the biblical materials under a number of headings which have become common in eucharistic studies: pascha, memorial, covenant meal, sacrifice. Jungmann favors the view that the last supper was the preliminary paschal

celebration. One would not expect in a book of this nature to find much on the reformers, but the early and medieval periods are extremely well covered; detailed, if brief, essays help one to see the development of the mass from 1 Corinthians through the Reformation. Since the focus is on the Roman development, there is not a lot on Eastern liturgies, but they are covered adequately. The book continues through the reform of Vatican II and discusses in detail the theology of the Roman rite as it now exists. The final portion treats the pastoral implications and conduct of liturgy from the perspective of the eucharist as center of Christian spirituality. Throughout the work Jungmann is keenly aware of the twofold need of pastors and theologians to, on one hand, preserve the central mystery of the eucharist in its inexhaustible meaning for and among the faithful and, on the other hand, to explain the eucharist in reasonable terms. The book is set up in such a way that it could be used as a liturgical dictionary or glossary, and this enhances its usefulness for parish clergy. Highly recommended for pastor's libraries. JCR

CHURCHES RESPOND TO BEM, VOLUME III: OFFICIAL RESPONSES TO THE "BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY" TEXT. Edited by Max Thurian (WCC Publications, Faith and Order Paper No. 135, $16.90). This volume continues the response to the BEM or Lima Document of the World Council of Churches. There is a brief introduction by Nikos Nissiotis in which the theme of the centrality of baptism, eucharist, and ministry among the churches is stressed. The "burning issue" of women's ordination is mentioned, and four requirements are made: first, local ecumenism; second, priority to a "charismatic, eucharistic, and eschatological ecclesiology"; third, renewal of pastoral ministry; and fourth, affirmation of the centrality of the sacramental life. 35 different responses are then published without commentary. Useful for understanding the ongoing attempt of churches, including those who hold quite differing views (Quakers, Anabaptists, Baptists) to come to grips with the Lima document for their own life. JCR

WORSHIP VESSELS: RESOURCES FOR RENEWAL. By F. Russell Mitman (Harper & Row, $13.95). Billed as "nuts and bolts," this uneven collection of resources contains materials for "word act," "offertory act," and—well, you get the idea. The materials feign poetry, but suffer from an almost complete lack of attention to inclusivity, which one would think an assumption for contemporary writing. Introductions to the chapters sometimes raise more questions than they answer, as e.g. when the author states that marriage is an extension of the baptismal covenant (sic!) on p. 178. JCR

LITURGIES ON THE HOLOCAUST. Marcia Sachs Littell, editor (Edwin Mellen Press, $39.95). This book suffers from two problems, neither of which is its fault. The first problem is that too few Christian congregations have learned to observe Yom HaShoah and thus the resource will go unnoticed by many pastors. The second is the exorbitant price, which is always a problem with Edwin Mellen books. This is by no means a statement on the worth of the book. Perhaps in areas where Jews and Christians have begun to shape interfaith services to confront the holocaust, one synagogue and/or one church might each purchase the resource for a common library. Yom HaShoah is observed on 27 Nisan, which is the 5th day following the 8th week after Passover, and thus falling usually between 29 April and 6 May. LSTC has used resources from this book for our annual observance, and they are awe-inspiring in their simplicity and directness. Emphasis is not on guilt but on reconciliation and learning. It is part of ongoing Christian-Jewish dialogue to come to grips with Yom HaShoah. JCR

The *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* is published by the University of Sheffield in England and gives prominence to new

methods of biblical study, such as literary or narrative analysis. It also publishes important supplementary volumes, such as the ones noted below.

SLEEP, DIVINE & HUMAN, IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Thomas H. McAlpine. JSOTS 38 ($16.95 paper; $37.50 cloth). Here we find answers to every possible question about sleep: Where did one sleep? How long? Where is sleep mentioned? (In cases of vulnerability or during dreams.) What vocabulary was employed? How did Israel's view of sleep compare with that of her neighbors in Egypt and Mesopotamia? In what ways is sleep like death? The Bible speaks only of Yahweh's untimely sleep, and that only by implication. The issue here usually involves the question of Yahweh's faithfulness or reliability, regardless of whether such language is to be understood literally or metaphorically. RWK

DIRECTIONS IN BIBLICAL HEBREW POETRY. Edited by Elaine R. Follis. JSOTS 40 ($15.95 paper; $37.50 cloth). Sixteen interdisciplinary essays by individuals who participated in the Society of Biblical Literature's Biblical Hebrew Poetry Section comprise the traditional, innovative, and even controversial contents of this volume. In addition to the usual biblical methodologies, the authors drew on music, drama, classics, philosophy and the social sciences. William J. Urbrock here publishes "Samson: a Play for Voices," consisting of extracts from Proverbs 1–9, Ben Sira, the Song of Songs, Psalms 22 and 29, and the Samson story. In 1979, he published "Creation 1: A Play for Voices" in *Currents*. RWK

ZION, THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. By Ben C. Ollenburger. JSOTS 41 ($14.95 paper; $33.50 cloth). Zion is a refuge because Yahweh provides security for his people there if they show faith or trust. For Isaiah the security of Jerusalem is the result of Yahweh's presence and is available insofar as Judah and its leaders exercise faith by resisting the temptation to seek security through armaments and alliances. One fascinating result of the study is his critique of those who contrast the Mosaic and Jerusalem traditions (e.g. Mendenhall, Brueggemann) to the decided disadvantage of the Jerusalem tradition. Instead O. finds in the Zion tradition a constant concern for justice, a criticism of royal attempts to pervert justice, an attempt to ground justice in the action and character of God, and an emphasis on care for the poor. He urges Christians to offer the world a vision based not on human possibilities, but on faith in God the king and creator (the legacy of "Zion"), who raised Jesus and pronounced a divine "No!" to moral visions limited to human potential. RWK

THE IDENTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE PSALMS. By Steven J. L. Croft. JSOTS 44 ($15.95 paper; $34.00 cloth). From the Conclusion: "To a great extent, the voices which we hear in the psalter are different voices in different psalms: that of the king, the private person, the cultic minister. . . . At a different level the voice we are hearing in the psalms is one voice, the voice of the accumulated tradition of a nation and religious community at prayer: the voice of Israel responding to her God." In the course of discussing more than 90 Psalms where the identity of the speaker is in question, C. also discusses the enemies of the psalmist and the poor in the psalms. RWK

THE CONFESSIONS OF JEREMIAH IN CONTEXT. By A. R. Diamond. JSOTS 45 ($14.95 paper; $29.50 cloth). D. remains uncertain until the end about whether these moving passages really were uttered by the historical Jeremiah. He interprets them primarily within their present deuteronomistic context, in which they provide a theodicy for Yahweh's judgment upon Judah based on Israel's opposition to Jeremiah. About a third of this revised dissertation is devoted to a detailed exegesis of the confessions themselves. RWK

THE BOOK OF JUDGES: AN INTEGRATED READING. By Barry G. Webb. JSOTS 46 ($14.95 paper; $31.50 cloth). This literary analysis is guided by two questions: How is the text of the book of Judges structured? What does it mean as a whole? W. believes that the book deals primarily with the non-fulfillment of Yahweh's promise to give Israel the whole land and with the related issues of Israel's persistent apostasy and the freedom of Yahweh's action over against Israel. In the face of Israel's apostasy Yahweh does not so much dispense rewards and punishments as oscillate between punishment and mercy. The story of Samson is not an appendix to the book, as in many modern commentaries, but its true climax. W. suggests that the so-called Deuteronomistic History was not originally a unified work, but that it is made up of an edited series of books, like Judges, each of which has its own structure and theological emphasis. RWK

THE CHRONICLER'S HISTORY. By Martin Noth. Translated by H. G. M. Williamson. JSOTS 50 ($9.50 paper; $22.50 cloth). This study of the Chronicler's History (including an appendix dealing with the relationship between P and the final form of the Pentateuch) *and* a similarly detailed essay on the Deuteronomistic History (early translated as JSOTS 15) made up North's *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* in 1943. W.'s introduction assesses the significance of Noth's work (it began the modern era of Chronicles studies), and it reviews what has been going on in this field in the last two decades. RWK

