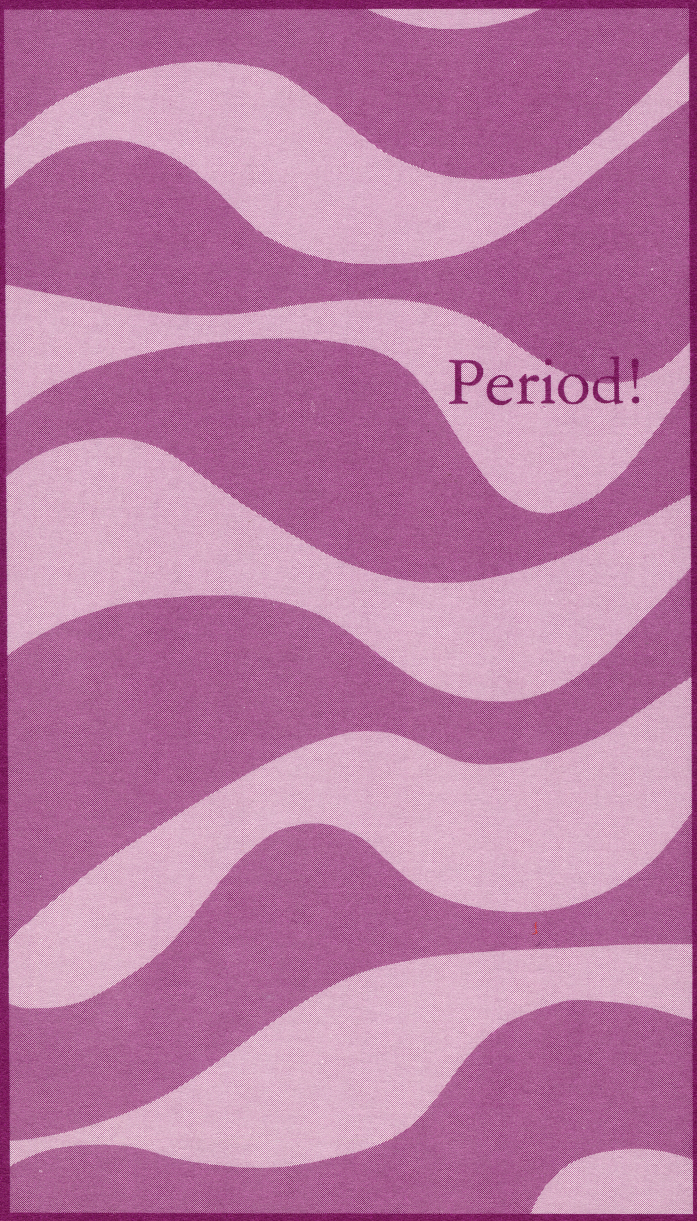
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CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

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

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

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

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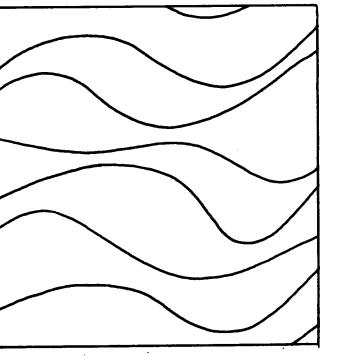
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Fifth Sunday of Easter—Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Period!

The first two articles in this issue were first presented at a workshop on the intentional ending of life. Among the luminaries at that conference was **Joseph Sittler**, Distinguished Professor in Residence at LSTC, who spoke movingly and deeply about his own mortality and about the many problems those who die face today. Joe could no longer see because of the infirmities of aging, and so he delivered his remarks extemporaneously, from a lifetime of memory and reflection. That speech haunts this editorial, for when I sat down to write today, December 29, 1987, I came from a phone call that told me that Joe had died last evening after a long and devastating illness.

Let Joe name the theme for this issue: "In Romans, the most mature of Paul's epistles, he says, 'If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's' (Rom 14:8). Period! That is the fundamental and absolute word of Scripture. But that word is immensely satisfying to old people" (*Gravity & Grace*, p. 127).

James M. Childs, Jr. observes that ethical decisions are based on fundamental belief systems. Created and redeemed in the image of God, we are alienated from God and we cannot absolutize life because of the hope that is in us. Some people try to "follow the rules" of the natural law tradition; others hold that there are no rules and that the end justifies the means. In dialogical ethics, account is taken of the gap between rules and a given situation and of the fact that rules often conflict with one another. Tough ethical decisions, such as the intentional ending of life, can be dared because of the freedom of the gospel. The author cites case histories to illustrate each of these approaches to ethics. The character of the one who decides is often crucial in ethical dilemmas.

Paul J. Bauermeister urges each of us to face up to our mortality. He warns clergy not to short circuit the grief process by careless talk about the resurrection. To speak of resurrection is to affirm God's unimaginable care for us in Christ. Pastors caring for the dying need to clarify who makes the decisions

about living and dying, and how these decisions are to be made. Those who must decide gather all the data and consider the possible consequences of various options. Pastors are to support decision-makers who face reality and take responsibility; they offer a steady hand to guide people past possible errors.

Though he was not a part of the LSTC conference, **David C. Schroeder** also reflects on his own mortality. From Bach's "Christ Lay in Deaths Strong Bands," he learned of the wonderful war between death and life. In the Cantata death *precedes* life, and only those who have already died are truly able to celebrate the here and the now, not to mention the hereafter. The "war" became wonderful for the Prodigal Son because the battle in his psyche led him to his knees, which in turn turned him toward home. My death is swallowed by Christ's death and sealed by his rising. *Vivit ergo sum*—He lives; therefore, I am.

Ralph F. Smith holds that assembling in the name of Jesus provides the context for everything else Christians do. Against the backdrop of the story of Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus, he discusses four theses: Christians are called to be a community of prayer, and worship is a necessary and constitutive part of that calling; The worshiping community is a symbolic witness in, to, and for the world; The transforming power of the gospel is rooted in worship; Worship is fundamentally subversive. Worship subverts the way in which we tend to spend our lives, and it subverts the way in which the world is able to limit or define human freedom. God's promise—lived out, experienced, given, and received over and over again—can truly cause our hearts to burn within us.

In a review essay **Ralph W. Klein** analyzes a recent computer concordance that promises to revolutionize the kind of word studies pastors can do. Instantaneous access to biblical passages and unprecedented types of searches can now be made with the help of modern technology.

In a letter to the editor, **Jeff Johnson** challenges the interpretation of the AIDS crisis offered by **Ralph Quere** in last October's issue. He argues that AIDS is not an expression of God's judgment, and that all who suffer with AIDS are innocent victims of an amoral virus. Quere adds a brief response.

Joseph Sittler once called himself the "little guy among the greats, as he referred to a WCC committee on which he served with the Niebuhrs, Bultmann, Barth, and Brunner. Most of us remember him as a big guy, with an exquisite control of the English language.

Period. Exclamation Mark! What a brilliant summary of "We are the Lord's."

Or, try this as you struggle with the dilemmas of life: "When one makes an ethical judgment in an indeterminate situation, that judgment might be seen as an offertory. 'This seems to me the right and the most morally appropriate thing to do. I offer it to God in that hope that it may be acceptable, but if it is not, then I can simply rest, in my own ignorance, on the forgiveness of God' " (*Gravity & Grace*, p. 90).

.!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

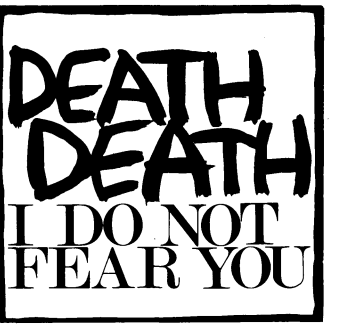
Correction: On page 32, column 2, line 13 of the February, 1988, issue, the following line was inadvertently omitted:

D and Reformed Theology. 1. As in D, the

Ethics at the End of Life

James M. Childs, Jr.
Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Ethics
Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio

The advance of medical science has created a whole new set of moral dilemmas at the end of life and, despite several decades of vigorous discussion, we still seek new wisdom. "The Intentional Ending of Life" encompasses questions we associate with categories of action classified as active euthanasia, passive euthanasia, and suicide. The decisions run the gamut from the neonatal nursery to the nursing home.



The purpose of the discipline of ethics is to answer the questions, "What is the good?" and, "What is the right?" The attempt to do so has yielded vast quantities of

theological and philosophical literature over centuries of discourse. This keeps ethicists busy in the study, in books, and in classrooms. However, ethical decisions have to be made by people who are not professional ethicists, but who are under the pressure of real and often desperate circumstances. How does the discipline of ethics serve those who are on the firing line? I believe it lifts up a mindset, an attitude, and a set of principles that we can carry with us into the midst of life's hard questions.

1. Faith Concerns

All ethics are founded on fundamental belief systems. What we think about the right and the good is a function of what we believe to be the truth of reality. The following theological considerations, central to the Christian faith, form a core of understanding and conviction at the heart of *our* fundamental belief system. They are germane to decisions concerning life and death.

A. God is revealed to us as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. At this point I want to call attention to the fact that we are created and redeemed in the image of God. Our existence in the image of God is a gift and comprehends the unity of our personhood as spiritual-physical beings. As image of God, we are dependent upon God for our very lives from the beginning, and we remain so until the end, in the hope of resurrection to life everlasting. As image of God we are created as persons in relationship with God and with each other. The divine intention in creation is that those relationships could be ones of harmony and love. The saving work of Jesus Christ is the promise that we shall be perfected in the image of God in the resurrection of the dead. In a real sense our existence in the image of God resides in the promise of that future.

B. It is against this backdrop that we appreciate that sin and death are present realities which cannot be denied and which speak of the radical truth of our alienation from God, from each other, and from our existence in the image of God. At the same time, these realities are not the last word concerning the nature and meaning of our existence.

Facts do not tell us what to do.

C. We value life absolutely because it is created and redeemed in the image of God. However, in view of the image of God as something that belongs to the future of God in the resurrection to the Kingdom of God, the life we live now and the death we die now are not absolute. To preserve life now in every possible way speaks of that hope that is within us, and it speaks of the value that each life has as a gift of God's creating and redeeming activity. However, to refrain from absolutizing the value of temporal life also speaks of the hope that is within us.

D. As image of God, we are created and redeemed for the freedom and responsibility of persons in relationship with God and each other. Thus, while life is a gift and in a real sense not our own, it is a life we have been given to live and one for which we are responsible, both in the pain of our fallenness

and in the courage of our hope. It is to this reality that Luther pointed when he said, "Sin boldly yet more boldly still believe." These thoughts frame the attitude and mindset of our faith that we bring to decisions about life and death.

2. Fact and Value

In all questions of ethics, including the intentional ending of life, knowing the facts of our situation is essential to good decision making. However, knowing the facts does not enable us, in itself, to establish the values that are at stake in any given circumstance. For example, in the case of a newborn infant afflicted with spinabifida a great many facts can be known: the severity of the case and the probable quality of life that will follow, the therapies that are available, and the costs in time, energy, and money. To decide on whether or not to treat this child and keep it alive can certainly not be done without a full consideration of these facts. Yet, knowing these facts does not establish for us the value of that new life or the values that are at stake in the lives of the parents and physicians as they go about making the decision. In other words, facts do not tell us what we ought to do. They simply provide parameters within which to make our decisions.

3. Deciding the Right

In moral philosophy and in Christian ethics alike there are a number of different theories as to how we go about deciding the right. For some the rules of decision are known beforehand and they simply need to be applied consistently. For others, there are virtually no rules; there is only a consideration of which course of action will bring about the best possible consequences in any given situation. For still others there are rules and principles to be followed, but these principles or rules can come into conflict with one another in some cases, and in other cases can be difficult to apply due to the complexity of the situation.

Natural Law Morality

Those who believe that rules are known beforehand and need simply to be applied consistently and accurately to life's decisions take what one might call a right for right's sake approach. That is, we follow the rule in our decision-making because it expresses what is right, and we do so simply for that reason. In this approach every attempt is made to minimize ambiguity and compromise. Perhaps this is best illustrated in Roman Catholic natural law tradition. This tradition has been very active in its analysis of ethical issues in medicine.

There have been a number of criticisms of natural law morality; I will content myself with just three. First and foremost, from the standpoint of Reformation theology, natural law tradition is often criticized for its inadequate appreciation of the reality of human sin and brokenness. The presumption that we can know and do the right as the absolute will of God for every human situation tends to underplay the distortions of sin, both within the moral agent and within the dilemmas of human existence. A second frequent criticism is the absence of consensus on all points of the natural law. If, as natural law tradition teaches, we are by virtue of our reason capable of seeing God's naturally revealed will both directly and in the patterns

of nature, why is it that there is so much disagreement historically on the content of natural law? Finally, the necessity for justifying moral judgments in terms of their compliance with certain rules often leads to an intricate casuistry that begs the question. A good example of casuistry is the application of the *rule of double-effect* in cases of indirect or passive euthanasia.

An anesthesiologist once related the following incident which helps us to understand the possibilities of casuistry.

> A young man was dying of inoperable cancer of the bowel. Normal pain relievers had failed to control his agony. After consultation with his personal physician, he and his doctor asked the anesthesiologist if he could administer a spinal anesthetic which would relieve the pain. The anesthesiologist said that he would indeed do that and it would relieve the pain, but that there would be a high risk that the bowel would then rupture, causing death to come quickly. The young man considered this and decided that, since he was dying anyway and could no longer stand the agony, the risk was worth it to him. The anesthesiologist consented and administered the spinal anesthetic. The bowel ruptured and the patient died shortly thereafter. The anesthesiologist asked the question, "Knowing what I did about the high risks of this procedure, was I not really guilty of active euthanasia?"

The casuistry of natural law ethics could easily give moral justification to the decision made in this case by simply applying the rule of "double-effect." This rule states that when an action, whose primary intention is morally correct, results in secondary, unintended consequences that are not morally correct under normal circumstances, such unintended consequences are morally acceptable because of the correctness of the primary intention. Giving the anesthetic with the primary intention of relieving suffering was morally acceptable; the unintended consequence of causing death is morally excusable in view of that.

Critics of this reasoning would point out that everyone involved in the case was aware of the high risk and in no sense taken by surprise when things happened as they did. Therefore, they might argue, the consciences of those participating should not be eased by the rationalization of "double-effect" reasoning. In any case, this incident certainly serves to point out that in real life circumstances the lines of distinction between morally acceptable and unacceptable actions are frequently quite fuzzy.

Consequentialist Ethic

The ethic of ends or the consequentialist ethic takes an almost totally opposite point of departure. No rules govern our actions *a priori*, only a consideration of ends. In Christian ethics the most famous representative of this approach is Joseph Fletcher. His position on the question of passive and active euthanasia well illustrates the general approach of this ethic. Fletcher has written that there is essentially no moral difference between the two kinds of actions because both intend the same end, namely, the best possible death. For Fletcher our task is to do the most loving thing or produce the most loving consequence in any given situation. The end justifies the means. Thus, to inject a dying patient with a lethal dose of narcotic in order to

put that person out of further misery is not morally different from the more passive action of withdrawing or withholding life-sustaining treatment from a dying patient in order to make them comfortable and let death take its course as quickly as possible.

This approach has been severely criticized on a number of points. Since there are no rules to guide our actions, let alone govern them, the judgment of what is the best possible end by which to justify our decision becomes highly subjective. A second problem with this approach has to do with its tendency to say that the end justifies the means. But means in and of themselves often have moral significance. When Fletcher equates passive and active euthanasia simply because they both have the same end, it causes considerable consternation among those who would hold that the means are vastly different in terms of their moral significance. Finally this approach, though it proposes to offer an alternative to legalistic, rule-oriented ethics, has some of the characteristics of legalism. That is, moral judgments are justified on the basis of *our ability* to know and project those ends which represent the greatest good. As with rule-oriented legalisms, this presumes a great deal of positivity on the part of the moral agent.

The following case serves to illustrate the importance of examining the moral character of the means and to point out that examination of motive is equally as important as consideration of consequences.

> Mr. W, age 81, had a cardiac pacemaker implanted 7 years ago. Though physically capable of handling his needs, his mental capabilities have failed to the point where nursing home care has been necessary for the last 3 years. His pacemaker battery needs replacement. Without this minor surgical procedure he would be likely to die a cardiac death within 2 months.
>
> Mr. W's mental status is such that he has no sense of time or place and has been declared incompetent to sign his own operative consent. To the surprise of all, his competent, loving wife of many years refuses to give the doctor permission to make the battery change. She says, "We are turning him into a vegetable. I cannot take it any longer. Let him die in peace." Mr. W's children support their mother's feelings and concur with her decision.

Means in and of themselves often have moral significance.

Clearly, the governing factor in this case is the desire of Mr. W's family to see him die without any further deterioration and indignity. In view of that end, they are willing to withhold permission to do a very simple procedure. Though we may sympathize with their desire to see an end to the low quality of life, we are forced to question whether it is morally acceptable to withhold a simple life-sustaining procedure from someone who is not dying or suffering in great agony. The moral precedent that could be set by such an action suggests that the means we choose are themselves morally significant, not just the

ends that we intend. Moreover, even if we were to see our way clear to justifying the means of withholding permission for surgery, we would also be forced to examine what motives lie behind this decision. Is it compassion for him, or is the family simply unable to deal with his state of affairs any longer? If the latter, what is our moral judgment in this case?

The process of moral deliberation involves the experience of law and gospel.

Dialogical Ethics

For my own part, I prefer a system which I refer to as dialogical. I would propose that we have certain general rules which embody the demands of love. These general rules state how "agape love" responds in certain kinds of situations. As representative of love's behavior, the rules are absolute in that they express the absolute norm of love, but their application in the context of decision-making is not absolute because we still live in an imperfect and sinful world. Thus, we are left with the task of interpreting the rules in the light of situations and, frequently, we find ourselves faced with a conflict of rule obligations that must somehow be resolved. The resolution of conflicts between rule obligations and the interpretation of rules in the situation both represent the dialogue between rules and situation which precedes ethical decision. There is an inescapable measure of ambiguity and compromise in this state of affairs. Recognizing this, we recognize the manner in which our ethics are related to our freedom in the gospel to risk decision despite ambiguity and conflict. The process of moral deliberation involves the experience of law and gospel. The law speaks to the ambiguity of human dilemmas in a fallen world, and it speaks to the ambiguity of our motives and our decisions. At the same time the gospel sets us free to decide responsibly despite the conflictual and ambiguous nature of our circumstances.

The following case helps to define for us some of the ambiguities and conflicts that occur in the dialogue between rules and situation.

> Mr. L was a 73 year old man who underwent surgery for cancer of the colon 2 years ago. After a recurrence of the malignancy, X-ray and chemotherapy were given in an effort to arrest the spread of the tumor. However, the tumor spread to both the liver and lungs. With the best possible response to chemotherapy, Mr. L might survive as long as 3 months. However, he suddenly developed a fever and other symptoms. The chest X-ray showed the early development of pneumonia.
>
> Mr. L had expressed numerous times during the past month that all his family and close friends have died recently and that he himself had been preparing for death, with the help of his pastor, since his diagnosis of cancer was made. He said he was happy and thankful for a fruitful life. He was

wary of hospital procedure and routines, and he would prefer to be placed in a quiet area of the ward where the professional personnel would "leave me alone."

Those attending Mr. L must decide whether to institute antibiotic therapy for the pneumonia. It is a normal and usually effective procedure. Is it morally correct in the instance?