LEVITICUS. By Lloyd R. Bailey. Knox Preaching Guides (John Knox, $5.95). Chances are, many readers of *Currents* have never preached on the third book of the canon, and they may not even have much information on its content. This book will give such readers a competent and semi-popular introduction to Leviticus that constantly asks about the relationship of the material to the New Testament, to the synagogue, and to the church. B. suggests that the following homiletically oriented questions are addressed helpfully by Leviticus: How does the believing community keep its identity amid secular pressures and competing value systems? What enabled Israel to survive in the alien culture of Canaan? What accounts for the durability of Judaism? Is there a necessity for discipline in worship practices? RWK

ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION. Edited by Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Fortress, $44.95). The thirty-three essays in this volume are written by students or senior colleagues of Frank Moore Cross, Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages at Harvard. Cross has made outstanding contributions to the study of ancient inscriptions, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the religion of Israel through more than 200 publications and through the lasting impact he has had on his many students. Because of the high quality of the contributors to this Festschrift, it will serve to indicate the state of the art in the study of the history of the religion of Israel and its immediate neighbors (Aram, Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ugarit) for decades to come. RWK

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

Preaching Helps

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost—Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Series B

Alaskan Pentecost

Time was, I used to hear that word "Alaska" and think automatically of snow. Not just snow but deep and killing frost, midnight sun and noonday dark, breath turning to crystals of ice on bearded faces. Last October I was invited to Anchorage for the All-Alaska Lutheran Conference, and as part of my preparation for my first venture that far north I read and re-read some Jack London. Just to get into the mood. His novels and stories of Alaska and of the Northwest Territories of Canada pit man against man, man against dog, dog against dog, everyone against the weather, and the weather against everyone.

White Fang and *The Call of the Wild,* and his stories of the Yukon and the Klondike, of trapping and hunting and searching for gold, of people sitting around stoves in log cabins drinking, "Confusion to the Mounted Police!" speak movingly, almost reverently, of the Cold and of the Silence.

The "White Silence" is one of Nature's cruelest tricks, he says, by which she convinces humans of their littleness. It is more terrible than shock of earthquake, fury of storm, or the long roll of heaven's artillery. When it's 60 below, and the sun never clears the horizon, cold and silence grip the land and seem to sneer at paltry humans moving across the face of the snow, mere specks of life journeying over a frozen waste. Then "the slightest whisper seems sacrilege" and "the mystery of all things struggles for utterance." At such times fear of death and fear of God mingle with hope of resurrection and yearning for life.

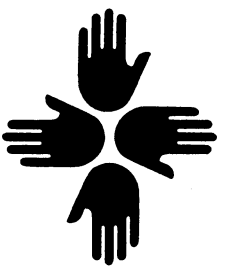
So I traveled north in October, my head full of tales of cruel frostbite and the crack of the dogwhip. But instead of numbing cold, I found warm people. Instead of freezing wind, the warm gusts of the Holy Spirit. Instead of the White Silence, the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters in the faith.

Among the good people I met there in Alaska are two pastors, Jim Nieman and Dick Jorgensen. Jim is Director of Native Outreach Ministry and Dick is pastor of Gloria Dei Church. Both make their homes in Anchorage.

Jim and Dick and I talked about biblical texts and about preaching as one of the pieces of the church's mission, and I ended up asking the two of them to collaborate on an issue of "Preaching Helps," bending their talents to the challenge of a series of texts in the middle of the Pentecost season. Jim has contributed the exegesis ("A First Reading"), marvels of compression and of loving attention to biblical detail. And Dick has then taken the next steps beyond exegesis toward the pulpit in his "Pastoral Reflections." These warm and spirited words of theirs, taken together, are part of the basic Christian antidote to the Great Cold and the White Silence. I commend them to you as you work at the great task of bringing the resources of Pentecost to bear on all that chills and kills in human life and threatens to still the Voice of God.

Pentecostally yours,

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor



Sixth Sunday after Pentecost July 3, 1988

Psalm 30
Lamentations 3:22–33
2 Corinthians 8:1–9, 13–14
Mark 5:21–24a, 35–43

A FIRST READING

Lamentations 3:22–33. Chapter three is the crowning jewel of Lamentations, the longest of the five dirges, and the only one marked by hope. It is an acrostic with verse-triads for each letter of the alphabet (heth, teth, yodh, and kaph in this text). Hope here is based upon the mercies of the Lord, acts showing fidelity to the covenant and reliability as a partner. How is this reassurance? Although exiles have lost their portion of the land, they can know they are like the Levites whose asylum was the Lord (v. 24; cf. Deut 10:9). And although exiles cannot wait for the Lord (v. 25) in the traditional sense—in the sanctuary—now they can wait through wisdom-maxims (vv. 27–30). Such wisdom calls for accepting God's judgment (vv. 28–30), confident that God's final word is, again, mercy and compassion (v. 32; cf. 22).

2 Corinthians 8:1–9, 13–14. Paul urges the Corinthians to complete the Jerusalem collection (1 Cor 16:1–4), contrasting poverty and wealth, want and abundance. The Corinthians are first compared to the Macedonians, who in deep poverty show abundant joy and rich generosity (vv. 1–5). Next, the Corinthians are tested against themselves (vv. 7–8), for since they now abound in so many ways (cf. 7:8–13), they should also abound in giving, proving their love to be real. Finally, they are contrasted with Christ, who though rich became poor, that we might become rich through him (v. 9). The repeated use of *charis* (vv. 1, 4, 6, 7, 9) further interweaves material *gifts* and this lavish *grace* of God. The goal of this giving is that the gifts of those in abundance and those in want would balance out and benefit each (vv. 13–14), recapitulating the uniformity of God's gifts to all (v. 15) on the order of the manna-collection in Ex 16:18.

Mark 5:21–24a, 35–43. Without a word, Jesus accepts Jairus' pathetic plea to heal his daughter (vv. 22–24a). In what follows, however, Jesus encounters four barriers to this healing and perseveres through them. Refusing to listen to the announcement of the girl's death, Jesus calls for Jairus not to fear but to believe, to join his persistence (vv. 35–36). Refusing to be overcome by the grief at the house, Jesus declares the true nature of the situation (vv. 38–39). Refusing to be turned aside by ridicule, Jesus drives out everyone except the parents and the three disciples (v. 40). Finally, refusing to be deterred by the fact of death, Jesus speaks her back to life (v. 41). He has accepted uncleanness by touching her (Num 19:11–13), and makes her more than just a "little girl"—for she is now identified as 12 years old, the age of womanhood (v. 42). Jesus has pushed aside barriers to bring her from static death to dynamic life, and even provides for her ongoing care in his call to feed her (v. 43). JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Lamentations lesson brings to mind the important but often-overlooked connection between the pulpit and the counseling chamber. It is the experience of many pastors that a solid, gospel-based sermon on forgiveness, or the meaning of suffering, or other central faith issues often results in a noticeable increase in requests for pastoral counseling or conversation. In the midst of grief, people are often only too willing to cling to a one-dimensional view of the "meaning" of their loss or suffering, and it is not opportune (or pastoral) in such a time to engage the sufferer in a theological debate. Responsible preach-

ing, therefore, offers the possibility of inviting the person and the community (both before and after the experience of grief) to consider other views of the relationship between faith and suffering. Keeping in mind that the Bible speaks with a variety of voices about suffering and its meanings, this text can serve as an effective basis for preaching on the God-faith-suffering question.

Although the text speaks of the benefit to a youth of bearing a yoke laid on by God, it is too big a jump to conclude that all suffering is therefore necessarily the will of God. The text also speaks of a Lord who "will not cast off forever," who has compassion, and who, significantly, "does not willingly afflict or grieve. . . ."

A preacher may want to speak of this text in the context of what it means to listen to "the whole counsel of Scripture," and may wish especially to allude to other parts of that scriptural counsel, i.e. Luke 13:4, John 9:2, Romans 8. (Many people draw their operative understanding of suffering from the King James translation of Romans 8:28, "all things work for good;" and perhaps need to hear the corrective of the RSV, "in everything *God* works for good.") Certainly this Sunday's Mark text is one of many which shows where Jesus stands in relation to human suffering: he has authority over sickness and death, and uses this authority on behalf of suffering people.

Douglas John Hall's recent book, *God And Human Suffering*, offers an innovative and provocative approach to this question which distinguishes between destructive suffering and creative suffering, suggesting that the latter is intended by God—even in the "perfection" of creation—as contributing to the wholeness of life.

Many of us will overlook or underplay the powerful Corinthians lesson because "it's not stewardship season." Yet I appreciate the counsel of a wise preacher: "If the text speaks of money, we'll preach about money!" RJ

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 10, 1988

Psalm 143:1–2, 5–8
Ezekiel 2:1–5
2 Corinthians 12:7–10
Mark 6:1–6

A FIRST READING

Ezekiel 2:1–5. In this first of Ezekiel's five commissions, the overpowering spirit (*ruah*) compels the prostrate prophet (I:28) to stand attentive (v. 2). The spirit sustains and strengthens him, giving his words power to revive (ch. 37) or condemn. Ezekiel is contrasted with the people of Israel who rebel and revolt. This latter term conveys political renunciation of a covenant, and is the most severe of the various terms for sin. Such sin could imperil the community's ability to draw close to God, and was usually answered by death or exile. The image, thus, is of God's intimate, spirit-filled prophet being sent to those whose covenant rejection threatens any intimacy with God. Ezekiel's words (vv. 4–5) serve to divide the rebellious from the obedient, with the hope of restoring the covenant (cf. 20:1–44, esp. v. 38).

2 Corinthians 12:7–10. Throughout the "Fool's Discourse" (ch. 10–13), Paul has boasted of many things, including surpassing revelations (12:1–7a). Since these might lead to being puffed up (a concern serious enough to be mentioned twice in one verse), *therefore* Paul is given a thorn in the flesh. The role this "thorn" plays in the overall argument is typically overlooked in the many grand speculations about what it really was. The reason for its mention is that, first, its savageness and harassing kept Paul from being puffed up, and second, it led to a divine revelation of something truly worthy of boasting (vv. 8–9). The

sufficiency of grace is revealed to Paul, as well as the idea that when one is weak, then God's power is what completes that person. Because of the thorn, *therefore* Paul has a new ground for boasting: his weakness which manifests God's power (v. 10; 10:17; 11:30).

Mark 6:1–6. Behind this story is the ongoing questioning of Jesus' authority, an issue raised by hostile forces in the past (3:22) and yet to come (6:14–16; 11:27–33). Here, the hometown crowd frames the question in terms that move from wonder, to wanting to know the source of his power, to noting with dismay his family background, to being scandalized (vv. 2–3). Jesus interprets this questioning with a proverb about dishonor suffered by prophets (v. 4). He is not declaring himself to be a prophet, but rather recognizes that the dishonor he receives here is commonly experienced by prophets, that of having their authority questioned. Prophets rightly knew their authority came from outside themselves. Since the crowd knew this too, they seek external validation for Jesus. What they cannot know is that Jesus acts *as* God; his authority rests within. What they also cannot know is Jesus' commitment to a world which marginalizes God. His authority is expressed in being emptied of power (v. 5). JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

However tempting, it would be off-base to apply the words of our Ezekiel text directly to our own preaching—to approach the pulpit with the intention that our hearers would "know that a prophet has been among them." And yet it seems clear that preacher and congregation alike need to wrestle with what (if anything) constitutes "the prophetic" in preaching or ministry. (James Limburg's *The Prophets and the Powerless* is a helpful essay on this topic, especially the question, "Why don't we have Old Testament-type prophets today?")

Perhaps the prophetic is something that cannot be defined or claimed as much as experienced. A pastor of my acquaintance has such a low tolerance for bureaucracy that he refuses to attend staff meetings; his impatience with church hierarchy has caused him to miss a few "good calls;" he claims that "the fire has gone out" of his preaching, yet, to me, he preaches with conviction and power; his concern for the hurting ones goes beyond words; colleagues and parishioners among whom he works most closely love him dearly, others are irritated by him. When I've been with him, I feel as though I've been in the presence of the prophetic, yet he would never think to make that claim for himself. (In fact Paul's declaration, "on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses," fits him well.) I hope you know someone like him. The church needs such people.

Another pastor was the subject of a parish petition drive critical of his involvement in a certain social protest. One parishioner, who was known to differ politically with the pastor, refused to sign. When asked why, he explained that the pastor had faithfully visited his wife as she was dying, and he wouldn't sign anything against him. Granted that this story is vulnerable to a kind of self-serving abuse, it makes an important point about the place of the prophetic in ministry: whatever it is, it cannot be divorced from the pastoral.

What is called "the prophetic" is often really "dogmatic"—a political or theological harangue proclaiming, "This is the way it is," when what should be said is (taking our cue from Paul), "I have no word from the Lord on this, but here is how I see it. . . ." One preacher in a sermon concerning a controversial issue said, truthfully and effectively, "I hope I'm wrong!" It is probably true that the greatest harm in the history of the world has been committed by people who have no doubts.

Most of us, however, are not in danger of being too prophetic, but just the opposite. In either case, it seems the same therapy can be

applied: to be pastorally involved with the people to whom we preach, to preach out of a sense of our own doubt and failure, to give up worshiping the god "status quo," to subscribe to the adage, "If you haven't offended anybody, you must be doing something wrong," and to realize that truth-telling is going to draw some heat (witness the Gospel reading). RJ

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost July 17, 1988

Psalm 85:8–13
Amos 7:10–15
Ephesians 1:3–14
Mark 6:7–13

A FIRST READING

Amos 7:10–15. Aware of both royal and religious duties, Amaziah is caught. Loyal to Jeroboam, he must report to the king what Amos has done and said and its unbearable effect (vv. 10–11). Yet as priest, Amaziah never denies Amos' right to be a seer or earn a living from this. Indeed, his advice to Amos (vv. 12–13) focuses on *where* the prophet's future activity is possible, and where it's not. In a twofold response, Amos notes that his origins as prophet stem from the Lord's commission and not from membership in a professional guild (vv. 14–15). Central to this commission was not only an activity but especially a *place*: Israel. Thus, Amaziah's neat compromise amounts to a rebellion against the Lord far more severe than Amos' rebellion against Jeroboam, and one for which he will receive the judgment reserved elsewhere in Amos for Israel (vv. 16–17).

Ephesians 1:3–14. Like the overture before an opera, this 202-word Greek sentence forms a benediction announcing the ensuing themes of the letter. God is praised for calling and destining the faithful. This is, in turn, laid against the backdrop of Christ, who is the basis and pattern for such election. From a temporal perspective, Christ is the origin of this call before the creation (v. 4), in the historical reality of his death (v. 7), with the goal of future fulfillment (v. 10). Just as Christ is seen as the eternally established pattern of God's suffering love for the sake of bringing unity and reconciliation (v. 10), so the faithful are to be patterned in holiness and forgiveness (vv. 4, 7) for the sake of praising God's glory (vv. 12, 14). One's call, therefore, is tested against God's love for Christ and Christ's ongoing work.

Mark 6:7–13. Urgency marks the calling of the twelve. In light of the plots and resistance against Jesus (3:6, 6:1–6) and what John's ensuing death portends (6:14–30), Jesus' tersely-worded commands suggest the disciples are to move with haste. Yet their original mission (3:14–15) which is finally authorized here is in continuity with Jesus' work (1:14–15, 39), and this is really the point. Their *authority* even over unclean spirits (v. 7) comes solely from the Jesus who was recently rendered powerless (6:5)! Their *equipment* (vv. 8–9), sufficient for the Passover (Exod 12:11) but less than what contemporary wandering preachers carried, signifies the poverty of a Jesus who is utterly reliant upon God. Their *message* of repentance (v. 12) echoes Jesus' preaching not only in content (1:14–15) but also in the opposition they can expect (v. 11), opposition which is also to be provoked into repentance through the sign of shaking off dust. Those who hear Jesus' call and adopt his mission are heirs to all of his fate, including powerlessness, poverty, and opposition. JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

An elderly retired pastor, asked by a young colleague for some advice on parish ministry,

replied that his approach had been to "preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, look in on the sick and shut-in, and try not to get in the way as the laity run the business of the congregation." Mark's Gospel here is perhaps not quite this simple a "how-to" for ministry, but there is a legitimate sense in which it does stand as a model for Christ's ministers today, as it did for Mark's original hearers. (It is, after all, a piece of directive advice—a "charge.")