Mr. L's situation places those who must care for him in a dilemma. In view of his healthy spirituality and his understandable desire to be allowed to die in peace rather than to undergo the further rigors of futile chemotherapy regime, the normally routine decision to administer antibiotics becomes a highly ambiguous decision. An ethic of love demands that we preserve life. An ethic of love also demands that we relieve suffering. Finally, an ethic of love requires that we respect the autonomy of other individuals and their right and freedom to take responsibility for their own life decisions. All of these obligations of love cannot be met in this situation; they stand in conflict with each other. To preserve Mr. L's life is to prolong his suffering and deny his autonomy. To respect his autonomy and to provide him with a peaceful death is to abdicate the obligation to preserve his life. A decision must be made. It is important to recognize, after it is made, that, while it has been made responsibly and with good reasons, it remains ambiguous and a form of compromise. It is then that we realize that the gospel, rather than the correctness of our moral reasoning, is the ultimate strength for the moral life.

Since moral decisions rely upon the promise of the gospel, rather than upon the justification of judgments according to rule or law, we see the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit at the very center of the moral life. It is the Spirit's work in establishing us in faith and love and in the freedom of the gospel that enables ethics to take place at all from a Christian perspective.

Character and Christian Decision

In recent discussions in Christian ethics a great deal has been made about the notion of character. So much of ethics heretofore has occupied itself with theories for deciding the right or with specific problem areas. As necessary as that kind of discussion is, some, like Stanley Hauerwas, have suggested that character, the way we are, has been neglected and is even more fundamental to an understanding of morality than systems which tell us what we are to do.

I would like to propose that this renewed emphasis on character is of tremendous importance to our discussion on the intentional ending of life. This observation flows naturally from my previous remarks about ethics as emanating from freedom in the gospel because freedom in the gospel is a statement of how we are shaped by the word of grace and the work of the Spirit. It is the instincts and dispositions nurtured in the Christian story and in the Christian community that we carry with us into decision-making even as we carry certain rules of love. It is here that we comprehend the total of the Christian life as it takes place in the congregations and communities of the faith.

One critical aspect of the character question arises when we consider the complexities involved in who decides about the end-

ing of a life. Specifically, one thinks of the role of the physician and the health care team. Though we customarily think the decision resides first of all with the person who is dying or with his or her immediate family, the role of the physician is of critical importance. Because the physician possesses expertise that neither the patient nor the family have, his or her counsel can often determine the decision that is made even though the physician may ostensibly defer to the patient or to the family. Given this tremendous influence, one is forced to ask, is the character of the average physician, shaped as it is by professional experience, the sort that is sensitive to the possibility that the morally correct decision may well be *not* to use every possible treatment that medical science has at its disposal?

Even as there is a character evoked by living out the Christian story, there is also a character evoked by living out the story of the medical profession. A number of studies indicate that the "story" of the medical profession does not include a way to deal with the reality of death. This reality is perhaps summed up well by a comment made to me by the chief resident at a university hospital. I was about to give a presentation on the very topic under discussion, when he came up to me and said, "I'm very glad you're here to talk about these things; it is awfully hard to die here at University Hospital."

The Christian community has an obligation to reach out in dialogue to the medical community. The medical community has an obligation, in turn, to examine its own story in the light of other stories. And, finally, our American society needs for its part to reevaluate its unrealistic expectations of the medical community in light of what clearly appears to be a widespread effort to deny the reality of death. Of course, it is this reality which the Christian story addresses in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Care at the End of Life

Paul J. Bauermeister
Christ Seminary—Seminex Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

On the Sunday before Christmas in 1985, my wife, Jeannette, and I were at our farm in Missouri. It was one of those brilliant Missouri days that come in December to tempt you with dreams of summer by offering sunshine and temperatures in the mid 50s. We succumbed, as we often do, and readied the canoe for a short float on the river which borders the farm. We had the river to ourselves except for one fisherman in a johnboat with his dog who passed us going upstream. Then by a series of events too quick to remember clearly we had capsized our boat,



and were bobbing and sputtering in a very deep, wide part of the river. After the shock of the 36 degree water had passed and I started to think again, I found myself laughing with God at myself and at my fear. Not my fear of dying, mind you. What I was laughing at was my old fear of dying too slowly, my fear of dying out of my control. It is a fear I acquired early in life as I ministered to people in public institutions, some of whom wanted to die but could not.

The idea that Christian people might be longing for their own death came as a rude shock to me in my seminary days when an old woman asked me to pray that she die soon. I could not do it and instead mumbled something about "living in God's presence." I have since learned how to pray that prayer and find the impulse well represented in Christian tradition. Most people know of St. Paul's desire to "depart and to be with Christ which is far better" (Phil 1:23). Also in the main Christian tradition is LBW hymn 527, "All Creatures of Our God and King," the hymn attributed to St. Francis. Stanza six of that hymn names death as God's creature:

> And you, most kind and gentle death,
> Waiting to hush our final breath,
> Oh, praise him! Alleluia!
> You lead to heav'n the child of God
> Where Christ our Lord the way has trod.
> Oh, praise him! Alleluia!

If that is not enough to convince you of the sturdiness of this tradition, try this 18th century hymn which is a favorite of many older Germans:

> Come, sweet death, come blessed rest!
> Come, lead me to peace, for I am weary of this world.
> Oh, come, I wait for you,
> Come quickly and lead me, close my eyes!
> Come, blessed rest!

Death in a Wider Perspective

In 1974, when he was president of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, Lewis Thomas wrote the following words which give us a bigger picture of death than the one we usually work with:

> There are 3 billion of us on the earth, and all 3 billion must be dead, on a schedule, within this lifetime. The vast mortality, involving something over 50 million of us each year, takes place in relative secrecy. We can only really know of the deaths in our households, or among our friends. These, detached in our minds from all the rest, we take to be unnatural events, anomalies, outrages. We speak of our own dead in low voices; struck down, we say, as though visible death can only occur for cause, by disease or violence, avoidably. We send off for flowers, grieve, make ceremonies, scatter bones, unaware of the rest of the 3 billion on the same schedule. All of that immense mass of flesh and bone and consciousness will disappear by absorption into the earth, without recognition by the transient survivors.
>
> Less than half a century from now, our replacements will have more than doubled the numbers. It is hard to see how we can continue to keep the secret, with such multitudes doing the dying. We will have to give up the notion that death is catastrophe, or detestable, or avoidable, or even strange. We will need to learn more about the cycling of

> life in the rest of the system, and about our connection to the process. Everything that comes alive seems to be in trade for something that dies, cell for cell. There might be some comfort in the recognition of synchrony, in the formation that we all go down together, in the best of company (Lewis Thomas: *The Lives of a Cell,* pp. 115–16).

That big picture may help us when we try to deal in a pastoral way with the intentional ending of life. The problem is our awareness of mortality. Here are some more wise words from Dr. Thomas on the subject.

> We continue to share with our remotest ancestors the most tangled and evasive attitudes about death, despite the great distance we have come in understanding some of the profound aspects of biology. We have as much distaste for talking about personal death as for thinking about it; it is an indelicacy, like talking in mixed company about venereal disease or abortion in the old days. . . . At the very center of the problem is the naked cold deadness of one's own self, the only reality in nature of which we can have absolute certainty, and it is unmentionable, unthinkable. We may be even less willing to face the issue at first hand than our predecessors because of a secret new hope that maybe it will go away. We like to think, hiding the thought, that with all the marvelous ways in which we seem now to lead nature around by the nose, perhaps we can avoid the central problem if we just become, next year, a bit smarter (pp. 55–56).

It seems to me that there are a lot of our fellow Americans for whom the good doctor's words are astonishingly true. I find many such people in the church, some with round collars, some without, who have never faced their own mortality, and they never will. They are people who have serious difficulty in facing the mortality of those close to them.

We live in a culture that steadily whispers in our ears that death can be defeated. There are even those who think they know how it will happen. By anointing our brightest daughters and sons with sufficiently large amounts of money we will finally succeed in reversing cancer which means, of course, our victory over death, not by the resurrection of our Lord, but by a combination of technology and good will that marks it as uniquely American. And the wonder of it is that we will have done it by ourselves!

Many people in the church have never faced their own mortality.

The failure of that prideful wish will come when subsequent to that great day of victory we realize that the death statistics have not been reduced, but they have only realigned themselves in different columns. Our human Titanic is still sinking, we have only succeeded once more in rearranging the deck chairs.

Pushing against this main stream of our culture has been another small force, and it

has made some progress in the past 40 plus years. In the 1940s Eric Lindeman and Gerald Caplan, two Boston psychiatrists, brought bereavement and the mourning process into the light of day. I am sure that what they delivered to the world with no small fanfare already existed in the collective consciousness of the ministerium of the church, but it had never been written down or organized. In the 1960s Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, a Chicago psychiatrist, brought the dying process out of the closet and into the public arena. This was again information long stored in the collective consciousness of the clergy, but never assembled and written down. It has now become scientifically respectable, at least in psychiatry, to speak aloud of bereavement and dying, and this attitude has begun slowly to seep into the public awareness.

Speaking of Resurrection

So some good things have happened in the past 40 years, but the avoiding of our mortality is still with us and is strongly supported by the dominant culture, and sometimes even gets unintentionally fostered by the way in which people doing pastoral care talk about resurrection.

Those of us doing pastoral care need to exercise caution and discrimination in how we speak about resurrection to the dying. The dying person loses friends, family, work, place, life itself. If one's dying is done with awareness, the anticipation of all those losses that death will bring activates the usual response of mourning or grief work. We grieve in order to relinquish the attachments we formerly had to people and things and tasks. This ending of attachment is the proper function and goal of grieving for the dying person. This function should not be disrupted by careless talk about the resurrection.

There can be great comfort for the dying in being directed to thoughts of resurrection, but such thoughts are best directed not to reunion with loved ones, but to thoughts of being in the presence of God. Thoughts of reunion with loved ones, if mentioned at all, would best be couched in terms of "starting all over again, with a brand new life, one like we have never had before." And such thoughts of reunion would be best delayed until after the present attachments have been diminished by the grieving process. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is not given us so that we can hold on to present attachments while we die, but is instead a way of speaking of God's unimaginable care for us in Christ.

> We must grieve if we are to recover.

The same distinction needs to be clear in the mind of those offering pastoral care to the bereaved and to those about to be bereaved. Again, the doctrine of the resurrection is not a way for the bereaved to avoid the pain of grieving. The doctrine of the resurrection means that the loved one is safe, kept by God. The danger is that the grieving ones may construe our talk of resurrection as a way they can avoid the pain of mourning. By

doing that they short circuit their own mourning process, thereby rendering it less effective and prolonging their pain. For example, avoid saying to mourners, "Well, don't take it so hard, mother is in heaven with Jesus, and one day we will all join her and be together again. Think of how wonderful that will be!" What is wrong with that kind of comfort is that it obscures the reality that the loved one is gone. Gone today, gone tonight, gone tomorrow, gone for the rest of your life. You cannot get her back. You are here without her and the only way you can put your life back together is to grieve, to mourn, to weep, to be sad, to hurt, to remember it all, and thereby finally to give her up. We must grieve if we are to recover.

Stressing resurrection as God's victory in Christ over death is fine. The last word is not death. Nor is the last word life. The last word is *God!* But that victory does not mean that the bereaved can avoid hurt now. They must hurt. Through their pain comes God's healing for their pain. It is the way God made us.

We know that, but there are many out there who do not. And our pastoral care begins with telling them, in sermons at funerals and on Good Friday and Easter and on other days when the lessons of the day lead us to consider death and resurrection. We tell them in Bible classes and when doing pastoral care. We do well to tell them the path through bereavement is called the work of mourning and it is painful, but it leads to healing as God intended it to. The pain gets less and finally becomes only remembered pain. Tell them that and keep on telling them until they all know.

The Christian doctrine of the resurrection is a magnificent expression of gospel, but it should not be used as "quick fix" for the pain of grieving. If it is used that way we distort the meaning of resurrection and damage God's gift of healing.

Pastoral Care of Decision Makers

The central task involved in the intentional ending of life is, interestingly, the doing of that task which is all but definitional of humanity, and yet that task which humans find most difficult and challenging to do, namely, the making of a decision.

Let us consider first the situation in which a family is faced with the possibility of making a decision to discontinue life support systems for a comatose loved one. This is probably the most common type of intentional ending of life decision.

When people begin to consider making life and death decisions, it is wise for the person providing pastoral care to remember that among the decision makers there may be a few who have faced their own mortality and are therefore comfortable with the fact that people die. But there are also others who have never faced mortality and never will, and some with every shade and degree of acceptance of mortality in between. Those who have faced mortality are ready to make life and death decisions, those who have not faced mortality are *not* ready to make such decisions, and those in between are in between. Many times life and death decisions cannot be made because people are not ready to make them.

The place to begin our ministry is with our assessment of the readiness for life and death decision-making by all the potential decision makers. One of the easiest ways to get into major pastoral trouble is to ignore

their varying levels of acceptance of mortality. Some people will see the pastor as favoring killing by sanctioning a decision not to resuscitate. We are therefore well advised to move carefully and slowly and listen attentively, even to the quiet ones.

The Columbo technique of asking dumb questions is not a bad one in situations like these. You know the one where he says, "Now I don't always get things right the first time, so will you please tell me again, do you really feel that. . . ." This technique makes people repeat, and as they repeat they clarify for themselves, for each other, and for you.

We Americans imagine ourselves to be decisive people. Our leaders know what is going on and they make decisions and that is why we follow them. At least that is the current mythology. And it may be even partly true. I have known some Yuppies who knew how to make some very good decisions. They gather all the latest data, calculate probabilities for uncertain future events, attach preferential weights to various options and then they make exactly the right decision on a PC or VCR or BMW. These same Yuppies come to their pastor to be married because they are "hopelessly in love" and never have given one moment of serious thought to their choice of partner or to the nature of their relationship, beyond the effects marriage will have on their separate careers.

We Americans are great at making consumer decisions, but we are inexperienced at the intentional making of personal decisions. Furthermore, we get very little help at that kind of decision-making. What help we do get is done behind the closed doors of lawyers and therapists offices and is shrouded in deep mystery. Actually, we make very few personal decisions in an intentional, rational way, and the making of them causes us to feel uneasy, even anxious and eager to get the whole thing over with.

Our role in pastoral care is to assist the decision-making process, which means slowing people down and making them think clearly. That sounds easy enough until we remember their inexperience, their anxiety, their guilt, their grief, their loss, their pain, their intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict—then it does not sound so easy any more.

Ideally the decision belongs to the dying person. If the dying person can make it carefully and thoughtfully and then share it with those who will be asked to assist in carrying it out and with all those who have an interest or a concern, we have a decision process needing a minimum of pastoral care.

If the dying person is unable to make the decision, the family may choose to decide. As we suggested earlier, people have varying levels of acceptance of mortality as well as varying abilities at decision-making. Also, all families have some kind of power distribution within them, clear or unclear, stable or unstable.

The first questions to answer are: Who is going to decide and how is the decision to be made? Will the decision be made by the family leader, or by concensus or near concensus? Will all participate in the process, or are some family members heavyweights and others lightweights?

A good rule for the care giver is to offer no more help than is needed. A few families are able to make this difficult decision with little outside help. These are families where there is a good acceptance of mortality, a clear, stable power distribution and good ability to think under pressure. When work-

ing with such a family, stay in the background, help them test their concensus, make sure nobody is getting ignored and that they take adequate time to become accustomed to their decision before setting it in motion. Then bless the decision makers.

> Americans are inexperienced at the intentional making of personal decisions.

Most families will need more than that. To most people life and death decisions have never been made before and their initial response is to want to run away and hide or to foist the decision off on somebody else.

Once the questions of who decides and what decision process will be used have been answered, we can move on to the data gathering state. In the medical sphere, they will want to ask all the questions they have, holding back nothing, and they need to get answers that all the decision makers understand. They may also want a second medical opinion. They may want a legal opinion. And they may want to discuss Christian ethics and personal values with a trusted member of the clergy.

Part of making a good decision is projecting into the future and considering the possible consequences of the various options available in the situation. We are wise to ask, "What if?" and to ask it repeatedly. A carefully considered role play is not a bad way to heighten the decision maker's sense of emotional reality. It could be very helpful to look a decision maker in the eye and say something like this: "All right, now you imagine that you are with your grandmother's friend, Irmgard. It is the first time you have seen her since the funeral, and she stares at you with her watery blue eyes and says, 'I know what you did with your poor grandmother, you just had her put to sleep like an old dog!' Now, you tell me how you will answer Irmgard." These techniques are strong but people will return to thank you for the way in which they assisted them to make a good decision and to prepare for the consequences of their decision. The person providing pastoral care certainly need not be in on every conversation or discussion in this process. Stay only as close as you need to.

Once a decision is made that faces reality and takes responsibility, it is time for you to tell them that they have worked faithfully and hard, if that is the case, and that they now should wait. Sleep on it. Sleep on it more than one night. Let it settle. Hang it out to dry. Wait.

All the while this strange and difficult process of making a life and death decision is going on, the provider of pastoral care has the additional task of supporting the decision makers. This is done by speaking often of the importance and difficulty of such decision making. "We don't do this every day." "You need to take your time." "This is not an easy thing to do." "You have never made a decision like this one before." "God has a lot of patience and will surely give you some as you do this difficult task." "Our Lord Jesus Christ knows about making life and death decisions, he made one in Gethsemane. He

knows it is not easy. This is your Gethsemane, and he gladly joins his Gethsemane to yours."

Pitfalls for the Pastor

Pastoral care means you support them, and help them touch as many decision bases as they need to touch to make a good decision. And you also help them avoid some of the pitfalls people stumble into as they make decisions.

The first pitfall to be avoided is the attempt to get somebody else to make the decision for them. They would like the pastor to do it, or they would like the physician to do it. These being the two most god-like people around, no wonder. Sometimes the physician will fall into such a trap, sometimes the pastor will. But neither physician nor pastor has the right to make this decision. By the way, if we are to keep our own bias out of the decision, we must know our own bias, so be honest with yourself about your own wishes.

We can get pulled in by a preemptive announcement of "God's will." Watch that kind of language. Or we can get pulled in by a preemptive blessing of a too quick decision by someone in the party, possibly a decision that coincides with our own bias.

Fatigue and frustration are also a factor. In Lutheran circles this is known as the Milwaukee Maneuver. "I am tired of all this hassle. Let's just get it over with and go to Milwaukee." It is doubtful if good decisions get made when the strongest motivator is frustration and fatigue. That is the time to say, "Let's quit for today. Sleep on it, we will come back to it tomorrow."

Another error in decision-making involves the "last straw theory." This one usually comes after the announcement of some new disaster in the life of the dying person. Incontinence, delirium, vicious attack, amnesia, a fall, an injury, an unforseen expense. Again, wisdom waits, gets over the surprise, and comes back to the decision-making task tomorrow. The problem with the last straw theory is that it projects responsibility for the decision away from those who make it and places it on some event which on more sober reflection may appear to be of little consequence.

Choosing to Die

Let us move our consideration now from the situation in which a family makes a decision for an incapacitated loved one to the more difficult situation where the dying person struggles toward a decision. Let us also move from passive euthanasia to the intentional ending of one's own life by active means, an action commonly called suicide. As we make this move, many of us realize that we are in an area unfamiliar to us and that the word suicide has an ugliness about it that causes us to catch our breath.

We may have some experience at trying to talk a desperate, depressed person out of suicide, and most of us have experience at trying to talk a substance abuser out of a slower form of self-destruction, but this one is different.

It all happens when someone under our pastoral care looks at us with a face reflecting clear-eyed reasonableness and intensity and calmly says, "Pastor, I think I may want to take my own life. Can you and I talk about that?"