Preacher and congregation alike may discover in this text a new urgency for and a renewed definition of their shared calling. We are reminded that ministry is not to be performed by "Lone Rangers." Ministry is essentially a stepping forward in faith and reliance upon the community. Furthermore, in the announcement of the kingdom there is actually something at stake worth asking people to repent for. And note how rejection of the message calls forth the testimony of judgment, the sign of which is a non-violent gesture on the part of the ministers. (Perhaps we need to confront more honestly those situations which call for a bit of "dust-shaking" on the part of the church while at the same time reflect on how the church and the world would be different if the historical response to a perceived rejection of the gospel had been *limited* to this sign.)

More important, however, is what this text proclaims about the *source* of our ministry. In the context of Mark's themes, we learn that the *authority,* the *message,* and the *signs* all have their genesis in the person and ministry of Jesus and his kingdom-announcing words and actions. He gives the disciples the same authority he has demonstrated, the same repentance is preached, demons are cast out, the sick are healed. All this, as the exegesis above reminds us, is bestowed by a Jesus who himself has been rendered powerless, and whose complete reliance is on God. It is an understatement to say that there is much for our ministry here. RJ

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost July 24, 1988

Psalm 23
Jeremiah 23:1–6
Ephesians 2:13–22
Mark 6:30–34

A FIRST READING

Jeremiah 23:1–6. This double oracle forms the conclusion to a series of denunciations of the kings of Judah (21:11–23:8). Following a general address against the royal house, specific kings are listed in chronological order. Thus, one expects this series to end with an oracle against the present king, Zedekiah. Instead, the first oracle (vv. 1–4) returns to a general condemnation against the kings (shepherds, cf. 22:22), and a promise to reunite what these shepherds have scattered (cf. 3:14–18). The second oracle (vv. 5–6) utilizes new imagery to enhance this promise. A shoot *(semah)*, the classic term for God's anointed (Isa 11:1, Zech 3:8, 6:12), will restore David's dynasty for covenantal, not political, reasons. Unlike the present king, Zedekiah (*sidqiyahu,* the Lord is my righteousness), God's anointed will be called *yhwh-sidqenu,* the Lord is *our* righteousness, a saving reality not only for Judah, but also for Israel (v. 6).

Ephesians 2:13–22. In language that pushes toward the depths, the Gentiles are described not only as victims of name-calling (v. 11), but also as separated, alienated, strangers, hopeless, even godless. Apart from the Jews, the Gentiles have been locked out of the covenant. But now, Christ has removed the barrier (v. 13, cf. Isa 57:19 which is reinterpreted here for Gentiles). The work of Christ is presented in negative terms (destroying, abolishing, killing), and even more so in pos-

itive ones (making one, creating, reconciling, coming and preaching; 14–18). At the heart of this uniting of Gentiles with Jews and with God is the sacrifice of Christ, whose blood, flesh, body, and cross are the means by which such benefits are achieved. The social reality that validates this sacrificial work is the growing household dependent upon Christ (vv. 19–22).

Mark 6:30–34. At the close of the disciples' first missionary journey, Jesus invites them to rest in a deserted place. What kind of place is that? In Mark, the desert has been a place of preaching, testing, and prayer (1:4, 12–13, 35), and for Israel it represented God's exodus presence as well as the home of the demonic. It is an ambiguous place of threat and promise, a battlefield of good and evil. And what Jesus and the disciples find there is not isolation, but the very crowd they sought to escape (vv. 33–34). Didn't Jesus know this would happen (1:45)? Both the crowd's leaderless condition (cf. 14:27 and Zech 10:2–3) and Jesus' compassion, *splangchnizomai,* point ahead to his death for such needy ones. The empty place is filled with empty people, and it is there that Jesus models for the disciples a ministry of compassion, even unto death. JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In the face of a variety of interpretive possibilities in regard to Jesus' invitation to rest (Is Mark being ironic? Is this a way of providing a setting for the feeding narrative?) and the fact that this goal was not accomplished, there remains something compelling about the context and reasonableness of the prospect that Jesus really did intend for them to get away from it all. The apostles have returned and reported to Jesus concerning their mission. Mark doesn't comment on the success or failure of that mission, but we need only to read the preceding pericope to be reminded that it was an arduous assignment. The crowd is now pressing—not only around Jesus but around the apostles themselves. It seems reasonable that the compassion Jesus feels for the multitude in this account would also be directed toward these weary apostles. A good rest seems to be in order!

In light of modern church organization, it is tempting to speculate, with tongue in cheek, that Jesus and the apostles scheduled a weekend retreat with a discussion program entitled, "Mission: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?" And indeed this text is often used to support the idea of retreat ministry. But then there is that irritating detail: the apostles weren't able to pull it off. The crowds got to the retreat center ahead of them. What are we to make of this? The key is in what follows: Jesus' compassion and teaching. The center of this text is not the apostles' mission accomplishments. Nor is it their weariness or legitimate need for rest. It is, rather, Jesus' compassion for the people, a compassion the apostles are invited to share as the story continues.

So what becomes of rest and retreat? Nothing in this text necessarily causes us to question the sincerity of Jesus' invitation, even though the plans for rest were thwarted by the needs of the crowd. And certainly a general biblical theology of sabbath suggests a life lived in the rhythm of work and rest. At the risk of reducing the sublime to the ridiculous, it could be noted that the busy pastor may feel special empathy with the apostles, who had "no leisure even to eat." Someone has suggested that there is a sure-fire way for the pastor to eliminate dinner-time telephone interruptions. By treating these calls merely as a nuisance and responding to them as such, he or she can cause the phone to stop ringing at dinner-time, and it will eventually stop ringing altogether. The reader, no doubt, gets the point; and most of us realize that a sometimes weary availability is a part of the calling. That's not to say, however, that we shouldn't continue to schedule those mealtime retreats with family or friends. (And perhaps—just every once-in-a-while—leave the phone off the hook!) RJ

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost July 31, 1988

Psalm 145
Exodus 24:3–11
Ephesians 4:1–7, 11–16
John 6:1–15

A FIRST READING

Exodus 24:3–11. These two versions of the covenant ratification arise from the Elohist (vv. 3–8) and Yahwist (vv. 9–11) traditions. The Yahwist describes a simple meeting and meal atop Sinai. Unusual here is that the Israelite leaders see God (v. 10) whose unbearable holiness in this case brings no harm (v. 11). God's relationship with Israel has thus changed so that the heavens, the name for the firmament separating humans from the transcendent (Gen 1:6–8), becomes a place of meeting. No wonder this story is taken into the Isaian apocalypse to speak of the new covenant meal on Zion (Isa 24:23c–25:8). The later Elohist version (vv. 3–8) describes the ratification as a cultic act at the foot of Sinai. Blood from sacrifice, the sign of life handed over and gathered into the holy, now binds the two covenant parties, linking Israel's life with God's.

Ephesians 4:1–7, 11–16. The hortatory section of the epistle begins with a catalogue of virtues to which the faithful are commended (vv. 1–3). The focus of such subordination is unity, expressed in the creedal triads of body-Spirit-hope, Lord-faith-baptism, and God over-through-in all (vv. 4–6). Yet this unity, the one gift of Christ measured out to all (v. 7), is displayed through diverse ministers of the word (v. 11). These diverse ***ministers*** have a goal: the equipping (***katartismos,*** only here in the NT!) of the saints for the work of service (v. 12). This work of the ***saints,*** in turn, also has a goal, stated in the teleological clauses pointing to unity, maturity, and avoidance of heresy (vv. 13–14). Rooted in Christ, the community then grows back toward Christ (v. 15), sustained by members who are linked as tightly as in a living body or a well-built building (vv. 16–17).

John 6:1–15. It is worth noting the uniqueness of John's version of the feeding, lest one succumb to the lectionary's temptation to treat this story as equivalent to Mark 6:35–44. This sign of excessive gifts occurs at Passover (v. 4), and it is Jesus who initiates the concern for the crowd for the purpose of testing the disciples (v. 6). John names Philip and Andrew, who note both the futility of buying food (v. 7) and the lack of food at hand (v. 9). The distribution is told more sparsely than in the Synoptics (v. 11), but the collection instructions, "that none might be lost," are highlighted (v. 12). Perhaps most important, John's version ends with the acclamation of Jesus as the coming prophet (v. 14) and suggests that he might be made king by force (v. 15). Indeed, this will come to pass, but in a most unusual way (19:2–3, 19–22)! The irony of the feeding is that Jesus' excessive gifts are never enough for those who only want worldly expectations fulfilled. JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Gospel account is rich with general and specific connections to Old Testament themes: the manna miracle; the Exodus proclamation: "They beheld God, and ate and drank" (24:11); Moses' concern for feeding people in the wilderness (Numbers 11:13); the sign of food left over (2 Kings 4:44). These references, combined with the facts that the feeding of the multitude is the only miracle account related in all four Gospels and that John's account contains enough eucharistic elements

to make this serve as his "institution narrative" provide a springboard for preaching on the connection between the tradition of Jesus' meal fellowship and ours (communion). This may be a good opportunity to speak of the altar as a table, and to help the congregation see itself as a fellowship gathered around that table with Jesus as host. Edward Schillebeeckx is helpful in observing that these Jesus meal narratives serve to connect the Eucharist with memories of Jesus' daily table fellowship with the disciples and of Jesus as "copious host."

The expressed desire to make Jesus king, combined with the misunderstanding in the ensuing dialogue about "living bread from heaven" indicate the degree to which those around Jesus (and those of us today) overlook the radically gracious gift and purpose of this mealtime fellowship. Jesus as both host and food is perhaps more "copious" than we can stand! This Sunday might be a good occasion for beginning a sermon series on the John "living bread" texts through Pentecost 14.

Speaking of series, it is also possible to see in the Ephesians text for this and following Sundays an approach to a Christian ethics centered in Christian vocation (as opposed to the ever-popular "trying to be a good person.")

In this text, Paul begs his readers to "lead a life worthy of the calling. . . ." Not a bad summary of what we might call Christian ethics, expressive of what is arguably the highest motivation for doing good. (Who was it that said, "Christian people care about doing good works because there are good works to be done and Christians are the ones to do them!"?) Preaching on these texts may provide opportunities to challenge other so-called "religious" approaches to how one lives one's life. ("Being religious" comes to mind.) The thrust and direction of the Christian life is not "if . . . then," but "because . . . therefore." And Paul centers the "because" in what is also the center of our calling: "the grace which was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." RJ

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost August 7, 1988

Psalm 78:23–29
Exodus 16:2–15
Ephesians 4:17–24
John 6:24–35

A FIRST READING

Exodus 16:2–15. Sequentially confused and at odds with Num 11:4–35, this Priestly story is set in motion by murmuring—a peculiar complaint to return to an unlikely meal which could only be enjoyed in bondage (vv. 2–3)! Unsolicited, the Lord announces the rain of bread from heaven, not mentioning the murmuring at all (vv. 4–5). Here this sign seems to serve only as a *test* of obedience to the collection instructions. But in the three ensuing speeches, the sign is variously interpreted as a *demonstration* of greatness (vv. 6–7), an *answer* to rebellious murmuring (v. 8), and a *revelation* of glory (vv. 9–10). Only in the final words to Moses does the Lord mention the murmuring at all (v. 12), underscoring the sign's role as revelation. The Yahwistic addition (vv. 13–15) interprets the quails and bread in a final way: as *food* which the Lord provides.

Ephesians 4:17–24. With stern and direct language, the Ephesians are enjoined to avoid mental futility. The various forms of ignorance listed (vv. 17–18) are reprehensible first because they separate from God, and second because mental callousness takes expression in physical sensuality (v. 19). Such sexual immorality isn't opposed for its own sake, but because it is the external result of internal ignorance of God. Instead of this, the faithful are to recall the Christ-lesson (v. 20). Christ

is both the teacher (v. 21ab, lit. "you heard him and in/by him you were taught") and the lesson of truth (v. 21c). The complete change this internalized lesson brings is expressed in a clothing metaphor of putting off the old and putting on the new (vv. 22–24). The mind isn't just reformed but made new (*ananeoo*) so that old corruption is replaced by new creation.

John 6:24–35. Drawing upon the events of the feeding-sign, the bread discourse formally begins here, following an order similar to the water discourse in 4:9–15. In this section, the noun and verb for work, *ergon* and *ergazomai*, figure prominently. The crowd is not to work for perishable but for enduring food, which God gives through the Son (v. 27). But God's work is more than food; it is also faith (v. 29). These food and faith themes struck a chord with the crowd for whom Moses' manna-work was likened to the revelation of Torah, the source of faith (v. 31). Would Jesus work for them a new food, a new Torah, a new way to faith (v. 30)? Jesus clarifies that the source of manna wasn't Moses but God (v. 33). Likewise, God's work in Jesus is a new bread which reorients human needs (v. 35), and his reception by faith is God's work for us. JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The 19th century British theologian P. T. Forsyth once compared the poetry of William Wordsworth to that of Wordsworth's contemporaries. Forsyth pointed out that, while Browning and others "tapped the prompt and fluent emotions" and had readers "pulling out their handkerchiefs," Wordsworth was confronted initially by critical and popular opposition. He therefore had not only to create his poetry but also, in effect, to create the *response* to his poetry. (Presumably, when Wordsworth was successful, he would not simply have produced a fan, but a reader with a new view of poetry.)

Forsyth used this illustration to make the point that Christ not only accomplished the work of justification, but also, through the Holy Spirit, creates the response of faith and life in the believer. For Paul, likewise, to "learn Christ" is not a matter of learning *about* him but of having been "taught *in* him, as the truth is in Jesus." As with appreciation of Wordsworth's poetry, this is a new thing and results in a new person. Thus, if we continue to examine Ephesians for implications in Christian ethics, the person in Christ does not simply learn some new stuff about how to live. Rather, the *person* is new. That person learns *Christ*! (emphasis Paul's). Paul's heartfelt admonition to the Ephesians is more of the nature of "Who are you?" rather than "What are you doing?" And his direction, as always, is "because . . . therefore," not "if . . . then."

If there are actual behavioral and societal implications connected with being Christ's people, then it seems that there must also be occasions to hear or deliver the remonstrance, "You did not so learn Christ!" This seems most appropriately carried out in the fellowship and discipline of the church, but it is nevertheless a daunting responsibility to contemplate. If a church body communicates a strong concern to the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa regarding its support of apartheid, for example, is this a legitimate way of saying "You did not so learn Christ"? Paul has some direction even here: a "therefore" which follows immediately upon our assigned text. "Therefore, putting away falsehood, let all speak the truth with their neighbors, for we are part of one another" (v. 25). A "therefore" which springs from how we have "learned Christ": perhaps that's as much guidance as we can hope for.

John's text contains some surprising words about what it means to do "the work of God," and about how Jesus' "work" is his person, given for the life of the world. If one is dealing with the whole series of "bread of life" texts, this one would lend itself to beginning a kind of suspense story (culminating on Pentecost 14) with the object of discovering just what is meant by this bread talk, anyway. RJ

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost August 14, 1988

Psalm 34:1–8
1 Kings 19:4–8
Ephesians 4:30–5:2
John 6:41–51

A FIRST READING

1 Kings 19:4–8. Elijah's despair comes to rest between two mountains: Carmel, where he defeated the prophets of Baal, and Horeb, where he will be recommissioned. Jezebel's threat has driven him south in fear to the pilgrim shrine at Beersheba (19:1–3). The story has a virtually unnoticed precedent. In Gen 21:14–21, Hagar is banished to the wilderness of Beersheba with her son Ishmael. The despair, the bush, the angel, and the provision are found in this tale, too, along with the promise that even the outcast has a future. Elijah will also receive pilgrimage provisions through a double-meal (vv. 6,8), not simply to sustain him for the journey ahead, but as a sign of God's concern to make a future for those whose hope is lost.