As with the awareness of our own mortality, we may discover we have another barrier inside ourselves that we must somehow pass before we will be free to provide pastoral care. The best way, and the only way I know to get ourselves beyond such a barrier is the same method you used the first time you came face to face with adultery or child molestation or family violence and realized that the barriers our culture had built into you were blocking your ability to provide pastoral care to those people. What you did then is what you do here. Take a firm grip on both your ears, so that you cannot run away and so that your ears will be out there and can hear everything. Then sit down, which lets the person know that you are going to stay. Then be very intentional about being "of, for, and with" that person, putting yourself in that person's place, thinking that person's thoughts, feeling that person's feelings. That way you can give that person, yes, even that first one, what you yourself would want if you had asked for the conversation: openness to the whole business, readiness to hear it all, readiness to feel all the feelings, all the fear, pain, uncertainty, and vulnerability of the most central kind. Be there with a readiness to pray, to lift up also this offering to the heavenly throne which we know to be a throne of indescribable grace. The first time and every time you do this kind of ministry may also be a good time to be in close touch with the one who provides pastoral care to you.

Be there with a willingness to pray.

Even though the decision about suicide is a qualitatively different one, the decision-making process is the same as the one described earlier and would be better made if other family members participate. First we determine who the decision makers are and assess their ability for this kind of decision-making. Data gathering leads to the hard work of deciding and testing the decision. All the way along, pastoral care offers support and patience and a steady hand to guide people past the possible errors.

This is a most difficult, demanding, and time consuming ministry, but also a much needed one. Faithful people are facing these decisions and should not be asked to face them without a competent and compassionate pastor at their side.

Lenten Passages: Reflections on Mortality and Resurrection

David C. Schroeder
Chaplain, Meridian, Idaho

"Intimations of Immortality" wrote the confident Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, as he boldly explored the grand theme that we are made of godlike stuff, and that we already have within us the divine spark of immortality, automatically and effortlessly and even painlessly, and that we need but recognize it.

Not so, if I am reading my current hunches correctly. Not so, if I am listening to my dying friends perceptively. Not so, if I am understanding the theology of the cross accurately. Intimations of *mortality* is more like it for me, closer to my realities.

Everywhere I turn these days I am reminded of the reign of death: every death notice, every obituary, indeed every page of the morning paper, not to mention the rich sprinkling of references to death in the English language as in "laughing to death."

The elderly, they say, check the obits to see if their name is included. I too check that page these days to see if their name is included. Or is it mine?

Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, leukemia and emphysema, CCU's and CVA's, patients at the tumor institute and the hospitals, not to mention the untimely death of my cousin David in an auto accident—all reek of death. And the stench of death is threatening to engulf me. There's nothing automatic or effortless or painless about that for this chaplain who serves in nursing homes.

Perhaps the highly touted film "A Passage to India" will provide some needed relief from my internal warfare. Instead "Passage" turns out to be David Lean's swan song, the great seventy-seven year old British director's final statement about the meaning of life. And what is the message that David proclaims so colorfully and so poignantly and yet so deceptively? Just this: we are fellow travelers on a difficult journey involving many passages to nowhere, to the bottom of the sea, if you will. For the sea of death will swallow us all in the end, just as it did Mrs. Moore after booking passage home.

What I want to know is this: Do the passages of *my life,* and there are many, mean anything in the final analysis? Or is the Hindu right? Nothing you do will make any difference when all is said and done anyhow.

Maybe Ecclesiastes is not so out of place in the Scriptural canon after all. Some wag called him "The Middle-Aged Preacher." "Is it I, Lord?"

"Totally incomprehensible to children; no offensive content." That's the inane way the review of weekend diversions in our valley evaluated "Passage." The whole movie was offensive to me and incomprehensible to any and all who do not want to face their realities.



Adela Quested (past tense of the verb "quest" as in "sought but did not find") books passage from England to India in search of adventure and love and marriage. Her quest for all that Western society calls good and proper appears within easy grasp, hers for the asking. All is forfeited, however, when she begins to uncover and confront her realities, including the fact that she does not love the attractive Britisher to whom she is engaged.

Ascending the mountain like Moses on Sinai or Elijah on Carmel, she dares to enter the cave of her subconscious and comes face to face with her own apparent madness. Rushing from that disconcerting confrontation, she tumbles down the side of the mountain, nearly destroying herself in the process, her body gouged from head to foot by exceedingly painful and potentially poisonous cactus needles.

The echoes of the Marabar Caves reverberated through my psyche as I viewed "Passage." Incredibly, as my wife and I left the theater the awful echo was repeated in the same tone and pitch by the roar of an Air National Guard RF4 screaming heavenward. The maddening thunder created a major mid-life crisis then and there. I felt as if all my assumptions about everything went up for grabs. In those intense moments I was as frightened as Luther in his thunderstorm, and came face to face with my own chaotic inner universe.

For months this David had been on an emotional and spiritual high. One insight tumbled upon another like tropical ocean waves. Putting those insights in writing affirmed my "isness." "I write; therefore, I am." Ministry in the trenches at three nursing homes taught me more about dying and living in months than I had learned in the previous forty plus years.

Now, however, the intimations of my mortality have become a tidal wave threatening to drown me. Enough! I have learned enough. I want to know no more. I want to stop my ears and cover my eyes. I want to wish away the terminal illnesses and the fatal accidents and the terrorist bombings. I want to forget that I am living or dying. I want to turn back the clock to that time before I looked my death mask in the face. Enough intimations. Enough premonitions. Enough, God! You have made your point all too well.

"Closeness to death and dying does not mean imminence of death," a physician friend assured me the other morning. "Just

because you are working with the dying does not necessarily mean that your own death is near."

That's easy for her to say. Anybody can *say* that, and I do like the sound of it, but how does anyone know whether or not death is or is not imminent *for me*? Maybe I won't be here tomorrow. That kind of thing happens all the time in care centers, and everywhere, and at any age. I do read the obituaries, and obituaries cannot lie.

Imminence, whether real or imagined, translates into eminence in my psyche. Webster says that both imminence and eminence are related to the Latin *mons* or mountain. This immense mountain of truth threatens to overwhelm me—challenges all that I have ever done or been, confronts all that I am now, upsets all that will become of me. At one and the same time I am both compelled to climb the mountain of God and I am also repelled by the deep, dark secrets I might learn there, not unlike the moth flitting around the flame that can consume it.

Bach knew what God knew from before the beginning—death always precedes life.

No philosophical debate, this. I'm talking about all there is of me. Just as I am beginning to understand my self a bit, and gingerly to accept and perhaps even grow to like my self, why am I being asked to give up my new self? "Is there no way," to borrow T. S. Eliot's question, "Is there no way that does not lead to damnation in pride?"

"Immediately the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness." "Immediately," that is, right after our Lord's baptism in the Jordan; "the Spirit," that is, the holy purifying fire; "drove out," that is, compelled out of divine necessity; "him," that is, Jesus the Christ; "into the wilderness," that is, out into the apparently Godforsaken desert.

Why must there be so little time and space between the Father's "Thou art my beloved Son" of baptism and the Spirit's driving him into the wilderness and the Tempter's "If you are the Son of God"? Why must the Jordan flow so near the desert? The valleys lie so near the mountain tops? My head answers one way; my heart quite another. And this internal civil war threatens to divide and debilitate me.

"*Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg*" proclaims the opening line of stanza #4 of Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata IV, "*Christ Lag in Todesbanden,*" "Christ Lay in Death's Strong Bands." This hymn was written by one Martin Luther in the springtime of the Reformation.

"Oh, what a wonderful war it was!" Bach sings. What, pray tell, is this so-called wonderful war? "When Death and Life met in mortal combat."

In English we are accustomed to saying "life and death." First life, then death. That's just the way it is.

Not so for Bach. Not so in Bach's cantatas. Their order is reversed. *First Tod, then Leben.* For Bach knew what Luther knew what Paul knew what Christ knew what God the Father knew from before the begining—

death always precedes life. That's just the way it is in God's economy. Only the veterans of this wonderful war truly understand. Only those who have already died are truly able to celebrate the here and the now, not to mention the hereafter.

The Children of Israel had to die for forty years in the desert before they were allowed to enter the Promised Land. I have a hunch, however, that the people of God experienced both death and life in the desert *and* in the Land of Promise, with battle lines constantly shifting within human hearts where the real battles will always be fought. I only wish that, like Lent, the battle lasted only forty days. I fear that, like life, it may last fourscore years. "Yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away." What's so wonderful about that, Johann?

"Life is winning the victory," Bach replies in his cantata. Rumor has it that the old enemy death has been chained. Death's chain may be long and the fight will be fearsome, but old death is being contained. "Life (with a capital 'L') is winning the victory."

How, Johann? "Life has devoured Death." Life has swallowed death whole. This reversal is as improbable as if the grandmother in "Little Red Riding Hood" had swallowed the wolf.

"The Saying is sure." A holy saying has come to pass, which is being fulfilled in, of all places, the heat of my battles and the bottom of my heart.

This battle royal is raging within me, within my own viscera. This amazing fray reflects both the power of death and the power of life, the Evil One and the Loved Son, the uplifted cross and the empty tomb, both "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" In other words both Good Friday and Easter in my innards!

"For your Lenten journey this year, to heighten your participation in the paschal mysteries, consider carefully what your Lord wants to put to death in you."

These troublesome words were put to me by my pediatrician-oncologist friend. Is it *I* who need to die? How else can my Lord rise within me unless first I am ready to die? "Whoever would save his life will lose it." Yet I dread that is my greatest need and my truest challenge.

Paul put it this way to his friends in Galatia: "I have been put to death with Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." The Master said it like this, "Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." And the hymnwriter like this, "Upon Your cross-forsaken Son our death is laid, and peace is won."

The death of my Lord makes my death meaningful, which in turn permits me to share his Easter rising. "Permits." That has a grace ring to it. "Permits" sounds a lot better than "struggle" and "warfare." However, Easter only happens within those who have experienced Good Friday. And the only way to experience Good Friday is to die, however you define "death," which is precisely what I have been fighting all the while.

Does Christ crucified become the new focus of my battle? Might I even be battling him, the Lord of life? Have I been entrenched on the wrong side in this war? I don't remember switching sides! Is the war only over when I stop fighting Christ? *Kyrie eleison.*

Finally, does my *war* only become *wonderful* when I finally admit my culpability? Repentance is without doubt the first step

home to the Father's warm welcome. But more to the point, will repentance be the first step home *for me*? Have I failed to comprehend how far I had strayed from home? And is that why I have taken my Father's welcome so for granted?

"Let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again." The New English Bible says even more strongly, "This son of mine was dead *and has come back to life.*" Is the parable of the prodigal son, then, an apt description of my wonderful war? The war became wonderful for the younger son because the battle in his own psyche led him to his knees which in turn turned him toward home. That's *wonderful*!

On the other hand, did the elder son refuse to celebrate because he refused to admit that a war was even being waged? What would it have taken for him to recognize that he had acquiesced to the Enemy?

Bach can sing, "*Ein Spott! Ein Spott! Ein Spott!*" "O Grave! O Grave! O Grave!" A strong challenge, a bold dare. Three times. First *death,* then *life.* Out of death, of all things, springs victory. God's grace is always amazing and genuine joy always a surprise when anyone is rescued from sting of death and grasp of grave.

No wonder Bach's every stanza ends with "Hallelujah!" Don't just say it, shout it. Don't just shout it, sing your heart out. "Hallelujah," the same in every language, "praise the Lord, all you prodigals on your way home."

"Thanks be to God" (that's gospel talk), "who gives us the victory" (now you're talking), "through our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the "one little word" that subdues all foes, including the last one to be defeated, death itself. He is sufficient.

My death swallowed up by his death. Hallelujah. My death sealed by his rising. Hallelujah. The gift of new and quite unexpected Life for this continually-being-born-again prodigal. *Vivit ergo sum.* He lives; therefore I am.

The war's over!

Or is it just beginning?

Did Not Our Hearts Burn Within Us?

Ralph F. Smith
Assistant Professor of Liturgics and Dean of the Chapel
Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

Luke may not have told the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples on the Emmaus road in order to make a point about worship, but the account is rich with images which capture the spirit of what Christians are up to, what they hope for when they assemble in the name of Jesus. The conviction underlying this essay is that assembling in the name of Jesus provides the context for everything else Christians do.

Only one answer can finally be given to the question of the church's purpose: Christians are called to bear witness to Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the anointed one, God's self-revelation. The more difficult question to answer is how to bear that witness in a given time and place. I want to suggest that the foundation and context for exploring the possible answers are provided by worship. The mere fact that Christians assemble, and that they do so in the name of Jesus, is perhaps the most powerful witness the Christian community can make about its identity and its purpose.

A list of theses can help to focus what I intend by the suggestion that worship provides the foundation and context for Christian identity and purpose:

1) Christians are called to be a community of prayer, and worship is a necessary, constitutive part of that calling.

2) The worshiping community is a symbolic witness in, to, and for the world.

3) The transforming power of the gospel is rooted in worship.

4) Worship is fundamentally subversive.

The Emmaus road story from Luke's Gospel (24:13–35) will provide a thread of continuity for our exploration as its images are allowed to weave in and out of the discussion of each thesis.

Thesis 1

Christians are called to be a community of prayer, and worship is a necessary, constitutive part of that calling.

Christian identity is communal. One cannot be a Christian alone. Numbers are not determinative of community, relationships are. For Christians the relationships are created by the Word of God alive between and among them. Prayer, whether described as an attitude of one's whole life or a specific

act of dialogue, is the word we use to name the presence of a God who is an active participant in the relationships of which we are a part.

"While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them (Luke 24:15)." At this early point in the story Jesus is not recognized, yet he is present with Cleopas and his friend in the talking and discussing. The mutuality of dialogue is what creates and expresses community. God in Christ is an active partner in the dialogue (and therefore in the relationship) because the disciples are open to hearing how they are "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken," and to having interpreted for them "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

Dialogue—speaking and listening—is the heart of the community of prayer. Dialogue is movement. The physical reality of the two disciples being on the road is not an irrelevant, offhand comment in this story. To be with and for someone is to "walk and talk" with them. It is not always possible to recognize the power or significance of what is being shared until after the fact. But lack of immediate recognition does not diminish the ultimate effect of life shared. Allowing God to speak and being willing to listen have much to do with defining "prayer" as the dialogical movement characterizing Christian life as life shared with God. Movement clearly implies willingness to risk, to change, to explore, to discover, even to be a bit crazy according to the world's norms.

We often want to pin down definitions of what it means to be a "community" of "prayer." Our desire to limit by definition is a desire that needs always to be held in check by the gospel's call to freedom. The place, the time, the occasion, the event—however one wishes to name it—of Christians gathered by the Word can be the opportunity for God in Christ to speak to that desire, which is personal and individual, and reshape it through the mutuality that is God's gift in the incarnation. Being linked with others whose lives are open to being shaped by the shared story of God in Christ establishes the Christian community of prayer.

Two things constitute group identity: belonging and ordering. A group takes on distinct identity when it is possible to say who is in it and who is not. That identity is further expressed by the way in which the group structures its communal life. For Christians, baptism identifies who belongs, and ministry orders (or structures) the community thus formed. Remember that the issue in baptism is belonging to the church (our name for the community of prayer). Because the church is not synonymous with the Kingdom of God, baptismal identity does not result in humanity being divided into the damned and the saved. We do not baptize people in order to save them from the world and bring them into an exclusive club.

The church's witness to Jesus as God's self-revelation serves the reign of God which Jesus established. Everything the baptized person does or does not do is caught up in that witness. Everything the baptized community does or does not do is caught up in that witness. Those who constitute the visible body of Christ are called to live as new creations. Consequently, many are fond of saying that the church exists for the sake of God's reign, and that that reign embraces both world and worship.

The Christian community can be the body of Christ in the world only when it is visibly

knit together and thereby recognizable to the world as a body, as a community. One cannot be a Christian alone. Neither can individual congregations or specific churches (denominations) be the church alone.

One often hears the comment that a Christian is not immediately recognizable in a pluralistic world. Christians do not look different from others, nor do they necessarily act differently in terms of human care, concern, and love. One does not need to be a part of the visible Christian community in order to love one's neighbor as oneself. To those on the receiving end of human compassion, like the hungry being fed, knowing why a person has been motivated to provide food, whether for selfish gain or out of altruism or love of God, is of little consequence compared with the desperate need to be fed. At a fundamental level, that of survival, Christians are neither more nor less called than any other person to care for one another and the rest of creation.

Our calling to be a community of prayer is realized in our gathering in response to the call; the gathering is simultaneously the occasion for making the call. This simple irony is the result of our living in history, of being people who remember and anticipate, people who make connections and do not live life as isolated bits of disconnected experiences. The tension of our being individuals and social beings at the same time is one of the mysterious givens of creation. Mutuality is avoidable only with strenuous effort. Few people are genuine hermits, or want to be. I cannot write these words without thinking of you. You cannot read them without thinking of me. To some degree we want to be related.

Our ability to identify ourselves and one another as Christians has more to do with our mutual dedication to prayer, praise, and thanksgiving as the most appropriate determinants of our lives than with anything else. The one act Christians do that no one else does in quite the same way is worship. It is a mistake to play off the community's ritual life (Sunday worship especially) and individual piety ("I can believe in God without going to church"). We need always to bear witness to the fact that a person may be able to believe in God without going to church, but one cannot be a Christian without the church.



The two disciples recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread and recall that their hearts burned within them on the road as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them. No matter how one wishes to exegete the story, it reveals the foundational nature of the experience historically termed "Word and Sacrament" which defines the Christian community of prayer. Jesus is made known there, he is revealed there. Just as Luther argued that God is hidden in creation, not thereby denying God's presence in creation, so one can say that Jesus is hidden apart from the assembly of "two or three" around word and table, not thereby denying Jesus' presence elsewhere (although it seems to me

difficult to articulate what Jesus' "presence" elsewhere might be).

To say that worship is a necessary and constitutive part of Christian identity is to affirm that God's radical embodiment in Jesus and the raising of Jesus from the dead inextricably bind (not limit!) God to Christians. That is in fact what we say happens in baptism, in the Word proclaimed, and in the meal shared.

Thesis 2

The worshiping community is a symbolic witness in, to, and for the world.

The Christian community is called to provide a vision of what God intends for creation. This could be, were it not for God's revealing of that intent in Jesus, an arrogant assertion of prerogative. In a pluralistic world Christians are finding it difficult to defend an exclusive approach which denies the possibility of other religions having something to say about who God is or what God intends. In other words, it is not appropriate to conceive of mission in imperialistic terms, where it is a question of "us" convincing "them" that we are right about who God is. Mission is rather a matter of affirming in our witness that we believe God to be self-revealed in Jesus, and upon believing that affirmation to live life differently than we otherwise might.

One of the ways we live life differently is to assemble on Sunday mornings, as well as at other times, for worship. Not everyone is willing to say what our gathering says about our priorities and about the ultimate author of life. In this country the right to assemble is clearly assumed and on the surface seems to provide no particular witness concerning the identity of God in Christ. When we examine more carefully our national "sense" concerning the effect of groups assembling, and how threatened we often are by, for example, protest marchers, we discover that there is indeed more power in assembly than meets the eye.

One of the ways we live differently is to assemble for worship.

"And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together, and those who were with them (Luke 24:33)." Assembly is an assertion of authority and power, and not in terms of numbers. It can be perceived as opportunity or threat. More often than not we perceive such assembling as threat. So do governments in those countries where the right to assemble is not allowed, and Christians who gather there take their life in their hands by gathering for worship. When we gather in Word and sacrament we state publicly, openly, and boldly that there is One to whom we owe our life, and no one else. The final claim on us, on all that we are, all that we say and do, belongs to God and to no one else.