Ephesians 4:30–5:2. The context (4:29, 31) suggests that language can grieve God's Holy Spirit. The catalogue of word-offenses progresses in intensity, describing increasingly public and violent forms of speech (v. 31). By contrast, the life of the faithful is to be shaped in kindness, compassion, and gift-granting (v. 32), attributes normally reserved for God and here rooted in the example of Christ. Both the hellenistic idea of imitation and the semitic concept of walking in the way (vv. 1–2) describe ethical conduct for the faithful, and, here again, Christ is the basis. What is more, Christ is both the atoning sacrifice and the priest who lovingly offers the gift (v. 2). Such sacrifice is the ultimate imitation of God's self-giving love and the supreme following in God's will—the root of all ethics.

John 6:41–51. Just as in last week's lection the crowd misunderstood the origin of the manna as Moses, here too they confront Jesus and question his origins (vv. 41–42). In what follows, Jesus confronts their unbelief by speaking of the origins of true belief. One may come to Jesus (i.e., believe in him) only by the Father's drawing (***helko***, cf. 12:32). The Jewish roots of this term suggest that to have a fuller knowledge of God, one must draw near to Torah. Thus, faith is presented as being drawn to the new Torah, Jesus, and this drawing near, in turn, results in true knowledge of God. To underscore this teaching motif, Jesus interprets Isa 54:13 (v. 45) and implicitly contrasts himself with the Torah-giver, Moses, in his words about manna in the wilderness (vv. 49–51). The true revelation is not the manna/Torah, since death still held sway. Instead, Jesus is the true bread, the revelation of God which sustains unto eternity. And the shape of Jesus' revelation will be his passion (v. 51). JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Bread Of Life story continues, and as in all good suspense stories, there is a false trail. Those confronted by Jesus' statements about himself consider that they are able to judge him because they know who he is, based on their knowledge of his father and mother. But do they really know his parentage? John's linkage of Jesus to "the Father" reveals that these who are questioning Jesus do not really know him. And the stakes are getting higher; Jesus' claim is not only that he is "from heaven," but also that he is living bread to be eaten by those who would live forever. Jesus is host and food. What does it mean for Jesus to give his flesh as bread for the life of the world? The story and the question continue: What does he mean by this? To be continued. . . .

It will be good if this text can be read and

the sermon preached in conjunction with the actual celebration of the Eucharist. Here is a clear opportunity for Word and Sacrament to enliven one another. Perhaps we will hear the "given for you" in a new way. And here, too, is a chance to breathe new life into the Lord's Prayer in its eucharistic setting. What of "give us this day our daily bread" and its connections to wilderness manna and to Jesus' offer of himself as living bread from heaven? One pastor makes a practice of introducing the Lord's Prayer in communion as "the gathered family of God joining in our table prayer." This reference pulls together a number of images appropriate to the eucharistic community.

If the reader continues to be interested in following Ephesians' ethical trail (see preceding "Pastoral Reflections"), we could place "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God . . ." next to "lead a life worthy of the calling . . ." and "You did not so learn Christ," as another summary statement of the Christian life expressive of the highest ethical purpose. If we imagine that a child (perhaps a teen-ager) has been asked by his mother or father to be in by midnight, we could then postulate a number of reasons why he may or may not wish to comply, ranging from fear to manipulation to guilt to duty, but we wouldn't be able to arrive at a higher purpose for compliance than love, a manifestation of which is that this boy does not wish to cause his mother to be concerned. (Oh, to have or to be such perfectly motivated children!) The word "obedience"—if meant as an expression of love—could be used here. "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"—Don't make your mama cry!

Paul's center for this life is not love in the abstract, but the forgiving love of Christ. Paul is not content even to stop with imitating God, but would have us walk in a love reflective of Christ's self-giving love for us. RJ

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost August 21, 1988

Psalm 34:9–14
Proverbs 9:1–6
Ephesians 5:15–20
John 6:51–58

A FIRST READING

Proverbs 9:1–6. A diptych is presented here, one panel being the invitation to Wisdom's banquet, the other being the invitation to Folly's table (9:13–18). Wisdom (*hokma*) is personified as a woman who builds the house (v. 1), provides the feast (v. 2), and is the meal as well (v. 5), allusions to both the cosmic (8:22–31) and humble (1:20–33) portrayals elsewhere in Proverbs. The house she has built is the creation itself. The meal she has spread is festive and rich. Her invitation through her maids is made to the simple, those open to suggestion and susceptible. The promise for those accepting the invitation is insight unto life itself. By contrast, the seductive call of Folly to these same simple ones is a call to an impoverished and criminal meal whose only outcome is death.

Ephesians 5:15–20. Here, too, the concern is for walking in the way of wisdom (v. 15). Since the present days are deceptive and transitory (v. 16), foolish behavior which fails to comprehend God's will (v. 17) is wasteful and self-destructive. Drunkenness functions here as a metaphor for such senseless living and as the real-life mark of those who are so wasteful. But true wisdom would be marked by being Spirit-filled, and its manifestation would be doxology (v. 19). All such liturgical praise is to be made from the heart, the seat of the intellect and wisdom. Its crowning glory is thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) always and for all people and things and on their behalf as well.

John 6:51–58. Clearly, the Jews are offended. Eating flesh (Ps 27:2; Zech 11:9) and drinking blood (Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; Deut 12:23) were horrible, violent, outlawed acts. How could Jesus give them his flesh to eat? Jesus doesn't seek to remove their offense, but heightens it by speaking of "chewing" and its benefits. To so eat of Jesus is to have eternal life, and not to do so is to have no life at all (vv. 53–54). This claim is based on the notion that, by eating, the believer mutually indwells with Jesus (v. 56) becoming a participant in the life the Father shares with the Son (v. 57). The startling implication here is that the offense at eating Jesus' flesh may well be justified, for such eating would result in experiencing the life and reality of God perhaps more closely than we might desire. God is not locked away in heaven dispensing manna to a dying world (v. 58), but draws close in the flesh of Jesus, sharing abundant life with those who partake of it. JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

This Sunday's three lessons have some intriguing connections which may prove profitable to explore. The Proverbs meal imagery is reflected in the John text, and Ephesians carries through a Proverbs-like wisdom theme. Many a sermon finds many a preacher trying to cram together lectionary texts which might better be treated separately, but here there seems to be good cause to at least weave (if not cram!) these texts into a strand. The Gospel speaks of bread, the Epistle speaks of wine, and Proverbs has Wisdom offering bread and wine so that the partaker may live, and walk in the way of insight.

In the on-going John story, the feelings are rising toward near-disgust, and Jesus continues to press the point of eating flesh and drinking blood. When is this going to end? At the cross? Jesus' offensive offer of himself for the life of the world is the reason the cross awaits him. Jesus may not seem so offensive to us, probably because we don't let ourselves think about it (more on that next week). He most certainly will be offensive to the world if we will push him—as he pushed himself—upon it. There is great devotional opportunity here for our communion fellowship: to eat and drink Jesus' flesh and blood, to abide in him, to live. Is Jesus an incarnational fulfillment of what Wisdom offers?

If we care to expand drinking imagery, Ephesians offers being filled with the Spirit as something which is analagous to (but literally replaces) drunkenness: psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs taking the place of the drunkard's ravings. The fellowship of the Spirit is counseled as a wise way of living in the times; drunkenness is not simply "bad," it is foolish and faithless.