Within the Christian assembly, we embody the vision of what we might be with and for one another and the world. The janitor and bank president who are otherwise alien-

ated from one another are able to sit side by side, eat and drink from the same loaf and cup, share the kiss of peace—all intimate points of recognition of mutuality in spite of the ways in which their lives outside the gathering might fail to embody the equality that is theirs. When their lives outside the assembly so fail, this gathering becomes a word of judgment as well as hope.

Echoing the message of Amos, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies" (Amos 5:21), some claim that this simply generates hypocrisy. We are always searching, it seems, for the easy way out. If we can prove that there is a dichotomy between Christian worship and Christian life, then we can rightly excuse ourselves from this gathering, or attend the gathering and excuse ourselves from living life as a new creation in Jesus Christ. What a profound example of self-deception this is. God is the one doing the calling through Word and sacrament. If it were my word alone you might rightly choose to stay away. Faith says otherwise.

Thesis 3

The transforming power of the gospel is rooted in worship.

The rhetorical question asked by the two disciples after their encounter with Jesus, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" expressed an inner light of recognition. It was a moment of insight that enabled them to appropriate their earlier experience in a startling, new way. The scene is perhaps the New Testament's most powerful example of the realization of Jesus' promise that where two or three were gathered he would be in the midst of them. Afterwards, they could not wait until the next day but rose that same hour and walked all the way back to Jerusalem to share the news.

To say that the transforming power of the gospel is *rooted* in Christian worship is not to limit that power to worship. It is rather to recognize what the Spiritedness of Christian community implies. It is not necessary to speak of dramatic moments of conversion, although they are fine moments to experience, in order to give evidence of the ongoing way in which we are shaped (converted) by participating in the body of Christ. Again it is a matter of seeing how individuals draw strength and insight, direction and challenge, support and comfort from others who are Christ for them day after day in their lives, and week to week in the assembly where God's Word for them is assured.

To return to the janitor and the bank president, they may not be able to overcome the separation or hierarchical distinction forced on them by their roles in a culture which is not Christian, or where others make different claims on them. But their participation in the weekly Christian gathering affords the opportunity for their being able to see one another and the world differently. Sometimes that will result in amazing changes which in turn force others to see them differently, sometimes not. The possibility, however, that their hearts (and our hearts) will burn with the fire of hope and new life is always the surprising possibility generated by gathering around word and table in the name of Jesus.

Contemporary concern for "spirituality" reveals that we long for what Christian worship offers, the experience of God (with the dimensions of both presence and absence being part of that). Such experience is not a

thing learned, but it is a shared journey, an ongoing story of which we are a part. Our concern for spirituality is our concern both to be a part of and to make sense of the journey. And we long to be transformed, to be given new beginnings, to feel our hearts burning within us. Worship alone, in the narrower sense of liturgical gathering as I have been using it, does not answer all these needs. But it does provide the context and foundation for interpreting the multiplicity of ways in which they are addressed.

Thesis 4

Worship is fundamentally subversive.

This thesis is in some ways the most exciting when Christians take its implications to heart. It is simultaneously the most frightening. To say that Christian worship is *fundamentally* subversive is to imply that on the surface this may not always be apparent. That is because Christians have a rather curious eschatology. We live by moving toward an end, a genuine end to life and time as we know it. Yet the end is indeterminately far off, and it is never quite clear how what we are doing right now is moving us there. What is clear is that we can never claim that what is happening to us now *is* that expected end, and therefore demands our complete obedience. For that reason what worship intends is always at root subversive.

Worship subverts the way in which we tend to spend our lives. The demands to work, to produce, to be useful are set aside, or transformed by worship's assertion that praise and thanksgiving, prayer and song, are worth doing because worth is redefined in the very doing of them. The redefinition comes not because we say anything particular about worth, but rather because we are there involved in living our life as the place of God's activity rather than only our own.

Prayer has been described rightly as "useless" activity, where "usefulness" is understood in either economic or utilitarian terms. Worship might similarly be described as useless, but only in the way that playful self-giving is useless. It is indeed a "waste" of time that might be spent otherwise, such as in working to produce something, to make money. But in worship God promises to recreate, to regenerate, to renew by being present. It is because these actually occur that Christians find themselves called to the community gathering over and over again. So it is that the self-serving tendency we have to spend our lives is subverted by worship's call to be for others, to be for God in playful celebration.

Worship also subverts the way in which the world is able to limit or define human freedom. Worship provides the vision that life lived for others (bearing the cross) rather than life lived for self is the heart of freedom. Mohandas Gandhi once spoke to a crowd explaining what non-violent resistance might mean. He realized that suffering and persecution would result. With regard to his persecutors he said, "they may torture or kill me, and then they will have my dead body. But they will never have my obedience." Gandhi rightly recognized the link between freedom and obedience.

Christian worship defines that link by opening a possibility other than what the world offers for identifying whom we might obey. Thus worship also redefines what it means to be free. Death and resurrection are the content of our obedience and our freedom. That is clearly a threat to whatever sets

of values or social structures make different claims. It means that you and I may find ourselves at odds with ourselves as well as at odds with others. We will find the words of Jesus to the disciples gathered and listening to the report of Cleopas and his friend spoken also to us, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings arise in your heart?"

What we say and do on a Sunday morning provide a holy glimpse of who God is.

Most of us are probably not predisposed to seeing ourselves as subversives. Yet when we worship we inescapably are, for by so gathering we are telling the world that there is only One to whom we owe our faithfulness, and that our self giving will not be limited by concern for self preservation. Thus we will continue to be troubled and filled with questions, for it is never easy to give up oneself for the sake of another. Fortunately, many opportunities exist within the broader life of the church to address both the troubled spirit and the questioning. Worship is not one among these many, but rather the context within which those many exist.

I am fond of reminding students at the conclusion of an introductory course on worship that there is no one right way to worship God, but in any given time and place some ways are more appropriate than others. What the preceding discussion has not done is to ask what in our own day might be the more and the less appropriate ways. Instead it has suggested that we ought to be surprised by the significance of the event to which we give attention each week on Sunday morning, even when it may seem empty or routine to us.

Yet the question of how we do what we do (the "what" being gathering for Word and sacrament, the "how" being the order of service by which that Word and sacrament are embodied) also begs for discussion. There can be no content without form for Christians, because revelation is always mediated. God is enfleshed. No one sees God fully face to face. What we say and do on a Sunday morning—the words, the music, the gestures, the environment, and all the rest—provide a holy glimpse of who God is.

There is no question that God can speak in spite of us, that is, in spite of the words and signs we use or the hindrances we manage to create. Yet what a wondrous thing it is when God is revealed in, with, and through rather than in spite of what we say and do. We all know that there are words that hurt and words that heal, actions that hurt and actions that heal. How will we speak and act so that in our community, our culture, and our time the witness we bear will be of Christ and not ourselves?

Answering that requires engagement in the very dialogue to which the Emmaus road story invites us.. Worship is God's promise, not mine or yours. Only that promise, lived out, experienced, given and received over and over again, can truly cause our hearts to burn within us.

WORDsearch: State of the Art Concordance!

Ralph W. Klein
Christ Seminary—Seminex Professor of Old Testament, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and editor of Currents in Theology and Mission.

1. Q. Where in the Bible are sin and grace used in one verse?
   A. Romans 5:20–21; 6:14–15.

2. Q. Where are Peter, James, and John listed in one verse?
   A. Two times in Matthew, four times in Mark, three times in Luke, once in Acts, and once in Galatians.

3. Q. How many times are gold and silver used in parallel lines in the Psalter?
   A. Five times, and always in the order silver-gold.

4. Q. How many times do we find a combination of the terms know, knowing, knowledge, known, knows, wisdom, wise, understand, understanding, or understands *and* one of the words fool, fools, foolish, foolishly, foolishness, or simple in one verse?
   A. Seventy-six.

5. Q. How many times are the words Lord, God, or Almighty used of the deity?
   A. 4,906.

6. Q. How many of those 4,906 uses have "love" or "friend" in the same verse?
   A. 192.

7. Q. How many times are the names Peter and Paul used in the Bible? And do they ever appear in the same verse?
   A. 125 and 129 respectively. No.

8. Q. Could you type out all the passages referred to in the seven questions above?
   A. Sure, but it'll take at least two seconds for each one!

If you have an IBM computer (or compatible) with a hard disk, you, too, can become an electronic concordance expert. There are several such concordances on the market, but the one I have tried with high delight is

called WORDsearch. It sells for $189.95 (WORDworks Software Architects, 5014 Lakeview Drive, Austin, TX 78732:1-800-888-9898).

The concordance is based on the New International Version, whose literal character is an advantage in this case and makes negligible any theological shortcomings. As with every English concordance, there sometimes is slippage between the original languages and the English text, but again NIV is probably about as consistent in its Hebrew/Greek—English equivalents as any of the other modern versions. To find the NT references to *episkopos* one has to look up "overseer" instead of "bishop." It pays to have a copy of the NIV handy.

The computer program lists chapter and verse where the word being sought occurs. Press one button and the complete English text for all those verses appears instantaneously on the screen. Press another button, and you are given context verses. Any of the above findings can be printed out, or they can be stored in a computer file and taken up into your word processing program. In my system (Compaq 286, with Notabene word processing), the words being sought stand out smartly since they are enclosed in angle brackets.

In a flash you can type out every verse in which the name Moses appears (547 in this count), but if you are a researcher in 1 and 2 Chronicles, as I am, you can easily bring the list down to the nineteen references to Moses in those two books. Take the numbers with a bit of salt since the computer counts references to Moses in two or three successive verses as one occurrence.

If you are even mildly literate about computers, you can figure out the relatively simple and brief manual. I found a minor mistake in it, but with a little hacking around I solved the problem—as you will too.

In short, this concordance will do anything any other English concordance will do, but much, much faster. Most concordances print out a four or five word context; WORDsearch gives you complete verses and even the surrounding verses if you wish. WORDsearch also finds things that would be virtually impossible with a regular concordance—just think about answering the questions with which this review began with Strong's or Young's concordances. The ability to print out your computer search or include it within a word processing program will prove extraordinarily useful for sermon preparation or Bible class materials.

I hope someday the authors will add a feature that will enable the user to seek out via English the underlying Hebrew or Greek text—as one can do *very laboriously* with Strong's or Young's, but even now word study via the English Bible has become almost eschatologically new. When you think about the time you'll save and the new information you will discover, the cost is really a bargain.

This concordance will do anything any other concordance will do, but much faster.

Oh, yes, where does Bethany appear in the Bible? Matt 21:17, 26:6; Mark 11:1, 11–12, 14:3; Luke 19:29, 24:50; John 1:28, 11:1, 18; 12:1. Thought you'd never ask.

Postscript: Search the Scriptures

This computer concordance, published by BibleSoft, Inc. (Route 3, Box 182, Monroe, LA 71203), is available in either a KJV or NIV version and has strengths and weaknesses different than WORDsearch.

Its principal difference is that it is both a concordance and a word processing program. A nifty advantage is that one can access the concordance from within the word processor—while one is working on a sermon, for example. Pull-down menus make this system a bit easier to use, based on the demonstration disk that was sent.

But there are also several disadvantages. The price is $250 (instead of $189), perhaps because one is also getting a word processor.

A more serious disadvantage in my judgment is that only questions 1, 3, and 7 listed at the start of this article could be done with "Search the Scriptures." Thus, some of the intricate searches discussed above could not be done.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Dr. Klein:

I am greatly disturbed by the inclusion of Ralph Quere's article, "The AIDS Crisis: A Call to Mission Based on 1 Peter," in the October 1987 issue of *Currents*. He may have more appropriately titled his article, "Sin, Judgment and Wrath: My View of Homosexuality," as it seems to this reader that indeed this and not AIDS is his focus. Unfortunately Quere has simply used the AIDS epidemic as an agenda, a front from which to launch a sweeping condemnation of homosexual orientation and lifestyle.

Furthermore, it is unfortunate that this article appeared in an issue of *Currents* dealing with the thematic question, "What in the World Are Christians For?" The article not only adds little to the church's response, but it reveals how apparently unfamiliar Quere is with the *real* problems and issues facing people caught in the middle of this epidemic. Do Lutheran Christians have a particular contribution to make as we respond to the crisis, other than the unsatisfactory response proposed by Quere? Hopefully in spite of Quere and others like him, a significant Lutheran presence has been and continues to be made within the vast Christian ministry to persons with AIDS, their lovers, family, and friends.

Quere's choice of text for his article raised many questions in my mind. Why choose 1 Peter for an article about AIDS? What is it that sets the agenda for his article—is it really AIDS, or are other issues of primary importance to him? To what is Quere actually responding? Obviously he is not responding to the specific questions, issues, and problems of people with AIDS. Instead it is the problem of homosexuality and sexual promiscuity that holds his attention! AIDS and homosexuality are tightly connected in Quere's mind despite his own admission that the total number of heterosexual cases world-wide far exceeds homosexual cases. It is because of this connection that he is able to write that, "...venereal disease or AIDS, resultant from sexual promiscuity, is an expression of God's judgment and wrath" (p. 364). To explain this, he devises an explanation of the innocent and non-innocent victims of this disease.

If God uses disease as an expression of wrath and punishment, how can Quere claim that there are innocent victims of AIDS? Perhaps they are being punished not because of sexual immorality but for other sins in their life? Or is AIDS, God's specific punishment, resultant from a specific form of immoral activity? Does Quere assume that his "innocent" victims are spotless and without sin in all other areas of their lives? Such implications lead me to reject Quere's hypothesis.

It is in such horrid questions that the viciousness of Quere's argument is revealed.

AIDS is a virus and viruses are contracted indiscriminate of one's sexuality, morality, race, gender, ethnicity, etc. To suggest that AIDS is a viral expression of God's wrath and judgment when it touches the lives of some (whose lifestyle or orientation do not conform to Quere's standard) but tragic when it touches others (those he labels innocent) is offensive. All are innocent when it comes to talking about this amoral virus!

At the center of Quere's argument, he believes that "Homosexuality is indeed a part of the brokenness of creation; homosexual behavior is disobedience to the Creator" (p. 369). Referring briefly to the theological and scriptural interpretations to the contrary, he quickly dismisses (hardly "discounts") them as obviously unscriptural and incomplete to his view (hardly a "reaffirmation" as you suggest in the issue's preface).

"Seeking and publishing the truth—that, too, is what Christians are in the world for." Especially around issues like AIDS when the stakes are so high and the need is especially great for a significant contribution from the church in response to the crisis, we need to carefully declare the truth. Unfortunately, this reader believes that there is little truth, gospel truth, to be found in Quere's article.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Johnson
Berkeley, California

Professor Quere Responds:

I regret that Mr. Johnson regarded my article as vicious. I attempted to speak the truth in love, aware that what I said seemed harsh. Let another judge!

Since Mr. Johnson has not responded to the biblical texts I interpreted, it's hard to pursue that discussion. It's a bit like a biblical scholar who has been a mentor for me who said, "The Bible clearly teaches that homosexuality is a sin, but I don't believe it's a sin." I appreciate his honesty, but I reject his conclusion.

For me, those clear biblical texts label homosexual behavior as sin. Given that starting point, the article attempted with "tough love" to explore the implications of the AIDS epidemic for pastoral care, discipline, confession and absolution, and instruction with the hope and goal that all might *experience* God's reconciling love in Christ. Since such experience involves repentance, that harsh word of law that "always accuses" must be spoken.

If the word of gospel that heals was not spoken clearly or rightly heard, of that I repent and that I regret!

Yours in Christ,
Ralph Quere
Wartburg Theological Seminary
Dubuque, Iowa

Book Reviews

A FAITH TO LIVE BY. Compiled by J. C. Wenger: Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1980. 70 pages. Paper. $1.50.

A THIRD WAY. By Paul M. Lederach. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980. 150 pages. Paper $6.95.

Anabaptist movements remain officially anathematized by the Lutheran Book of Concord, but in practice many Lutherans live in communities in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa with Amish and Mennonite people, and there has been quiet interaction between the faiths for centuries. These two books will be of special interest to those who live in such places and of general interest to those seeking some knowledge of Anabaptism.

Wenger's book is a compilation of writings from Anabaptist reformers, chiefly from Menno Simons, to whom Mennonites trace their origin as a particular movement. The Spirit-filled, Christ-centered life of discipline is highlighted in these readings, as well as the peculiar understanding of Ordinances (baptism and Lord's Supper, which Mennonites call breaking of bread) that characterizes the group.

Lederach's book is a primer which may be seen as commentary and expansion on *Affirming our Faith in Word and Deed,* a 1977 document for congregational and personal study from the Mennonite Church General Assembly. The title indicates that Mennonites see theirs as a "third way" beyond/between Roman Catholicism and the Lutheran-Reformed tradition; this way begins with contemplation of the life and teachings of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. Mennonites, while not denying the significance of Christ's death and resurrection, derive much of their energy from this contemplation. This unique starting point means that Mennonites stress, on one hand, the communal/familial aspect of both baptism and the breaking of bread and, on the other, the church as visible community of those who voluntarily accept a discipline of worship, work and service in harmony with one another.

The two books complement one another quite well.

Jay C. Rochelle
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

JOHN WESLEY AND SLAVERY. By Warren Thomas Smith. Nashville: Abingdon, 1986. 160 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Smith's volume is a compilation of historical documents which clearly set forth John Wesley's position regarding the institution of slavery. This book also explains in succinct and easy-to-read language how Methodism gained such a strong hold in the West Indies and the southern part of the United States. Using August 1, 1838, the date on which the British Parliament passed the Emancipation Act as the culmination of Wesley's work, Smith backs up into his subject.

He begins by explaining the ancient world's understanding of slavery and quickly catapults the reader into Medieval Europe, Africa, the West Indies, and North America. Into this deplorable situation Smith introduces the Wesley family: from Bartholomew Wesley (1650) through the birth of John in 1703 and his brother Charles in 1707. The author says of the family that: "An intense Puritan resolve had

been inherited, along with a passionate concern for the oppressed, whoever or wherever the oppressed might be." Prepared by the Anglican church in England to be missionaries, the two brothers (John and Charles) set sail for the anti-slavery colony of Georgia on October 14, 1735. The experiences which these brothers had in the colonies is documented through extant correspondence and John Wesley's journal.

The rest of this volume uses personal correspondence, published works, journals and other historical documents to trace the development of Wesley's position on slavery and, as a direct consequence, the Methodist Church's position on oppression. Included in this book is a copy of Wesley's 1774, third edition, *Thoughts Upon Slavery.*

While there are some glaring omissions (i.e., thought regarding slavery in the Early Church; the *theological* development of Wesley's position; the influence of the Apostles and Church Fathers upon Wesley's thought), this volume is a good resource for those who are students of the Black church tradition as well as world religions. The reading is easy and the documentation is good. I recommend this interesting and brief treatment which documents the development of Wesley's position regarding the institution of slavery.

A. P. Pero
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE CONFESSING CHURCH, CONSERVATIVE ELITES, AND THE NAZI STATE. By Shelley Baranowski. Vol. 28 in Texts and Studies in Religion [edited by Herbert Richardson]. Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1986. 185 pages. Cloth. $40.00.

This revised Princeton University dissertation examines the rise and demise of the Confessing Church and debunks the still popular view of this group as evidence for "another Germany" of integrity which survived in a morally bankrupt Third Reich. The author will have none of it. The Confessing Church and its "conservative elite" constituency struggled for class survival and little else in the Hitler period. The so-called "church struggle," Baranowski argues, was but a special case of class struggle. The Confessionals' theological concern is seen purely in terms of a sincerely felt elitist need to exercise social control over the *non*-elite proletarian Nazi political theologians of the "German-Christian" movement, while simultaneously maintaining an accommodationist posture toward the Nazi state as a guarantor of elite status.

Despite the reductionist inattention to theological issues, the book nevertheless needed to be written. Baranowski has hammered the last nail into the coffin of church struggle historiography as hagiographical event-history. Although the events of those years are theologically dubious, the confessional legacy which the Confessing Church and its allies left—but upon which they admittedly failed to act corporately—is that which is of enduring significance for the Christian church today, if not for social scientists.

Lack of a clear statement of methodology, a discrete conclusion, a bibliography or a list of abbreviations diminish the usefulness of this volume, priced beyond the means or appetites of all but libraries and church struggle specialists. The prose is seriously marred by typographical errors and lax editorial oversight, but the basic structure of the argument is accessible and engaging for those with a sound knowledge of the church struggle and the Hitler period. The book should be used as assigned reading in graduate theological courses on the church struggle as a healthy corrective to a romanticized view of the Confessing Church. Baranowski's consistent use of class struggle analysis with its tedious jargon robs the book of the dispassionate balance needed for a standard text, but her consistent use of this his-

toriographic framework makes the study a useful tool for teaching contemporary models of the historian's craft.

Guy C. Carter, Pastor
Faith Lutheran Church
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

THE NARRATIVE UNITY OF LUKE–ACTS: A LITERARY INTERPRETATION. Vol. 1: The Gospel According to Luke. By Robert C. Tannehill. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. 334 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

Ernst Renan knew that St. Luke's account of Jesus was one of the world's masterpieces of narrative, but he failed to grasp the primary reason for the conceptual and artistic merit of that story. Robert Tannehill does not make that mistake. He knows that what threads the whole is St. Luke's unfailing attention to God as the hero, who brokers all manner of relationships through Jesus Christ, Lord of history and of God's people.

Much of Luke's ongoing appeal is his ability to control the record of action on a stage as large as divine and human history. And Tannehill discerns his mastery of dramatic features that screech the world of his auditors to a halt as they confront the claims of Jesus the Unique Name in conflict with a variety of bewildering efforts of humanity to hold God's contemplated future at bay.

Nothing has the potential of being more disastrous to authors' intentions than to have their works undergo the fate of picked-over cadavers through detailed philological comment. In one of his odes, the Roman poet Horace even resigned himself to become part of a young scholar's totebag. He might well envy Luke for having found such an understanding critic as Tannehill, whose grammatical sensitivity is subservient to the higher task of seeing Luke's work whole.

Editorial criticism—redaction criticism for those who think better in German jargon—finds expression throughout Tannehill's study, but in a manner consistent with Tannehill's main objective, which is to show how narrative parts contribute to the impact of Luke's literary whole. Two sentences by Tannehill say it all: "The decision to include a unit of tradition in the work is a choice which affects the total work. Even if the wording of the traditional unit is unchanged, it has been redacted by inclusion in a new writing" (p. 6).

Ever merciful to his readers, Tannehill eschews most of the current literary-critical cant and carefully notes the distinctions that are made in the use of such terms as "author," "implied author," and "narrator."

About Luke's use of recurring words, patterns of repetition and contrast, irony, pathos, and many other features of his narrative, commentators have written much, but Tannehill's study shows how they contribute to the total fabric of Luke's masterpiece.

One will not go far astray in determining Luke's meaning with the help of this book. And upon reaching its end, readers will marvel at the charming manner in which they have been trapped into drinking in its totality what is after all the contents of a wineskin of commentary—but filled with varietal delight.

Frederick W. Danker
Christ Seminary–Seminex
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE MAKING OF THE PENTATEUCH: A METHODOLOGICAL STUDY. By R. N. Whybray, JSOT 53. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987. 263 pages. Paper. $14.95.

These are hard times for the Documentary Hypothesis. Some believe that only the canonical form of the first five books is authoritative;

others see in the present text a meaningful literary masterpiece; still others find fault with the presuppositions and results of main stream students of the Pentateuch over the last two centuries.

Whybray speaks for the last two groups. Part I claims that advocates of the Documentary Hypothesis tolerated no inconsistencies for individual writers while allowing them at will for the redactors and editors of the Pentateuch. He takes apart, point by point, the arguments for the existence of documents like J, E, and P: language, style, alternating divine names, doublets, repetitions, differing theologies, and the like.

In Part II Whybray turns on the tradition critics, who tried to trace the oral pre-history of the materials in the Pentateuch. Martin Noth in particular is scored for his undue scepticism and for his propensity to pile hypothesis on hypothesis in order to construct a whole tradition history out of the flimsiest of clues.

Whybray's knowledge is encyclopedic and his argument sustained—and almost convincing. But while these are indeed hard times for the Documentary Hypothesis, and while the arguments for the sources are not always as neat as one might like, I remain convinced that it is possible, necessary, and useful to speak of a Yahwist theology, a Deuteronomic theology, and a Priestly theology, and that the coherence of these theologies and the literary documents of which they were a part can be described convincingly and in some detail.

Whybray's criticisms cannot be ignored, however, and much of what he says is increasingly common coin among all Old Testament scholars. To cling to source criticism after his attack will require courage and a coming to terms with his often insightful remarks on the shortcomings of the hypothesis.

Whybray believes there was one author of the Pentateuch, who wrote no earlier than the sixth century. Before that time there was no comprehensive story of Israel nor any extended sources. This exilic author put it all together from bits and tatters of tradition, though Whybray admits that the laws and the poems included in the Pentateuch were inherited from the past. Whybray assumes that the sixth century date will be acceptable—he offers no arguments for it. He posits that much of the Pentateuch is fiction, arguing even that the notion of Abraham's migration from Mesopotamia to Palestine was *invented* in the 6th century. The best analogy to the composition of the Pentateuch he can find is in Herodotus (who also varied his style and compositional techniques for purely literary purposes), but for his proposal to be at all convincing he ought to show how the author proceeded in detail for a major part of the Pentateuch—the Abraham stories, the primeval history, the Sinai accounts, or the wilderness wandering. Did the single author of the stories and laws of Genesis-Numbers really also compose Deuteronomy?

My reactions to this important book are twofold: stubborn adherence to the badly shaken but not yet defeated documentary hypothesis; disappointment at the unconvincingly argued alternate proposal.

Ralph W. Klein
Christ Seminary—Seminex
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THEOLOGY OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS. By Friedrich Mildenberger. Tr. Erwin L. Lueker and ed. Robert C. Schultz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. xiv and 257 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION. By Wilhelm Maurer. Tr. H. George Anderson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. xi and 434 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

These works by important scholars at the University of Erlangen represent two ways to approach Lutheranism's confessional docu-

ments: historically or theologically. The historian explains the past with an eye to changing people's view of it, while the theologian uses the past to change people's view of the present. Given this distinction, Mildenberger has achieved his goal, but Maurer has not.

Mildenberger begins by examining and accepting the old-fashioned and, hence, radical notion that the confession of the church has binding character on the church. He examines the confessional documents in the light of the church's confession and the gospel that works faith.

Mildenberger does not treat the Book of Concord as a body of doctrinal statements, but isolates "the basic decision of the Reformation" and uses it both to clarify the meaning and intent of each confessional document and, especially in the case of the Formula of Concord, to call their results into question. The Reformation's basic decision, "God alone works our salvation," eliminates all human efforts, prevents defining faith in terms of some innate human qualities, and focuses the whole life of the church upon the gospel, a word of God outside ourselves which God's Holy Spirit uses to work faith in us.

Mildenberger outlines the basic position of the early church that "biblical history teaches that the world and salvation have both been given to us by the one and the same God." He then shows how this ancient doctrine of the Trinity was put to use in the Reformation's basic decision, where the Holy Spirit, not the church, actually grants salvation through the external gospel of Christ.

Mildenberger examines individual documents in the light of the Reformation's basic decision. Regarding the Augsburg Confession (AC), he examines the "Articles about Matters in Dispute" and links them to a wide-reaching program for church reform. Two excellent chapters on Luther's writings and the Formula of Concord follow. He concludes with two chapters on today's church. The first includes an analysis of the Barmen Declaration. The second looks at several modern dilemmas in the light of the church's confession: modern biblical interpretation, the relation of state and church (entitled "divine providence and the Christian's cross"), and preaching.

Mildenberger has rescued the Lutheran confessions from the dustbin of history and the staid discussions of dogmaticians. By delineating the ***historical*** context of these documents he has allowed them to speak poignantly to the church of his own day. Rather than eliminating himself or the confessions from ecumenical discussions, he places them squarely in the center of the modern debate over the true nature of the church and the gospel. This book must be read by all serious students of the Lutheran Confessions.

Most disappointing is the wooden translation and the scores of typographical errors which mar the book and make it difficult reading. Fortress could have improved the book further by printing references to the Confessions within the text, instead of in footnotes in the back of the book, and then moving the few remaining footnotes to the text itself.

At times Mildenberger seems too willing to skip over important issues in the documents. In his chapter on Luther, e.g., he misses the importance of the references to the devil in the Smalcald Articles and neglects detailed assessment of Luther's understanding of the sacraments. His weak arguments against infant bap-

tism reflect the narrow German scene out of which he works, where the state church and not the Southern Baptist Church is a major problem. His approach to modern problems also lacks precision; e.g., despite his attack on modern biblical studies, he suggests only vague alternatives. In the same way, he details the woes of modern preaching but fails to clearly state his own remedies.

If Mildenberger's book succeeds in a theological analysis of the confessions, Maurer's book, which contains much useful historical and literary information concerning the AC, falls short as historical analysis.

Maurer describes the various sources, editions, and changes in the AC and the differing roles of Melanchthon, Luther, and others in this work. He analyzes first the "Disputed Articles" and then the doctrinal articles. In the latter he treats the AC as a body of doctrinal statements, examining, among other things, sin and free will, faith and good works, and the church and its sacraments.

Maurer's work is a painstaking reconstruction of the literary and theological forces which went into the wording of the Augsburg Confession. All the historical and theological disputes take a bow as he struggles to bring the AC in line with his understanding of Luther's theology.

The tension between the theologies of Luther and Melanchthon and, hence, between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans obscures much in this work. On every page the author is trying either to point out the differences between the two or to explain them away. This is the book's greatest strength and most glaring weakness. He seems unable to take the AC for what it was, a document of the moment, shaped by forces more complex than the simple confrontation between Luther and Melanchthon.

Maurer loses the AC in a mountain of historical and theological minutiae until finally its decisive character is lost. A historical analysis of the AC must not only delineate theological tensions and literary genealogies, but the drama of "speaking God's testimonies before kings."

This book is unquestionably important for scholars doing detailed research on any of the various articles of the AC or on the relation between the theologies of Luther and Melanchthon. It may be used like a biblical commentary, since it gives invaluable information regarding the text and history of the AC, but the reader needs to take Maurer's own theological agenda into account.

Timothy J. Wengert
Cross Lutheran Church
Roberts, Wisconsin

BETWEEN FAITH AND CRITICISM: EVANGELICALS, SCHOLARSHIP AND THE BIBLE IN AMERICA. By Mark A. Noll. Society of Biblical Literature: Confessional Perspectives Series. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. xiv and 247 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

Today the Evangelicals are in many respects a microcosm of biblical scholarship at large. In sum, they have entered the main stream of American scholarship. The story of that journey, told in frank and engaging candor by Mark Noll of Trinity Seminary, replicates what has happened earlier to so called "main-line" Protestants. It is worth reading.

Noll's book is both descriptive and evaluative, as any good historical work should be. A short introduction defines evangelicalism in terms of four theological affirmations: (1) a high view of the canonical Scriptures as the inspired Word of God; (2) the affirmation that God acts in history; (3) the Lordship of Christ and the centrality of his saving work; (4) the importance of a personal experience of grace. That definition is helpful, because it distinguishes evangelicalism from earlier Fundamentalism. It also clarifies one thing that seems to puzzle Noll, why classical Lutheranism cannot affirm evangelicalism. The four points stand on a level for him; Lutheranism cannot give equality of place with the doctrine of justi-

fication to any other theological principium or to any experiential ingredient.

The bulk of the book is historical. Evangelicalism began as a learned, conservative response to the rise of biblical criticism (1880–1900), declined into a more rigid, anti-intellectual Fundamentalism (1900–1935) while British evangelicalism came to terms with a (slightly) errant Bible (1860–1937), then returned to the mainstream of American higher education as it sought academic respectability (1935–1974), and now is an accepted part of the professional guild of American biblical scholarship. Noll tells this story well, sketching in personalities, movements, heresy trials, and personal animosities in a fascinating tale. While some scholars (C. H. Dodd, for example) might be surprised to discover they are evangelicals, these six chapters deserve reading.

The three final chapters evaluate the present state of Evangelical biblical scholarship. Evangelicals are struggling to find commonality within a movement where some people affirm absolute inerrancy of the Bible and others admit errors while affirming authority; where some find concepts like Midrashic interpretation in the New Testament unacceptable and others use it to explain materials in the Gospels (R. Gundry); where one society demands a sort of loyalty oath for membership, while another allows more latitude.

The problems are not unique to Evangelicalism. Classical liberal Protestant scholarship is finding historical criticism by itself inadequate for applying the Bible to contemporary life (witness the rise of the "New Hermeneutic," structuralism, and recent literary critical approaches) at the same time that Evangelicalism is struggling to overcome the straitjacket of a doctrinaire rigidity that also limits the biblical message. Noll's volume is to be greeted for its clear picture of the debate going on within the Evangelical movement.

A few details are striking. Women play almost no role in this history. But can one really understand this movement if one ignores, for example, the women translators of the Bible in the last century? The *Word Biblical Commentary* has two Lutherans writing for it, not one—and neither would regard himself as part of the Evangelical movement. There is no attention given to the "conservative movements" in Germany, whether the *Kirchliche Sammlung um Bibel und Bekenntnis,* the work of the Bengel Haus in Tübingen, or the recent publications that stress the role of the classical church Confessions on biblical interpretation. Reformation theology plays almost no role in this story, though both the Kirk of Scotland and American Presbyterianism had strongly confessional roots and orientation.

It is, for all that, a splendid book. It inaugurates the new Confessional Perspectives Series of the Society of Biblical Literature. At least three more volumes are projected, to present the Bible in American Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. If they maintain the standard of this volume, it will be an impressive and valuable series.

Edgar Krentz
Christ Seminary—Seminex
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

IN THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLE: THE DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM. By Meir Ben-Dov. New York: Harper & Row, 1985. 381 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

The 1967 war brought Israeli hegemony over the old city of Jerusalem and made possible three major excavations. Reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter (the ancient "Upper City") enabled Nahman Avigad to investigate the remains of the Israelite Wall, the second temple priests' quarter in the upper city, the Byzantine cardo, and the great Nea Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary by Justinian, all published in an excellent popular volume titled *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983). Yigal

Shiloh reported on the Ophel excavations, i.e. the OT city, in a series of excellent articles and a final report: *Excavations at the City of David: I 1978–1982* (Qedem 19, Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1984).

Benjamin Mazar presented the third excavation, concentrated on the area around the southern end of Herod the Great's temple platform, in his popular, yet highly useful *The Mountain of the Lord* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975). The present work, a handsome volume described by Meir Ben-Dov (the field director) as a "Preliminary Report," supplements Mazar's work. It traces the archaeological evidence for the occupation of the city from the time of the Solomonic temple through the Crusader and Turkish periods (somewhat cursorily for the latter). The excavation is highly significant; it has added immense detail to our knowledge of the Herodian period, especially of the gates, streets, and structures that surrounded the southern portions of the temple precinct (pp. 72–184). No plan of that part of the city drawn before the Ben-Dov excavation can any longer be regarded as accurate. The painted pseudo-Nabataean pottery (pp. 162–63) adds to the Jerusalem pottery repertoire for the period. Understanding of Byzantine and pre-Crusader Islamic Jerusalem has been increased geometrically.

It is an engaging story, told well, that gives good insight into the day by day operation of the excavation. It is less satisfactory in presenting precise data to the archaeologically interested reader. It is well illustrated with photographs, line drawings of artifacts, reconstructions of excavated structures and plans of different areas of the city. The reconstruction of the "Royal Portico" combines details from the stoa of the Greek world with the basilica of the west. I know no parallel for an eastern apse in a stoa; this detail at least is entirely conjectural (cf. drawings on pp. 125–27). Photographs of the site usually do, while artifact photographs and drawings almost never have a scale included, e.g. the Rhodian import amphora on p. 70. One must await the final publication for the sections, the precise descriptions of structural remains, and the important ceramic evidence before one can accept some of the detail in this presentation.

One should not cavil at the style of writing, often personal and direct. That style, used by other Israeli excavators as well, conveys the excitement of excavation, transmits some of the surprises that await every excavator, and underscores the significance of the finds. The story of the "battle" to secure the site for excavation from Orthodox Jews and Islamic leaders is interesting and gives the reader a view into the complex religious phenomena that is Jerusalem today. There is a place for the kind of exciting archaeological story, and not just for fascinated non-professionals. But it does make one realize the value of good technical reports.

The volume has been translated into excellent English by Ina Friedman. It lacks an index and a good list of plates that orient the reader. Ben-Dov has provided a brief bibliography of English language publications.

Edgar Krentz

AN DIE HEBRÄER. By Herbert Braun. *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* 14. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1984. vi and 485 pages. Cloth. DM 84. Paper. DM 58.

Buchanan wrote the last major commentary on Hebrews in English in 1972. It is an interestingly aberrant work. The last in German is that by Otto Michel (1936), rev. in 1966. Braun's commentary, which replaces that of Hans Windisch in this series (2nd ed. in 1931) is a mas-

sively learned, thoughtfully critical, impressively comprehensive work that will be a resource for all exegesis of Hebrews for the next twenty years.

Still, the work has major problems. Its format is that of the series: Braun provides a minimal introduction to the document (pp. 1–5), in which he briefly describes Hebrews' unique theological content in Christology and parenesis and treats the normal questions of introduction briefly. Braun stresses that we know little about its origins, though he is certain the document was written for Gentiles in the post-apostolic period, i.e. between 80 and 95 C.E. He supplies a functional bibliography of the modern literature on Hebrews (pp. 6–15) and the chief commentators he consulted (p. 16).

A minimal presentation of the structure of the book on p. 16 is followed by the lengthy, detailed, critical, and learned commentary (pp. 19–485). In the tradition of the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* the commentary uses the glossatorial method; that is, Braun translates each individual verse into German and then comments on practically every individual word. Braun stresses the textual tradition, the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of the book (calling attention to unique and typical vocabulary and idioms, stressing the good Attic Greek of the writer), and parallels to the language and thought from the Old Testament, early Judaism, and the Greco-Roman world. There are frequent references to modern scholarly literature. And there are often penetrating comments on the theology of the writer. All of this is presented with frequent abbreviations that will threaten the reader who has not worked often with the *HNT* commentaries. Paragraphing is not done according to the sense of the discussion; rather each verse gets one long paragraph. Eleven excurses discuss significant aspects of the thought, e.g. the Old Testament interpretation, Jesus as heavenly high priest, Faith in Hebrews, Melchizedec, etc. One is surprised *not* to find such excurses on the attitude toward cult (old and new) and on the conceptual world of the writer.

This massive commentary will be used as a resource by commentators for the next generation; the wealth of citations is enough to insure that, especially the use of the Nag Hammadi texts. Students needing help with the Greek language of Hebrews will find it here. Yet, the very dimensions of the presentation show that one cannot infer Braun's understanding of Hebrews theological position by reading his introduction and dipping here and there into the commentary. That is one of the major problems with the work. There is no adequate orientation into Hebrews' thought, structure, or mode of argumentation. In short, even the reader who is already familiar with Hebrews in modern scholarship gets no road-map of Hebrews by which to integrate the detail that Braun presents. I recall Callimachus' famous bon mot, *mega biblion, mega kakon,* a "big book is a big evil." That only partly true thought describes the problem with Braun's commentary.