It is surprising how many people are confused about the what and the why of worship and liturgy. The Ephesians text offers a beautiful opportunity to speak about the christological center of our worship and the doxological purpose of our liturgy. The practice of the early church is movingly portrayed here, and equally moving is the liturgical connection we have maintained with these Christian forebears through the centuries. A preacher will be doing a great favor to a congregation by opening for them some of these ancient and living connections. RJ

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost August 28, 1988

Psalm 34:15–22
Joshua 24:1–2a, 14–18
Ephesians 5:21–31
John 6:60–69

A FIRST READING

Joshua 24:1–2a, 14–18. Shechem, with its ancestral associations (Gen 12:6; 33:18; Josh 24:32), is the site of the Elohist form of the

covenant renewal. Surely more ancient than its setting here, the story has long been linked with other Shechem ceremonies (Deut 27–28; Josh 8:30–35). The people stand in military formation (v. 1), with Joshua as hierophant reciting the holy history (vv. 2–13; cf. shorter credos in Deut 6:20–23; 26:5–9). On this basis, Joshua calls for fear of the Lord and service in integrity and continuity; i.e., in line with the facts already recited (v. 14b). By definition, this means rejecting gods who didn't shape such history (v. 14c). The freedom to choose here is unprecedented in extrabiblical vassal treaties, and the Joseph clan gives the model response (v. 15). The people agree to this version of history, implicitly and explicitly acknowledging the God behind such events (vv. 17–18).

Ephesians 5:21–31. It cannot be overstated that the work of Christ is the measure of human ethics in this text and throughout the entire passage (5:21–6:9). The topic of marriage is but an occasion to praise the Christ whose work of love in turn shapes human institutions like marriage. Thus we learn that mutual subordination is motivated by fear of Christ (v. 21), the wife's subordination by Christ's headship (vv. 22–24), the husband's love of wife (and self) by Christ's love and care for the Church (vv. 25–30). What this means, then, is that the wife is subordinate (*hypotassomai*) not in a beaten-down or servile sense, but with the kind of voluntary devotion one has for Christ who first loves, and unto death. Similarly, husbands are under the measure of Christ, for their love is to be like his: purifying, unifying, and marked by the humility that extends unto death.

John 6:60–69. This text reverberates with themes sounded earlier in the discourse. The first half (vv. 60–66) in particular repeatedly refers backward (61 recalls 41, 62 alludes to 51, 63 contrasts with 51–58, 64 reflects 36, and 65 recounts 44). The new element here is how Jesus' hard words offend (*skandalizo*, vv. 60–61), with resulting unbelief and betrayal (v. 64). The protasis in verse 62 suggests the offense wouldn't be removed if Jesus' heavenly origins were obvious—perhaps it would even be heightened. No, belief is always the Father's work (v. 65; cf. 6:29, 44–45). Although Jesus' words provoke offense, some will believe—that is the point of the second half (vv. 67–71) which mirrors images in the first half, but in a positive way. The disciples see Jesus as the only way, whose words are life. But even though they have been given faith (cf. v. 69 with v. 65), the ominous reality of betrayal and death remains (cf. vv. 70–71 with v. 64b). JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

There are so many ways to read this Gospel text that to choose any one of them is to make an interpretive leap. For example, the "hard saying" which the disciples have difficulty listening to is usually understood to refer to Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh. But it may refer to his claim to be "from above." The latter interpretation makes some sense in light of verse 62. To paraphrase: "You are offended at my claim to have come down from heaven? Wait until you see me go up again!" Likewise the reference to the spirit may imply that only through the Spirit can Jesus' hearers understand what he is telling them, but it has also been used to defend a "spiritual" approach to the Eucharist.

For the preacher who has been following the bread of life discourse, this text offers three dramatic culminating episodes: One is that now the disciples themselves (the larger group, not the twelve) are having difficulty accepting Jesus' words, and many "draw back" from following him. Their response has been paraphrased by someone as "We can't stomach this!" (which of course is an interpretation). The second is Jesus' declaration about his words being "spirit and life," perhaps implying that if his hearers have gotten hung up on cannibalism they have missed the point about what Jesus is really offering. The third is Jesus' reference to "ascending where

he was before," which in John's scheme is likely a reference to the cross. The way Jesus ascends to the Father is by being lifted up on the cross. The bread from heaven—Jesus' life—is being offered for the life of the world on the cross. And this is really the great offense. Our eucharistic celebration as "visible word" is the proclamation of this Gospel.

Some of us may want to whitewash the "wives be subject to your husbands" language in the Ephesians reading, but it is more important to correct the abuses of this and similar texts which are often used to support other kinds of abuse. This is certainly no prescription for a "husband-dominant" marriage. Not only are husband and wife to be subject to *one another* out of reverence for Christ, but the husband's love is compared to the love of Christ in terms of giving up oneself for the sake of the beloved. Allowing for the customs of Paul's times, this text is a ringing (perhaps even radical) endorsement of a concept of mutuality in marriage based on mutual reverence for Christ. RJ

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 4, 1988

Psalm 15
Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 6–8
Ephesians 6:10–20
Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23

A FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 6–8. With the exhortation to listen Moses sets forth the benefits of the law. Obedience to it ensures the covenant promise of *land* (v. 1). (The command not to add or subtract was common in ancient treaties, and reflects the Josianic strictness about written law [v. 2].) For the first time law is linked with *wisdom* (v. 6a), an idea whose apex is seen in Prov 8:22–36. The law also represents God's *nearness* (v. 7). By the time of Josiah's reform, the ark, symbolizing the law, also becomes a political symbol of the nation. Since God draws near the ark/law, God is thereby drawing near to the nation and making it *great.* Finally, the law is called *righteous* (v. 8), because righteous (*sedeq*) describes the loyalty God displays toward the covenant people in the giving of the law.

Ephesians 6:10–20. In view of the darkness of the times and the adversaries at hand, the faithful are urged to become strong through God's strength, to take a share in God's might (v. 10). The image for this strength is God's armor (v. 11a), and the enemy, more than merely human, is described in a list that ascends from worldly power-systems into the very spiritual realm (vv. 11b–13). The whole point here is to stand or withstand, a holy war image of battle done in and through God's power (vv. 11b, 13–14). The armor is described in six pieces, mostly defensive in nature, paralleling contemporary Roman use (vv. 14–17). The armor is then interpreted in an irenic tone (vv. 18–20), for communal prayer, watchfulness, and proclamation are the Spirit's work and weaponry.

Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23. Just as a conflict with Jerusalem authorities in 3:20–22 signaled a new phase in Jesus' Galilean ministry, so here a similar conflict with such authorities (v. 1) precedes healings among Gentiles (v. 7:24f.). A seemingly trivial concern about defilement sets the stage for a larger dispute about tradition (*parodosis*) vs. Scripture. Out of a concern to preserve the covenant community, traditions emerged which interpreted Scripture by providing ritual actions of separation. Such separation preserved the boundaries of the covenant community. At the same time, however, it altered the purpose of the law, which no longer enabled a meeting with God, but was an end in itself for the sake of community preservation. Such tradition not only contradicted the very Scripture it interpreted (thus Jesus' use of Isa

29:13 in vv. 6–7), but it also shrouded the true nature of defilement (vv. 14–15, 21–23). Jesus never softens the concern about impurity, but radicalizes it in light of Scripture, not tradition, showing both Jews and Gentiles at risk for such uncleanness. JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Ephesians reading is a call to preparation for warfare—spiritual warfare. This call is all the more important because nowhere in the New Testament are the followers of Christ called to physical warfare. (We might well wonder how the history of the world would be different had the church taken Jesus' command to "put up your sword" as seriously as it has taken the command to "take and eat, take and drink.") Although certain isolated New Testament passages are open to an interpretation which could place them in the service of warmaking, it is noteworthy that the great majority of biblical passages cited in support of a God-is-on-our-side militarism are taken from the Old Testament, and even then are wildly misapplied, usually referred to in a way that overlooks the important theological point that even in "holy war" it is *God*, and not the people, who does the fighting. Robert MacAfee Brown once observed that for every passage the Moral Majority finds in support of a B-1 Bomber, they manage to overlook the hundred passages dealing with justice and concern for the poor (see next Sunday's James text.)

The language in the Ephesians text leads us to see that the kind of warfare that is being described is no less real and no less urgent than the military kind it replaces. Certainly the enemy is very real and very great. But with the whole armor of God, the outcome is not in question; as with Old Testament holy war, it is God who fights for us.