Edgar Krentz

AND SO WE CAME TO ROME: THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ST. LUKE. By Paul W. Walaskay. London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. 121 pages. Cloth. $27.50.

Walaskay reviews the tradition that Luke composed his two volume work in part at least as a political apologetic, with the aim of defending the church against Jewish slander and Roman suspicion and persecution. He then turns the argument on its head and suggests the

very intriguing hypothesis that Luke wrote to a Christian audience in defence of the Roman Empire.

He imagines that the setting is not one in which Christians suffer widespread or systematic persecution but rather one in which Christians are tempted by apocalyptic rhetoric to attitudes and acts of disloyalty and rebellion.

Walaskay presses the case that Luke is at pains to show how Rome is well-disposed toward the church (and therefore omits or overlooks Acts 4:27 and its implications and connections in the texts). He argues that in Acts 27 (the great sea voyage and shipwreck) those on board are saved through the good offices of Paul and Julius, the Christian missionary and the Roman centurion, and that humankind will be saved by the cooperative efforts of church and empire. These two institutions are "co-eval and complementary"; God stands behind both of them, using both for the good of all people.

Lately Luke has been portrayed in some quarters as a liberation theologian. A few passages may be summoned for such duty, but Walaskay is surely closer to the truth. The mind of Luke is certainly irenic, optimistic, positive, as he reviews the church controversies between Peter and Paul, and as he reflects on relations between church and empire. Luke respects the emperor and imperial institutions. But I do not find in Luke-Acts the picture of one God under whom are two regents, Caesar over the empire and Jesus over the church. Luke knows only one Lord, exalted to God's right hand, only one through whom the Spirit is given, salvation is dispensed, and the kingship of God is being established.

This is a fascinating study, clearly written and well argued, with extensive and really helpful notes (some are long discussions of relevant literature and controverted points), on an important topic.

Robert H. Smith
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Berkeley, California

RITUALS AND POWER: THE ROMAN IMPERIAL CULT IN ASIA MINOR. By S. R. F. Price. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. xxvi and 289 pages, with 6 maps, 30 plans and plates. Cloth. $49.50. Paper. $14.95.

This is an absolutely fascinating book; it shows how the application of new categories can illuminate a much-investigated topic. Price seeks to interpret the significance of the imperial cult in the Roman empire and locates the cult within the social structure and not within individual religious feeling or consciousness. He does not consider ritual to be a means to allow the individual to participate in group religious rites, but rather it is the public manifestation of a group cognitive system. It has a language and a symbol system of its own that must be known to understand the role of the cult in the Roman world. Price establishes the contexts in public life in the first four chapters and imperial ritual and cultic practice in the final four chapters.

Price knows the familiar materials: literary texts, inscriptions, imperial temples, sculpture, and the like. He examines archaeological evidence and sacred precincts of imperial cult temples. What is new in this volume is the application of French structuralism and American sociological methods to the understanding of imperial ritual. What is the result?

First of all, Price interprets imperial cult as a means by which Greek people were able to coordinate the (new) experience of powerful individuals (Alexander and the diodochoi) with their self-understanding of the polis as an independent, self-governing political unit. Price concentrates on Asia Minor in his research because it offers the most primary evidence in terms of coinage, inscriptions, sculpture and temple precincts. When Rome took over Asia Minor in the Second to First Centuries B.C.E., the Greeks there could recognize Rome as ruler and benefit from a system of exchange in which ruler cult secured positive relations

with the Roman overlord. The cult is thus securely anchored in civic life, not as a kind of inexplicable bit of religious nonsense, but as practical interaction with the central authority in Rome. It is analogous to the relation of former crown colonies to England in the British Commonwealth or to the relation of Puerto Rico to the United States today. Recognition of power begets benefits.

Price bases his interpretation on an examination of the location of imperial temples, of their architecture, sculpture, and rituals, and on the role of sacrifice in imperial cult. (He does not correlate the iconography of imperial statues with the descriptions of the physical appearance of emperors in ancient literature, e.g. Augustus as described in Suetonius, *Vita Caes.* 2.79.2, nor did I note use of the prevalence of statues of Venus genetrix as imperial propaganda.) In the process he discusses numerous ancient texts, including Tertullian's *Apology* (p. 113), the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (p. 170), the Apocalypse of John (pp. 196–98), and many post-Constantinian documents. The Christian problems with imperial cult, the arguments used by Christians, and the post-Constantinian transformation of the cult all get their due.

Price interprets imperial cult as both religious and political phenomenon. The imperial cult had diplomatic significance for the Greek states of the east. Responses to imperial decrees were often cast in divine language. Thus imperial cult had social significance; Christianity, concerned with the way to salvation for individuals, had little concern for political power other than to fear it. According to Price, the imperial cult was one of the major forces for stability in the Roman empire; Christianity, not able to recognize that reality, felt the negative impact of the power involved.

This is an excellent book, carefully researched, precisely written, meticulously documented. Plans and illustrations complement the argument on cult centers and iconography. The catalogue of imperial temples and shrines in Asia Minor (with bibliographic and epigraphic lists added) is itself a major resource for future work. New Testament scholarship will find in this book a major supplement to F. Danker's work on the benefactor motif; no one should write on the Apocalypse of John or on Christianity in the first four centuries of our era without careful attention to Price's research.

Edgar Krentz

VERUS ISRAEL. A STUDY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE (135–425). By Marcel Simon, tr. by H. McKeating. New York: Published for the Littman Library by Oxford University Press, 1986. xviii and 533 pages. Cloth. $57.00.

Marcel Simon's *Verus Israel* marked a turning point in the study of the contact between Judaism and early Christianity; it was a model for the study of Judaism without Christian bias or arrogance and held a unique place in scholarship since it was first published in 1948; a reprint in 1964 added a 25-page "Post-Scriptum" (reprinted again in 1983). Now Oxford University Press presents a welcome translation of this work, a standard for almost 40 years.

Why a translation a generation later? It is true that scholarship has in some areas revised Simon's judgements, e.g. his adoption of 135 C.E. (end of the Second Roman-Jewish War) as a point of departure. Many scholars argue that the conflict between church and synagogue is already reflected in Matthew and John. What Simon wrote about Paul and the Torah (pp. 73–75; 81–82) would probably be formulated more precisely today.

Nonetheless, the book still deserves wide dissemination. The Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins recently spent two years

(1980–1982) discussing Simon's work. Their discussion made clear points. Simon raised the right issues in his book about the difference between "Anti-Judaism" and "Anti-Semitism," about the character and history of Jewish Christianity, about the missionary character of Judaism after 135 C.E., about Jewish magic, etc. He pointed to the right sources available at his time. The "Postscript," written fifteen years after the book's original publication, showed how Simon absorbed criticism and rethought his positions.

Why a translation now? Because the book retains its place as a landmark of scholarship, because it deserves wide circulation, and because the publication in English should stimulate others to rethink their stereotyped images of Judaism and Christianity in their first four centuries of life together.

The translation is excellent. Notes, gathered at the rear in the English edition, are not updated. Hyam Maccoby in an appendix provides English translations of all Greek, Latin, and German citations in the text. The bibliography includes references to English translations of entries, when available. In short, a more significant work of scholarship on an important and relevant topic is not available in a reliable translation. The whole is produced with Oxford University Press's usual (and appreciated) expertise in typography, proofreading, printing, and binding on an excellent grade of paper. It gives new life to an old friend.

Edgar Krentz

RECONCILIATION, LAW, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. ESSAYS IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY. By Peter Stuhlmacher, tr. by Everett R. Kalin. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. xvi and 200 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

In recent years Peter Stuhlmacher's essays and books have laid out a hermeneutical and theological program in biblical theology. *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Fortress, 1977) introduced his hermeneutical thought to North America. The present volume of essays shows how the "hermeneutics of consent" (the translation is Harrisville's on p. 83 of *Historical Criticism*) translates into biblical theology.

Stuhlmacher argues that the basic context for interpreting the New Testament is the Old Testament approached via early Judaism. The Judaism of the early Roman Empire is "the primary history-of-religions frame of reference for the New Testament" (p. x). That means that the theological vocabulary of Jesus and the New Testament was shaped by the Old Testament and Judaism. The primary mode of interpretation is to look for the "traditio-historical connections between Old and New Testaments," to "investigate how the Old Testament is quoted and interpreted in the New," and "to pursue the question regarding the testimony concerning the saving activity of the one God which connects the Old and New Testaments" (p. x). The essays in this volume illustrate that method.

Four of the eleven essays deal with reconciliation and righteousness in the proclamation of Jesus. The other seven are investigations of Pauline thought on the law, righteousness, and reconciliation. Some are detailed interpretations of specific passages: Mark 10:45 is an authentic Jesus logion based on Is 53:10–12, Is 43:3–4, and Dan 7:9–14. Rom 3:24–26 is a pre-Pauline tradition that may go back to the Stephen circle, based on Lev 15. *Hilastêrion* must be understood against the background of *kappôret* as "mercy seat." Paul argues that Jesus is the reconciler who surpasses Lev 16.

Other essays take up significant topics more thetically, Stuhlmacher sums up the significance of the law in biblical theology in twenty-five theses with supporting data and argumentation. The law is not a static concept, but "the question of the way of life revealed and set down by God for Israel and the nations of the world" (Thesis 1, p. 111). It is reinterpreted

by the prophets, by early Judiasm, Jesus, and (in differing fashion) by the writers of the New Testament. In this development Paul argues, based on his personal experience in his conversion, that the "time of freedom from the Mosaic law has begun for the community in and with Christ" (Thesis 19, p. 125). Thus Rom 10:4 is a fundamental statement of Pauline thought. Stuhlmacher also presents eighteen theses on Paul's Theology of the Cross.

I have some criticism of the English edition. There is no indication of the original date of the essays, either in the notes or the introduction. The thoughtful reader wants some chronological reference. An index of passages and of scholars cited would be a great aid in using this collection.

The excellent translation was done by Everett R. Kalin, as Stuhlmacher points out in the introduction to the English edition (p. ix). Kalin not only Englished a difficult text, but carefully provided references to English translations of the primarily German literature used by Stuhlmacher, whenever possible. The reference by Stuhlmacher is the only mention of Kalin in the volume, and he deserves to be listed on the title page. (His name is given on the dust jacket.)

Edgar Krentz

JESUS CHRIST: THE MAN FROM NAZARETH AND THE EXALTED LORD. By Eduard Schweizer. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987. vii and 96 pages. Paper. $9.95.

This short, but fascinating book presents the four lectures on Christology delivered by the Emeritus Professor of New Testament of Zurich University. They are supplemented by a highly interesting theological "autobiography" in which Schweizer surveys his scholarly engagement with the New Testament while also presenting his own growth in the Christian faith.

The first chapter begins in epic fashion "in the middle of things," that is with the effect of Rudolf Bultmann on Christology for his students and the renewed interest it called forth in the study of the Kerygma. Schweizer concludes that Christology must begin with the study of the canon, that is, with the post-Easter proclamation of the church; then one may move to the traditions about his life and teaching. It is only through his death and resurrection that the early Church and we truly come to understand him. In that context Schweizer turns to the New Testament as a resource for the present debate.

His second chapter surveys the "Kerygmatic Answers" in the New Testament, that is, christological convictions presented in creedal summaries and hymnic passages in the New Testament. These formulae stress Jesus as the object of God's acts in his death for sins or his resurrection to Lordship over the church. Interest in Jesus' life is minimal. The "Narrative Answers" (chapter three) begin with an interest in Jesus' teaching (Q). But the four Gospels all unite that teaching (to a greater or lesser degree) with the narrative to present him as more than a wise teacher, a suffering righteous man, or a divine-man miracle worker. Each of the four in its own way stresses the decisive interruption of history by God in the person Jesus.

In the fourth chapter Schweizer draws his conclusions. He is convinced that the title "Son of Man" on Jesus' own lips was a riddle, enigmatic, possibly connected to Daniel 7. Whatever claims Jesus raised about himself were raised implicitly, by his actions in commanding illness and obsession and by his unusual use of the title "Father" for God. The death and resurrection of Jesus led to the disciples' experience of his presence as living Lord. They encountered the very one whom they had betrayed. And that led to confession and doxology. It is only through the kerygma that one can come to know Jesus as Martha knew him, as resurrection and life. It is the kerygma today, interpreted through the narrative of his life and death, that enables us to understand him.

Thus Schweizer's Christology is not the classical discussion of Jesus as presented in Nicaea or Chalcedon; it does not ask questions about the nature of Jesus as God. Rather it stresses the action of God in Christ. It is also the account of how our confession of Jesus as Lord is enabled. The final autobiographical chapter tells how his life of scholarship was finally devoted to accounting for Christ on the basis of the New Testament. His Christology is, thus, experiential. This little book is Schweizer's own evaluation of his life's work, interesting and challenging reading. I wish he had also integrated his exegetical conclusions with the catholic creeds; but that lay outside the scope of this little gem of a book. Any reader of this journal would find the book fascinating.

Edgar Krentz

NARRATIVE SPACE AND MYTHIC MEANING IN MARK. By Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. xiv and 212 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

Structuralism is alive and well as a helpful exegetical tool. Many biblical scholars claim the cutting edge has moved to post-structural methods—and perhaps it has—but Malbon's insightful book demonstrates how structuralist approaches to biblical texts have come of age and produce new light.

Malbon adapts the methods of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss to read texts as if they were musical scores. The "melody" is the text itself, as we are used to reading it sequentially. However, by placing related elements over each other in a chart arrangement (the "score"), the exegete is able to "hear" the "harmonic" relationships in the text which reveal the mythic deep structures, the presuppositions about reality upon which the text is based.

Malbon creates a partial structural analysis of Mark's Gospel. She concentrates on Markan references to space, first analyzing Markan geopolitical space: references to specific place names ("Nazareth") and regions ("Galilee"). In each chapter, related references are grouped into bundles (the "harmonic" relationships) and then analyzed as a series of oppositions. Markan geopolitical space is arranged around the opposition of the "familiar" and the "strange." The strange is threatening, but Jesus reaches out to it and, by so doing, brings to light the innate hostility within the "familiar" environs of Jerusalem—where, in the end, Jesus is killed. Reality is turned inside-out; the familiar becomes strange and the strange becomes familiar.

Chapter three analyzes topographical space: non-specific references to natural and human-made features ("mountain," "sea," "city"). The underlying opposition in this case is "promise" versus "threat." Heaven and earth, land and sea, uninhabited and inhabited spaces lead to the final mediating concept of "the way." Again, Jesus becomes the bridge between these oppositions—not in any ultimate, static sense but by inviting men and women to follow him on the path of discipleship.

Chapter four analyzes architectural space. The theme of Mark's Gospel in this respect is the overcoming of distinctions of "the profane" and "the sacred." Here Malbon is most insightful, especially when she contrasts "Temple vs. Tomb" and stresses that "The good news cannot be kept inside" (p. 140).

A short final chapter integrates the different references to space into an overarching scheme for the Gospel. Malbon's concluding sentence reveals her message: "Conflict between the chaos and order of life is overcome not in arriving but in being on the way" (p. 168). The book contains extensive notes and indexes to biblical references and modern authors, but it is weakened through the omission of a topic index.

Ronald W. Roschke, Pastor
Peace Lutheran Church
Manhattan, Kansas

WITNESS TO THE WORD. By Karl Barth. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. xii and 161 pages. Paper. $10.95.

In 1925 and 1926 Karl Barth lectured on the first eight chapters of John's Gospel prior to beginning his long writing career in the Dogmatics. This book comprises his commentary on John 1 from these lectures, which have not previously been translated into English.

Barth demonstrates his usual familiarity with contemporary scholarship in these lectures, his usual exactitude in searching for the correct understanding of the Greek text, and his adroit style of moving into theological commentary from the textual evidence as he construes it. Much has happened in Johannine scholarship since the Bonn lectures of 1933, which are the endpoint for the textual rescensions of Barth's commentary, but here we see Barth moving surely into a theology of the Word which we have come to see as characteristic: not our Words about God are of importance but God's self-disclosure and humanity in the Word who is Jesus the Christ. In discussing the *logos* Barth urges us to read the data of the text apart from preconceptions about the relationship of John's use of the term to Philo's use, so that we hear how the Evangelist proclaims Jesus as Word.

In these introductory notes we see Barth struggling with the difference between the revelation in Christ and the record of that revelation in the Evangelist; for John the *logos* is the principle of revelation and this is never forgotten. John the Evangelist stands in relation to us as John the Baptist stood in relation to the people who heard him: as pointer to the one whose Word is self-authenticating in the life of the faithful. In interpreting John 1:19–31, Barth connects the gift of the Spirit in the life of the believer with baptism as authentification for the latter, i.e. Christ gives efficacy to water baptism through the Spirit.

Jay C. Rochelle

WAR: A CALL TO THE INNER LAND. By Eberhard Arnold. Introduction by Gordon Zahn. New York: Paulist Press, 1987. 136 pages. Paper. $5.95.

This book is known among the relatively small number of people who recognize the names of Eberhard and Emmi Arnold as *Innenland.* It is the interior landscape of grace and faith, which is upbuilt through meditation on the Word and the personal reflection we make on the work of Christ. It is the interior fortitude which is upbuilt through the conviction that the Reign of God is coming, that it is coming soon, and that it comes among us in community, a community in which mutuality would replace superiority, in which charity and love could prevail above privilege, a community—that is—directly in opposition to the aims spoken and unspoken of the Third Reich. The book is written devotion.

Arnold is a sort of underground hero in 20th Century theology. Heir to the spirit of the Blumhardts of Bethel bei Bielefeld, that center of spiritual and physical healing in the German church, and influencer of Barth and Thurneysen, Arnold preached and lived more than wrote his theology. *Innenland* is the wine which distills his thought, soaked in biblical wisdom, into three vats: the inner life, the way of the heart, and the soul and spirit of humanity.

Arnold was spiritual father to the Bruderhof, the largest and most durable Protestant commune. The colophon gives addresses for those interested in seeking out his legacy in these communities; the book *The Joyful Community* by Benjamin Zablocki (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972) helps you understand Bruderhof from afar.

Jay C. Rochelle

IMAGERY IN HEALING: SHAMANISM AND MODERN MEDICINE. By Jeanne Achterberg. Boston: New Science Library, 1985. 253 pages. Paper. $9.95.

This book presents a scientific approach to the heretofore unscientific. Jean Achterberg links together the ancient visionary methods of shamanism with the results of recent research into the healing power of imagery. She provides us with a very provocative and interesting book.

We are all aware of reports of death without a physiological cause. Today we may refer to these as a "parasympathetic nervous system death." The victim dies from a sense of hopelessness as the result of the vivid working of the imagination. Then there are such cases as when a terminally ill cancer patient goes to the shrine at Lourdes in France or when another such patient is treated with the useless drug Krebiozen and both are cured. What has taken place is not just a change in attitude, but also a transformational change in biochemistry. These findings call into question one of the most damaging and erroneous assumptions of modern medicine—the separation of mind and body.

The author states:

> A renewal of focus on the imagination as at once an ancient and potent aspect of healing will help mark this decade as having initiated the most dramatic advances in medicine the world has yet seen. The forces responsible for bringing about these changes represent a grand confluence of theology, psychology, medicine, and anthropology, and are embodied in the personages of the scientist and the shaman (p. 4).

The writer presents findings from research within the field of immunology, more specifically from "psychoneuroimmunology." She holds that the major diseases of humanity, including cancer and arthritis, could be conquered if the immune system could be trained to function effectively. She reflects on the research of Walter Cannon and Hans Selye on the potential for stress to hamper the immune system.

Although the field of pathophysiology in recent years has reaped the benefits of high technology—lasers, computers, and telemetry—including the description of a disease process as an isolated phenomenon, nearly separate from the host that bears it, it has now come to a point of diminishing returns. Achterberg suggests we look beyond the pathological issues to examine the many facets of psychology and physiology in an attempt to determine cause and cure of disease, an approach quite unpopular to modern medicine. This recalls the great French physician, Claude Bernard, the founder of experimental medicine. In reaction to the fervor of the microbe hunters in the mid-1800s, Bernard held that "the microbe is nothing, the terrain everything," with which his opponent, Louis Pasteur, finally came to agree. Immunization, by way of example, is based upon heightening the body's natural ability to defend itself.

Achterberg says we must no longer study immunity from disease exclusively "in vitro," in a test tube or under a microscope, or otherwise outside the living organism. We must recognize that the immune system "is smarter" than that as it reacts to messages controlled by the brain. For example, recent investigation into the opiate-like chemicals found naturally in the brain, the endorphins and enkephalins, has indicated that these not only function to produce euphoria and pain reduction, but they also serve to enhance the immune system.

The imagery created in the therapeutic atmosphere has profound effects upon resultant healing and growth. This book enables us to consider spiritual aspects of healing and the interrelationships of mind, body, and the "environmental terrain."

Paul R. Swanson
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

ON THEOLOGY. By Schubert M. Ogden. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. 160 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

The question is: what is theology? Schubert Ogden answers: theology is "the fully reflective understanding of the Christian witness of faith as decisive for human existence." This reflective understanding has three components: (1) historical theology which reports what Christians have believed in the past, and this includes exegesis of Scripture; (2) practical theology which examines human existence in our contemporary situation; and (3) systematic theology which bridges the two temporal poles.

What we say theologically must be appropriate to the primitive or formative witness of the Christian faith, and this means Scripture and the history of the interpretation of Scripture. In addition, theology must be credible. When Ogden uses the term "credible" here it marks a modest change from his 1972 *Journal of Religion* essay, "What is Theology?" where his second criterion was understandability. Whether understandable or credible, Ogden intends to say here that theology needs to meet the relevant conditions of truth universally established with human existence, especially as understood in our own contemporary situation. Hence, Ogden is working with a version of the method of correlation, namely, the "correlation of the Christian witness of faith and human existence."

The position Ogden develops continues many of the older liberal agendas, especially the priority given to natural revelation and categorizing Christianity as one religion among many. With regard to revelation, he argues that the question of the divine reality is given universally with human existence as such, and he dubs this "natural" or "original" revelation. All religions, of which Christianity is an example, are based upon "special" or "decisive" revelation in that they offer a historically contingent reflection upon the more basic original revelation. The Christian religion represents in symbols having to do with Jesus Christ what human beings as such already know, namely, that God makes a gift to and a claim upon us.

This position has many implications for theological method. First and foremost, it assumes that all people are confronted at least prereflectively with their relationship to the divine reality and, further, that the task of theology is to bring this to conscious reflection. Second, it places all theology, whether Christian or not, into the arena of general human discourse. Christian theologians cannot claim any exclusive authority or unique criteria for determining the truth of their claims. It makes theological talk public. Third, this means that insofar as we use public criteria to evaluate theological statements, then the discipline of theology may be carried on in the university. It is not restricted to ecclesiastical institutions. Liberal Arts programs with Religious Studies departments can and should pursue theology, especially philosophical theology. Fourth, it also means that the theologian need not be personally a Christian. Christian belief is not required to ask the question of human existence nor to give the specifically Christian answer (p. 119). At this point Ogden finds he must part company with Gustavo Gutierrez and the liberation theologians who argue that theology is an expression of the faith upon which one reflects critically. Ogden criticizes this position for confusing the notion of critical reflection upon the Christian witness with one's Christian vocation. (p. 142).

What we have, in short, is an abstract theology of religion in general with all of its principles intact. This generic theology is then applied to Christianity as a special instance. The only item which distinguishes Christian theology from other theologies is the criterion of appropriateness to Scripture, historically understood. This criterion could be applied equally to every religion which wishes to attend to the roots of its own tradition. Thus, there seems to be nothing within the Christian claim which decisively influences Ogden's method. One won-

ders why, then, in his definition of "theology" he says that the Christian faith is "decisive for human existence."

Ted Peters
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
The Graduate Theological Union
Berkeley, California

THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS IN EAST AND WEST: THE ORIGINS OF THE DIVINE OFFICE AND ITS MEANING FOR TODAY. By Robert Taft, S.J. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986. xvii and 421 pages. Paper. $15.00.

Of the achievements of the twentieth-century liturgical movement, the least known among Lutherans in this country is the rediscovery and clarification of the liturgy of the hours as the prayer of the church. Unlike our Anglican brothers and sisters who have preserved to some extent these daily services as a living part of parish worship, Lutherans are faced with the formidable task of achieving a healthier liturgical life comprised of *both* the Eucharist and prayer in common.

Robert Taft's *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West* is an essential resource to assist us in this task. Written in four parts, this study begins by tracing the formation of Christian traditions of prayer in common and its development into cathedral (or parochial) and monastic types. The cathedral way of common prayer was celebrated by the whole community and consisted of popular elements such as psalms, canticles, the use of light and incense, and intercessions. Strikingly absent in some places (at least for many Lutherans!) were the reading of Scripture lessons and preaching. Moreover, what is clear about common prayer is that it was *not* "a service of the Word." Rather, its content and thrust were thanks and praise for the new day and for salvation in Christ in the morning and thanksgiving to God for the day in the evening along with asking for forgiveness, grace, and protection through the night.

Some Lutherans I know would regard such a practice as problematic. Worship must be "scriptural" and this means readings from the Bible and, most importantly, preaching. A knowledge of the development of Christian prayer in common, however, can remind us that worship is also "kerygmatic" when we *speak* the Scriptures, using psalms and canticles to express together our relationship with God.

Parts II and III of Taft's study discuss the development of the Liturgy of the Hours in both eastern and western Christianity. Of particular interest to Lutherans should be Part III where Taft's focus is on Western liturgical traditions including the churches of the Reformation. Given our habit to make pietism and rationalism the "whipping boys" for individualizing and privatizing the church's worship, Taft demythologizes what amounts to be a cliché at best. By the end of the twelfth century, there was underway a profound shift in religious perception and sensibility: "a distrust of sacerdotalism and sacramentalism, insistence on the reading of Scripture in the vernacular, zeal for preaching and hearing sermons, a love of association and 'meetings for prayer,' and the organization of charity" (p. 303). Such developments are, of course, not inherently "bad." But they will eventually produce an emphasis on "a more affective, subjective, interior devotional life focused on the person of Jesus and finding expression in meditation and a proliferation of 'devotions. . .' " (p. 304). What is most helpful is that we can begin to see some of the roots of what has become the contemporary criterion for evaluating the church's worship—will I get anything out of it?

This criterion is sharply challenged in Taft's concluding reflection on the theology and spirituality of daily prayer in Part IV. Here he provides not only a theology of worship as a whole that is biblically, historically, and experientially based but also a forceful discussion of what is

at stake in our gatherings for the celebration of Word and sacrament *and* common prayer alike. It is nothing less than authentic worship which consists of the proclamation of faith to the world, participation in our mission to witness to Christ and his salvation, praise and thanksgiving for this gift, and intercessory prayer for the needs of the entire world as well as our own.

Michael B. Aune
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
The Graduate Theological Union
Berkeley, California

THEOLOGY BY THE PEOPLE: REFLECTIONS ON DOING THEOLOGY IN COMMUNITY. Edited by Samuel Amirtham and John S. Pobee. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986. 143 pages. Paper. $7.50.

This volume of papers presented at a 1985 conference of the World Council of Churches' Programme on Theological Education collects a dozen global voices who concur that theology must be done not **for** but **by** the people, and thus they profoundly challenge usual paradigms for theological education. The ecumenical contexts out of which these theologians speak include Latin American base communities, Korean Minjung story-theology, African cultural theology, Chinese immigrant women's experience, as well as models from North American and European contexts.

Theology is being re-invented as "people's work." The "people" most commonly refers to the poor and/or others who are marginalized, and who must recover or "kidnap" the Bible, so that it might speak to or become present in their own concrete struggles of life. The whole local community of faith needs to discern what is happening and what God is saying in it. The people's theological work is that of constructing and articulating the faith by which they can live. The proper place of this work is the local congregation, which needs to be converted into a place where this theological task can be done.

The ordained minister needs to become a genuine "workmate" of those who in the end must do and live out their own theology. As a theological specialist, he/she does not **own** the people's struggles or theology, but can provide the necessary textual and technical knowledge, make the commonwealth available to them, and link them with the wider communion of saints.

The call is clear. The tough challenge is how to carry this out in the contexts in which we find ourselves.

Karen L. Bloomquist
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE ANONYMOUS CHRIST: JESUS AS SAVIOR IN MODERN THEOLOGY. By Lee E. Snook. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 171 pages. Paper. $10.95.

Lee Snook has two goals in this book: to show how the major extant Christologies present Jesus as one who "saves from the many dimensions of lostness which threaten humanity: idolatrous unbelief, hopelessness, anxiety and alienation, oppression, ecological disaster, isolation, or false and distorted human consciousness" (p. 8); and to offer his own proposal (not definitive pronouncement)—the Anonymous Christ.

Snook's basic premise is that "both lostness and salvation are multi-dimensional . . .; it takes many Christologies, that is, numerous theories, to do justice to the multifaceted fact" (p. 156). In the first five chapters he lays a perceptual grid over the various current Christologies. Students and pastors will be helped to discern their own ways of perceiving Jesus as

Savior. They are likely to find, as I did, that no single soteriological understanding excludes all others in their thinking, their preaching, and their practice of ministry. That discovery is, in itself, a great pain.

While this sharpening of focus serves a good purpose in the descriptive chapters, it becomes a narrowing of scope in the final chapter, where Snook makes his own proposal. The "Anonymous Christ" is, to be sure, less exclusivistic and imperialistic than some others, but too many dimensions of the Christ seem to be neglected. The earliest Christian confession, according to the New Testament, was, "Jesus is Lord"; and the ecumenical creeds affirm him as Son of God and Judge. Soteriology is central to Christology, but it is not its only facet.

On the whole, though, Snook's effort in this book is highly commendable, and will reward anyone who wishes to hone his or her thinking about what we mean when we call Jesus the Savior.

Frederick Reklau, Pastor
Grace Lutheran Church
Evanston, Illinois

Briefly Noted

Books that make the New Testament come to life for non-professionals, i.e. not pastors or seminary teachers, are few and far between. John Drane accomplishes that goal in his **INTRODUCING THE NEW TESTAMENT** (Harper & Row, $19.95), the rewriting of three earlier separate publications. Historically conservative, profusely illustrated (with well selected photographs, plans and charts), well written in clear English, the book is a natural for parish libraries. It provides historical context, continuity, and application. Drane calls attention to the problems that the observant reader will face and suggests conservative solutions. I like this book, even when I differ with it. It's useful. Edgar Krentz

Too often we read about the ancient world, not in it. Marvin W. Meyer provides a way of reading one's self into the religious world of the New Testament in **THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES: A SOURCEBOOK** (Harper & Row, $14.95). Major chapters are devoted to the mysteries of Eleusis, Andania, Dionysus, the Magna Mater, the Syrian Goddess [Astarte/Aphrodite], Isis and Osiris, Mithras, and to Jewish and Christian reactions. Each chapter has a short introduction with multi-lingual bibliography followed by important ancient texts in English translation. The whole is a useful collection, with two major weaknesses. (1) The significance of ancient art for the understanding of religion is recognized, but the book provides only one (usually uninterpreted) illustration for each chapter. Dionysiac religion

is not understood without the visual experience of bacchantes or Dionysiac sarcophagi. One must go to John Ferguson's *Religions of the Roman Empire* (Cornell, 1970) or Joscelyn Godwin's *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (Harper & Row, 1981) for an adequate (though not extensive) collection of illustrations. (2) While the bibliographies give extensive references to German and French titles, nowhere does Meyer tell the reader where the original Greek or Latin texts may be found in magisterial editions. That limits the book's utility for people who want to know the vocabulary that underlies some translations. It is nevertheless a useful introductory book. Edgar Krentz

It's the year of Matthew. Jack Kingsbury's Proclamation Commentary **MATTHEW** has been prized as a trustworthy guide to the book since its publication in 1977. The revised edition (Fortress, $6.95) is the best single volume to orient the preacher to Matthew. The new edition, set in smaller type, is some 15 pages longer than the first edition. The first chapter gives an overview of recent scholarship, including the significant developments in literary criticism. The other three chapters discuss the Christology (much revised over edition 1), theology, and ecclesiology of Matthew. It's a good book made better; buy it for the year of Matthew. Edgar Krentz

Bruce Vawter is one of the Roman Catholic biblical scholars who led Catholic Scripture studies into the mainstream of scholarship after the Second Vatican Council. In a short generation Catholic scholars were in the forefront of research, setting new trends and opening new avenues of study. A small group of scholars bridged the gap between pre- and post-Vatican II biblical studies. Vawter published books and articles in both Testaments with equal facility and magisterial scholarship, an accomplishment that few attempt today. **THE BIBLICAL HERITAGE IN MODERN CATHOLIC SCHOLARSHIP**, edited by John J. Collins and John Dominic Crossan (Michael Glazier, $12.95), honors him on his 65th birthday. Nine outstanding Catholic scholars and one Protestant survey and evaluate the present status of Catholic biblical scholarship in both Testaments. Two conclusions are evident: (1) Catholic scholarship today is a part of biblical scholarship, no longer distinguishable because of a doctrinal or confessional bias. The bibliography appended to each article lists Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish scholars without identifying them as such. (2) As the Protestant, Walter Harrelson, makes clear, Protestant scholars read their Catholic colleagues gladly, learn much from them, and appreciate the ecclesial commitments that give a pastoral cast to their work. In short, Catholic biblical scholarship is catholic, useful to all interested in the Bible. This *Festschrift* honors Fr. Vawter by documenting how much he and the scholars of his generation have affected (positively) the use of the Bible in Catholicism today. Edgar Krentz

The journal *Semeia* describes and advances new developments in biblical studies. Its 35th issue, edited by John H. Elliott, discusses and illustrates **SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS SOCIAL WORLD** (Scholars Press, $9.95). Elliott describes the method in the lead article (his work includes a useful bibliography of recent NT scholarship using the method). Essential is the use of conceptual models of social relationships based on comparative cultural analysis. Articles by other scholars show the method used to describe Christian origins (Bruce Malina), the social code in the Sermon on the Mount (Leland White), concepts of purity in Mark (Jerome Neyrey), use of body language in 1 Corinthians (Neyrey), and a critique of Abraham Malherbe's interpretation of 3

John (Malina). These five essays are valuable in their own right; read as models of sociological interpretation they are fascinating illustrations of the theoretical model Elliott describes. The issue would be even more useful if the editor had written an addendum to his article briefly describing for neophytes in social-scientific criticism how each writer used the method described and how each was unique in his application of the method. All in all, a useful collection of articles on a highly significant topic; they will be widely read—and should be. Edgar Krentz

The South African Bible Society seeks to use modern linguistics for Bible translation. Its 1983 monograph *Style and Discourse* presented the results of a seminar on rhetoric, stylistics, and the Greek Testament. Their most recent volume, **SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND COMMUNICATION** is published as UBS Monograph Series, No. 1 (London, New York, Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, price not given). In six chapters the relation between cultural factors, interpersonal relationships, and communication are examined as an aid in translation. After a theoretical presentation of the method and its application to translation and exegesis, case studies in modern speeches and sermons show the utility of this approach for good communication—with which all translators must be concerned. Although the discussion may appear too theoretical in places for "practical translators, neglect of this study will impair translation. In fact, preachers and teachers of homiletics would benefit a great deal also from the communication theory promoted in this volume. Its esoteric sounding, "egghead" title conceals an ultimately immensely practical concern for all communicators, translators and preachers included. Edgar Krentz

THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE. Edited by A. S. Van der Woude (Eerdmans, $34.95). This book offers responsible, contemporary, and scientifically grounded information about the land of the Bible (geography and archeology), about the languages and writing systems of the ancient world, about textual criticism of both Testaments, about the history of the ancient Near East (to the beginning of the second century C. E.), and about biblical institutions (marriage, death and burial, money, weights and measures, and all kinds of religious practices). Three subsequent volumes in this "Biblical Handbook" will deal with the Old Testament, the Intertestamental Period, and the New Testament. Translated from the Dutch. RWK

AMOS. By A. G. Auld (JSOT, $3.95). This eighty-nine page booklet is part of a series called Old Testament Guides, which intends to provide concise and affordable data for studying biblical books. A. shows what the big issues are these days in Amos studies and what major scholars have said about them in the last 15 years or so. Particularly useful are his summaries of studies by Hartmut Gese and by several literary analysts of chapter 5. RWK

BIBLISCHE ZEITTAFELN. By Karl Matthiae and Winfried Thiel (Neukirchener Verlag, DM 34). This is a packet of materials, including four overviews of historical interactions between life in Palestine and the surrounding kingdoms, from the 16th c. B.C.E. to the 2nd c. C. E. In addition, there are twenty tables, which list the Table of Nations, the Dynasty of David, the prophets in their chronological setting, the high priests in Seleucid and Roman times, etc. Finally, the packet includes ten outline maps showing not only the ancient Near East, but also things like the Assyrian provinces in Palestine, Persian administrative districts in the post-exilic period, Palestine at the time of Jesus, and the Roman Empire. It comes with a sixty-page mini-history and explanations to the various overviews, tables, and maps. What a wonderful packet! RWK

EARLY JUDAISM AND ITS MODERN INTERPRETERS. Edited by Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg. (Fortress Press and Scholars Press, $24.95). In 17 essays, leaders in the field report on the last forty years of developments in the study of Early Judaism (330 B. C. E. to 138 C. E.). Part I deals with the historical setting; Part II summarizes recent discoveries (Dead Sea Scrolls, archeology, coins); Part III provides introductory information on the voluminous literature (apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, Josephus, Philo, others). This volume is one of about forty that are being published to mark the centennial of the Society of Biblical Literature. If you want to know what Judaism was like at the time of Christ, this is the best place to start. RWK

FROM SACRED STORY TO SACRED TEXT. By James A. Sanders (Fortress, $18.95). S., a leader in "canonical criticism," republishes in this book nine significant essays. This is not a discussion of which books made it into the canon and why, but rather a demonstration of how the biblical story was constantly readapted for new situations. In a sense, the canonical process goes on as we prepare sermons based on the Bible. Monotheizing pluralism provides a hermeneutical guide for those who want to adapt the tradition. "Pluralism" might be exemplified by the ways in which Judaism and Christianity have adapted the old Torah story to new situations. "Monotheism" in this context emphasizes that only one deity in the canonical tradition is responsible for judgment and grace, law and gospel, creation and redemption. RWK

THE GOSPEL OF BAPTISM. By Richard Jungkuntz (Pacific Lutheran University Press, $4.95). "This book tries to tell how rich in meaning and power a Christian's baptism can be when he or she listens a little more closely to the witness of Holy Scripture. So insistent is that witness, so ingrained in every stratum of the Scripture, so manifold in its variety and color, so directly applicable and pertinent to the whole of Christian life that one may be led to wonder how it is possible to hear the biblical gospel at all or to celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar without a consciously joyful reembracing of Holy Baptism." (Author's Preface). This fine exegetical study, first published in 1968, still holds promise for profound parish renewal; it is written in a style accessible to many. J. is Provost of Pacific Lutheran University. RWK