This text could be applied to the current concern regarding satanism and devil worship. Youth and adults need to hear the gospel which proclaims that, in Christ, there is "no contest"; Satan is defeated. Luther, in his typically provocative way, said, "The children of God enjoy playing with devils, because they know they are perfectly safe!" This kind of surety needs to be preached. That is not to say that there is an easy antidote for those who are attracted to violence-prone Satan cults. In my opinion, young people drawn in that direction (as to drugs or other forms of self-destruction) are in need of psychological and family counseling as well as spiritual, and it is even likely that some corners of the church are guilty of being in league with Hollywood in promulgating the popularity of these movements by giving the devil more credit than is due. And Jesus, in the Gospel reading, speaks very telling words about the nature of evil.

Let us encourage those among whom we minister to put on the whole armor of God in confidence, and let us follow Paul as we attempt to be faithful in declaring the gospel boldly, "as we ought to speak." RJ

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 11, 1988

Psalm 146
Isaiah 35:4–7a
James 1:17–22 (23–25) 26–27
Mark 7:31–37

A FIRST READING

Isaiah 35:4–7a. Set in stark contrast to Isa 34, this ensuing chapter tells of a refreshed land, a new exodus, and a restoration of Zion in terms more reminiscent of Deutero-Isaiah. Through a series of balanced parallelisms, different images are vividly portrayed: the blossoming desert (vv. 1–2), physical healing and strengthening (vv. 3–6), waters (v. 7), and the holy way back to Zion (vv. 8–10). The central

images here are not those describing the transformed wilderness, but those noting God's provision for the people. The crucial message to such exiles is to be strong and not to fear, and the basis for this assurance is that God will save (*yasha'*). Far from an abstraction, deliverance has its source in God's recreative actions which result in a doxology of creation, from parched land to weary people.

James 1:17–22, (23–25), 26–27. Having made it clear that God is *not* the source of testing (1:13), the Epistle then discloses that God *is* the source of every good and complete gift (v. 17a). Unlike sun and moon, whose movement casts varying shadows, God is unchanging (v. 17b) and doesn't give good things one day and evil the next. The fundamental gift God wills to give is the true word which bears us as first-fruits (v. 18), anticipating the transformation of all creation. This word is implanted by God and frees from impurity (v. 21). It will therefore be manifested in how we use our language (vv. 19–20) and how it shapes our actions (v. 22). Those who hear *and* do gaze into a perfect mirror which enables amendment of life, not amnesia (vv. 23–25). Word-driven action also tests external, cultic religion showing its substance (vv. 26–27).

Mark 7:31–37. Following last week's conflict with the Jersusalem authorities, this text teaches to an outsider: a Gentile. A natural tendency in this healing is to focus on the *hearing* restored through the heard word, "Ephphatha" (v. 34). In fact, however, much of the stress in the syntax of v. 32, 35, 37 is laid upon *speech.* It is not enough that the deaf-mute has his ears opened, but moreover his tongue's imprisonment, *desmos*, is released so that he can speak rightly in the sense of proper speech *or* correct statements. The powerful word of Jesus has utterly changed one who had no ability even to hear it! What is more, Jesus' "Ephphatha" is effective for the crowd as well, opening them to a right proclamation of Jesus, despite his strong protests to the contrary (vv. 36–37). JN

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Gospel reading presents a strange and beautiful and powerful story. Look at that picture of Jesus and the deaf man: Jesus takes him aside (not working the crowd), puts his fingers in the man's ears, touches the man's tongue with his own spit. This is a moving portrait of Jesus' loving and intimate concern for the people to whom he ministered—new life is breathed into our understanding of incarnation. Perhaps this text can be applied to review the great history of the church in the healing arts and the evolution of Christ-centered care which has produced modern hospitals and medicine.

This is not Jesus' first healing, but it is an unstopping of ears and a loosing of the tongue, associated with the salvation promise of our Isaiah reading, and thus is in the nature of a kingdom-announcement, even if at this point a sort of hint.

And what of the frustrated command to silence? Is it that the kingdom news is such that it cannot be contained? Perhaps in our preaching we could ask the congregation to pretend that they are sworn to silence about the gospel, but are unable to keep that pledge because of such good news. This approach, of course, might be an occasion for some facetiousness: we may be only too willing to comply dutifully and keep quiet, an attitude about which we may want to be properly confessional. And yet, rather than work toward guilt, it may be possible to usher our hearers into at least a shadow of the excitement contained in Mark's accounts of those who were unable to keep quiet in response to Jesus' life-giving presence.

I, at least, see a bit of humor in the notion that Jesus does his work so well that the man speaks "plainly," only to immediately charge him to curb his new-found eloquence. In any event, it is a familiar theme in Mark that the charge to silence is answered by open proclamation of what has been done. RJ

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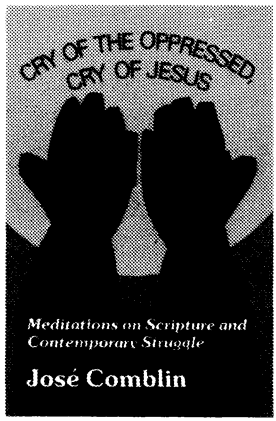
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Setting the Tone for Life Together

Roger Fjeld
President, Wartburg Theological Seminary

Most of the formal aspects of our life together as a new church have now been set in place. The church and its synods have been constituted and its new structures have been given shape. Its officers, bishops, boards, and executives have been elected. Some of its programs are in operation and others are on the drawing boards. The worst of the transition is over. While there are staff yet to be appointed, programs yet to be developed, and lots of money yet to be raised, it is clear that the new church is now firmly in place and our life together has begun.

Yet it sems to me that another, less formal part of the transition is now pressing for attention. That is the task of setting the tone for the life of this new church. We are just now in the midst of negotiating the patterns and quality of our working relationships.

Surely that tone-setting process has been underway for a long time. The Commission for a New Lutheran Church worked hard at developing the relational tone of the new church. The constituting conventions of the church and of its synods gave serious attention to the quality of our emerging life together. But tone cannot simply be legislated or willed into being. Tone is also and especially established as we begin to deal with each other in this new church. And it is precisely at that point that an important task runs the risk of being neglected because it goes unrecognized.

By tone I mean the quality of our communications with each other, the amount of care we exercise in getting to know each other, the respect we show for those institutions and patterns which were dear to others in the old churches. We are at a stage, in our life together, during which we are gaining impressions of each other, and first impressions are likely to shape the way we deal with each other. And frankly, right now we are giving each other some very mixed signals! There are examples of great patience, great care, and great flexibility. There are also examples of great impatience, uncaring rejection of the values of others, and great rigidity. There are people trying to develop genuine partnerships and there are other people trying to carve out and dominate their own turf. There is some pushing and shoving going on; some petulance that does not become us.

We are a church still trying to decide whether we are better served by guidelines or rules, in those matters not already determined by constitutions. We are a church

presently preoccupied with procedures and management concerns. Perhaps that is inevitable for awhile, but one also senses that some folks feel so strongly about such matters that they are willing to sacrifice substance for the sake of their version of good order. What is worse, we are in danger of perceiving reality in procedural and structural terms, rather than in terms of the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ whose witnesses we are to be.

Examples abound in my life. I suspect you could add examples of your own. I can identify both graceful and graceless interactions with people who are supposed to be partners in our new church. The failures have sometimes been mine and sometimes theirs. None of us has a corner on virtue in this respect. To make matters worse, most of us are trying to do too much these days, because the transitional tasks were added to already substantial work loads. It is easy, when one is too busy, to give onself permission to be stubborn and insensitive. Yet it is precisely in these days that we are setting a tone which, once it is set, will be very difficult to change.

My concern, then, is that we help each other toward more graceful and gracious interactions, more flexibility and more caring in our approaches to each other, more openness to the ways of others and to new ways not yet in view. For better or worse we are setting the tone. Let us set it for the better!

This is not simply a question of good manners. The structures, the programs and the priorities of this new church will be strengthened or weakened by the quality of the working relationships we develop. We enable or detract from the mission of the church by the ways we live and work together. We can't afford an adversarial atmosphere. We are not well-served by processes that consume too much time and energy or which pre-occupy us with ourselves. It is time to set the sort of tone that will serve us for the sake of serving others. Let us give some priority to setting that tone and setting it well!

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