The Daily Study Bible is designed to make the Old Testament come alive for believers in the twentieth century. In addition, it reports on the most significant results and insights of modern biblical scholarship. Recent volumes published by Westminster Press include: **I & II KINGS.** By A. Graeme Auld ($8.95); **PROVERBS.** By Kenneth T. Aitken ($8.95); **ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON.** By Robert Davidson ($7.95). RWK

ILLUSTRATED DICTIONARY AND CONCORDANCE OF THE BIBLE. Edited by Geoffrey Wigoder, Shalom M. Paul, Benedict T. Viviano, and Ephraim Stern (Macmillan, $100.00). The authors are American and Israeli, Christian and Jewish; they and their editors are well-known contemporary exegetes. They serve up 1500 color illustrations and the text of the New King James Version; they comment on every person and place in the Bible, its flora and fauna, manuscript fragments and classic paintings, briefly and without bibliography. Along the center margins lies a built-in concordance. This book is "designed for anyone in any religious tradition," and too often fades off into vagueness. On Genesis: "The Book of Genesis is most valued for its religious teachings on God, man [*sic*], the origin of evil, the moral law emanating from the one God, the unity of mankind, the divine election of individuals and Israel, the covenant and promises be-

tween God and *man* . . . and the notion of a God directing the course of history." Well, yes. And a bit more. RWK

INCENSE IN ANCIENT ISRAEL. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 38. By Kjeld Nielsen (Brill, 38 Dutch Guilders [= $17.25]). Wellhausen held that incense was not used in Israel until late monarchic times and that the incense altar first appeared after the exile. N. concludes that incense was used already in 1 Sam 2:28 (the time of Samuel) and believes that Israelites took over incense altars from Canaanites shortly after their arrival in the land. This revised dissertation pursues the smoke and smells through Egypt, Arabia, Syria-Mesopotamia, and Israel. Burning incense was one way of paying homage to God, and there seem to have been propitiatory and mediatory ideas associated with it. RWK

DAS KÖNIGTUM GOTTES IN DEN PSALMEN. By Jörg Jeremias (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, DM 40). This investigation of the kingship of God in the Psalms (especially 29, 47, 68, 93, 95–99, and 104) concludes that Israel was in constant conflict with the Canaanites about divine kingship, especially in the north. Sometimes, as in Deut 33, the particularism of Yahwism was maintained through the divine royal title; at other times, as in Ps 93, the universalism of Yahwism was expressed. The question about the salvation of the nations first arose in post-exilic Psalms that were influenced in direct or indirect fashion by Second Isaiah. Yahweh's kingship grew and changed as Israel had new experiences, and it is this theological adaptability that sets Israel off sharply from its religious environment. RWK

THE LISTENING HEART. Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. (JSOT, $32.50). M. has been a leading figure in the revival of interest in the Wisdom literature of the OT and was one of the editors of the pace-setting Jerome Biblical Commentary. The sixteen essays (seven by women!) in this Festschrift are a fitting celebration for a warm-hearted and elegant scholar at his retirement. His bibliography runs to 25 pages, including a 1977 essay in *Currents*. RWK

THE BOOKS OF HAGGAI AND MALACHI. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. By Pieter A. Verhoef (Eerdmans, $17.95). Widely read in modern exegetical literature, V. tries to make these post-exilic prophets understandable to and usable by modern conservative Christian audiences. In my judgment his New Testament applications do not always take into account that Christ is not only the fulfillment, but also the radical reinterpretation of the Old Testament. We need to differentiate between what these prophecies meant originally and what they might mean in our new context. V. on Hag 2:20–23: "The splendor of the new temple and the glory of the throne of David will . . . be fulfilled in Christ, centrally at his first and finally at his second advent." On Mal 2:17–3:5: "The prophecy's final fulfillment will coincide with the coming of the great Day of the Lord at the second coming of Christ. . . . The judgment on that day will be confined to Israel, first as a refining process, but then also as judgment." So? RWK

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Preaching Helps

Fifth Sunday of Easter—Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Series B

Winter and Springtime

How odd it is. I am sitting at a word processor three days before Christmas, trying to think about the April issue of "Preaching Helps." And this April issue must cover Sundays beginning with the Fifth Sunday of Easter and stretching down to the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

It helped to attend Stacy Boorn's ordination yesterday. We sang about the Spirit and invoked gifts of the Spirit upon her. So we struck Pentecost themes, even though the great Christmas tree with all its lovely chrismons stood there brilliantly lighted in the corner of the chancel by the lectern. It was and is hard to live liturgically, live with the Christian Year, let that Year have its way, when this other task beckons.

One of our contributors this month is Ruth Ellen Sievert, Pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Baldwin Park, California. She has just entered the doctoral program in Pastoral Counseling (Theology and Personality) of the School of Theology at Claremont.

Ruth has contributed the "Pastoral Reflections" for this issue. With her Reflections she sent a note in which she mentioned one difficulty of writing something for a season so distant: "I lost one whole resource for illustrations: the newspaper!" Gone. Just like that. Working ahead has its hazards! But we thank her for her labors, willingly performed in spite of risks and handicaps.

As in several past issues now, the "Prophetic Voice" is the work of Pastor Don Prange of Nora, Virginia, where Don is deeply involved both in parish work and in community issues. He continues to struggle to relate the gospel and the liturgy to matters of justice and the economy, to issues of land and peoplehood and God's purpose for all this vast creation.

In working on the "First Readings" for this issue, I have wrestled not only with questions of distance but with constraints of space. I have tried to focus on a

single issue in a single lesson, instead of trying to cover the waterfront. But the water is so very refreshing, all along the front!

As I read Don's contributions, here in the days just before Christmas, I reflect on how apt they are in their insistent reminder of the reality of the Word made flesh. And as I ponder Ruth's words (written without benefit of newspaper!), I am reminded again of the currency and appropriateness of the gospel to all our times and all our conditions.

Good preaching, wherever you are!

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor



Fifth Sunday of Easter May 1, 1988

Psalm 22:24–30
Acts 8:26–40
1 John 8:18–24
John 15:1–8

FIRST READING

"I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). Was the tree of life in the Garden of Eden really an apple tree? That is the western Christian tradition, owing to the fact that in Latin "evil" and "apple" look and sound exactly alike. Both are "malum."

But the "tree" may have been a great vine (*ampelos*) with roots sunk down not into the earth alone but into the life of God. And Jesus says to all devout and eager souls, seeking to be rooted and grounded in God, "I am that great and primal Tree of Life; come and let your life be grafted into mine."

A variation of that theme appears in another writing of the Johannine community, in Revelation 22. In the New Jerusalem the Seer beholds the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and alongside the river he sees the Tree of Life (*xylon zoes*). It has twelve kinds of fruit and yields one of them each month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Seekers grafted into the Vine or Tree which is Christ have the precious juice of divine life surging in them (see Sixth Sunday of Easter). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In this age and culture of self-sufficiency it is good to hear the words of the Ethiopian eunuch when Philip asked if he understood the words of Isaiah that he was reading: "How can I, unless some one guides me?" In these fast paced days of competition and rugged individualism, one can heave a deep sigh at hearing Jesus say, "I am the vine, you are the branches." In our fragmented world it is healing to be reminded that we are part of a whole; that we are connected to God, connected to one another. When we ignore, deny or sever that connection we are like cut flowers: as a flower loses its fragrance, color, beauty, its very life, we lose our ability to see beauty, to respond to love, to reach out in need, to be servant. Connected to the vine, however, we have the brilliant beauty of the bird of paradise in its bright gold and purple attire.

Knowing the source of our life lets us know the source of all life and we can breathe deeply the beauty around us. When we have the life-blood of the vine pulsing through us, we can risk being tender, risk loving because we have the knowledge that even a broken heart will be healed by the Healer. Empowered by the one who abides in us, we are free to be faithful servants because we know that God does not call us to be successful. God calls us to be faithful.

Being one branch on the vine also means that each is connected to one another, as twins in the womb live on the same blood supply. This frees us to be partners in our venture in the gospel. We don't have to be self-sufficient. We can know the freedom that the Ethiopian knew when he acknowledged that he could not understand the Scriptures without someone to guide him. Though everything in our world lifts up survival of the fittest, we can freely choose interdependence.

After nearly three years of a glorious team ministry I am serving as the only pastor of a very small parish. There is not a day that goes by that I do not miss the life that came from being part of a large staff that worked together as a team. We were not without our serious painful problems and we had to make major changes in the staff from time to time but there is an energy and vitality that comes from work-

ing together that is its own life, that goes beyond the sum total of all of us working together. There is nothing more rewarding to me than the experience of trusting, respecting, loving collegiality. Now I am learning to have that collegiality with my parishioners, my partners in this particular ministry. Though they may not be professionally trained, they are faithful, and in this, they are good colleagues. As members of the Body of Christ we are given the opportunity for that collegiality in all that we do. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

Acts 4:32–35 connects the resurrection to a way of life reflecting community ownership of property aimed at meeting human need. That is "something real and active," to use the language of the Second Lesson: "My children, our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active" (1 John 3:18, JB). And that shared ownership takes love beyond abstractions to the material reality of the world of economic justice. In fact Jesus' words about fruit-bearing love mean that we cannot just theorize about a new and better economic order. We are called to activate it, "whatever accusations it may raise against us" (1 John 3:20, JB).

Our baptismal grafting into the true vine means that we are part of the "pruning" going on in history—in the conflicts in El Savador and Nicaragua and South Africa, to say nothing of the potential conflict on the horizon in the USA growing out of the disparity between rich and poor. That pruning can be a positive process, sharpening our sensitivity to injustice, or it can be judgment, revealing those who are not branches of the true vine, because they fail to produce fruit. DP

Sixth Sunday of Easter May 8, 1988

Psalm 98
Acts 11:19–30
1 John 4:1–11
John 15:9–17

A FIRST READING

"I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (John 15:16). The Tree of Life in the heavenly City (Rev 22) bears twelve kinds of fruit and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

In John's Gospel Jesus meditates on the fruit of the Tree or Vine, and he names self-denying, sacrificial love (*agape*) for others as the one fruit desired and enabled by God. Earlier in the Gospel Jesus speaks much of life (*zoe*): life from above, water of life, bread of life, light of life, resurrection and life. He has spoken at times also of love (e.g. 3:16), but beginning in chapter 13, at the start of the Passion and Resurrection Narrative, Jesus speaks more and more insistently of love so that this theme begins to dominate the Farewell Discourse (cf. 13:1, 34–35; 14:15, 21–24, 28; 16:27; 17:22–26).

Love reaches out to people like the Ethiopian (Acts 8, last Sunday) and like the "Greek" or Gentile population of Antioch (Acts 11, this Sunday) and so is healing for the nations. And love responds to the dread news of a great famine, all contributing to the sisters and brothers according to their ability (Acts 11). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Unless absorbed in a beloved project with a deadline in front of my face, I am easily distracted. If something interests me, I turn to it at

least long enough to find out just how interesting it is. I have found parish ministry to be a place in which one is easily distracted. The phone calls, the drop-in visitors, the staff person with a problem, something of interest in the mail, emergencies, conversations with the neighbors, a "quick" stop at the theological book store . . . the list goes on ad infinitum.

Barnabas exhorted the church in Antioch to "remain faithful in the Lord with steadfast purpose." The phone calls, drop-in visits, staff problems, mail, emergencies, and conversations are only distractions if *I* am distracted; they are only distractions if I have lost sight of steadfastness of purpose. When I am clear about being faithful, these things *are* my ministry. Our ministry in baptism, and perhaps even our ministry in ordination, is not defined by task but by attitude and purpose. Edwin H. Friedman says in his book *Generation to Generation* that " . . . self-definition is a more important agent of change than expertise. . . ."

As members of the Body of Christ then, our self-definition is rooted in the call to a purpose, an attitude, and an action of love. Over and over again I am astounded to realize that when I focus on my own attitude and my own sense of purpose and less on the actions of those around me, the task falls into place. When I seek to be faithful in love, no matter whether it is in the task of preaching or calling in a convalescent hospital or doing a favor for a friend or even the menial tasks in my home, I can enjoy the tasks without anxiety. The distractions are those things that lead me away from my own self-definition, away from my purpose, God's purpose of loving. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

Some early Christians had difficulty accepting the material reality of the incarnation, the fact of God's coming "in the flesh" (1 John 4:2). Maybe they had grown up in a culture which simply could not fathom such an idea.

Others, like the community at Antioch (Acts 11), responded with "in-the-flesh" action when it was needed to provide relief for hungry sisters and brothers in Jerusalem.

Jesus condemned the "heresy" of failing to act in mercy and compassion when situations of injustice and need are before us. It is, in my judgment, heresy to continue to support economic traditions which do not put human need and care for the earth at the center of human life. DP

The Ascension of Our Lord May 12, 1988

Psalm 110
Acts 1:1–11
Ephesians 1:16–23
Luke 24:44–53

A FIRST READING

Here we are at the heart of Luke's thinking about Jesus: the ascension means not levitation but exaltation to God's right hand. Through his resurrection-ascension, Jesus has inherited a throne and power greater and higher than that of Caesar, and he sends out not conquering legions but a handful of inspired witnesses to bring the nations to faith and allegiance.

"Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) That is a mere paraphrase of the old request of James and John that they might sit, one at his right and one at his left, when he comes in his kingdom. They have very specific views about how he should be exalted, what a sovereign looks like, how an empire is founded, and how a court is organized (cf. Luke 22:24–27).

Jesus tells them (and us) to forget about "when." Clock and calendar are in God's hands, and that's all we need to know. As for

rank and power, Jesus answers again as he had in the garden when disciples eagerly volunteered two swords: "Forget it!" (or, "Enough of this!" Luke 22:38).

The one power (*dynamis*) the new community of disciples requires and will receive is the Spirit of God. And their task is not conquering the nations but including them in that new and ecumenical community of Jews and Samaritans and Gentiles and whatever other kinds of people are out there all the way to the ends of the earth. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

As a doctoral student it is easy to climb the stairs of the proverbial Ivory Tower and enjoy the stimulation of books, classrooms, and friends who enjoy wrestling with ideas. Even as a parish pastor it is fun to dream about parish programs and brainstorm new ideas for enriching our worship life. In those moments I experience the creativity and intellect of God, but these are not the events in which I experience the heart of God.

I am touched by the heart of God in the events of the people's lives that touch mine. The heart of God is evident in moments like the one when my classmate confessed the horror of growing up as the Perfect Preacher's Kid and the journey to come into her own. God's heart is evidenced in talking with the primary caregiver of a lovable but demanding old woman after her death when I was able to address the unspoken guilt of the woman in front of me: "It's O.K. to feel relieved that Louise has died. It doesn't cancel the grief." I am touched by God in moments when bitter conflict is being resolved with someone I love, when I am honored by another sharing their wounds with me, in the quietness of my own tears of grief at my mother's death.

Paradoxically, the Ascension of Jesus Christ reminds us that God's heart is here, on earth, in the midst of the pain, the brokenness, the muck and mire. Standing looking to heaven, looking to "other-world," past life experiences (apologies to Shirley McClaine) takes us to safety zones in which we may experience the intellect and creativity of God, but the heart of God, the heart of people, is where we belong as members of the human race.

And so, Paul prays that the saints may receive from God the spirit of wisdom and of revelation that we may know God, having the eyes of our hearts enlightened. We are reminded in the Luke text that what preceded Jesus' ascension was his death and resurrection for repentance and forgiveness of sins. In that act, we have access to the heart of God. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

Did the disciples ever fully grasp the full dimensions of the vision Jesus shared with them? They were probably much like us, plodding along, with constant need for correction and forgiveness.

They showed tendencies (like us) to rely on power from the world rather than on a power derived from peace "which the world cannot give." Jesus with his transcendent power aimed at serving, not dominating. He aimed at disarming every old "Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named" (Eph 1:12). His goal was helping us toward a life in which power is shared, not jealously guarded.

To celebrate the resurrection and ascension means to wait, to hope, to pray, and in the peace of God to act in solidarity with the powerless, "until we are clothed with power from on high" (cf. Luke 24:49). DP

Seventh Sunday of Easter May 15, 1988

Psalm 47
Acts 1:15–26
1 John 4:13–21
John 17:11b–19

A FIRST READING

"That they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:11b). "One" (*hen*) is only two letters in Greek, with the "h" in the transliteration representing the rough breathing mark.

But it is easier to talk Greek than to fathom that oneness. In fact it is easier to understand electing Matthias to bring "The Twelve" (representing Jesus' claim to be renewer of the tribes of Israel) back up to its full complement after the defection of Judas.

"One" represents wholeness and integrity of a different sort. Jesus prays not just for the ecumenical character of the church and for the removal of denominational barriers. And not just for the inclusiveness of the new community, with or without quotas based on criteria of race or language or age or sex.

The "oneness" which Jesus and the Father share is the divine life. He is "of one substance with the Father." And the great barrier to participation in the divine life is sin, unbelief, love of darkness and the lie rather than love for light and truth. Jesus prays that God through the truth of the divine Logos (v. 17) would lay hands on the disciples and "consecrate" them, separate them from their unbelief, peel away their indifference and rebellion, fill them with trust and truth, pressing them and absorbing them into the life of the Creator-God, so that their lives are transparent and the life of God at once illumines them and shines through them.
RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Fear is an amazingly powerful phenomenon. The existentialists would say all fear is related to the basic anxiety of not *being* in the world. Webster says it is "an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by expectation or awareness of danger." They seem to be saying the same thing.

The greatest danger that one might anticipate is the danger of somehow losing a part of one's self. The most obvious is the danger of emotional harm to self-esteem or spiritual harm to one's faith system. The epistle text points out that the answer to fear, the "cure" for fear isn't safety, security, confidence, or bravery, but love. Perfect love. God's perfect love. God's perfect love given to us so that we might in turn, love God and neighbor.

What is God's perfect love for us if it is not the absolute assurance that God's will for us is good and that God's activity in our life is rooted in that will? That doesn't explain the fact that things happen to us that cause us to be fearful. It is the rare person who does not experience physical harm, either in injury or disease. Daily events carry assaults on one's self-esteem. Living in the world threatens one's faith system. Living in God's perfect love assures us, on the deepest level, that even those assaults on our well-being cannot take away our existence in God, cannot separate us from the love and grace of God.

Over the years of contact with chronically ill folks I am always struck by the difference of how one's spirit can be completely beaten down while another's seems to soar in spite of it all. One such person was a woman named Donna whose faith in the face of being bedridden with Multiple Sclerosis was so powerful that every visit with her was an event of grace that enfolded me in that unspeakable peace and drew me back to her bedside. Here was a woman for whom God's love had cast out her fear. In fact, the way she told the story, it would seem that she was a much more whole, loving

woman *after* she had to confront herself in her illness than before, for it was in her illness, in her brokenness that she confronted God and became ready to be transformed by God's perfect love. Isn't that what the theology of the Cross says to us? RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

Luther in his catechism raised the fundamental question: "What does this mean for daily living?" Well, what does the resurrection mean for daily living?

It is one thing to bear witness to the resurrection (Acts 1:22) as a historical event of the past. It is another to bear witness to the revolutionary power of the resurrection of Jesus today.

This latter kind of witness understands truth in terms of relationships, in terms of oneness with God (John 17), rather than in terms of a correct, abstract answer. Because it is rooted in a oneness with God, it affirms a new way of looking at all other relationships. The resurrection of Jesus opens our eyes to see new possibilities in the ways we relate to other people in terms of a new economics of justice, and in the ways we relate to the land as stewards of God's creation.

The resurrection means new life, and being witnesses to the resurrection means bringing the revolutionary truth of the new age and God's new life to bear on the crying needs of oppressed people everywhere. Anything short of that is a denial of the resurrection and makes our testimony a lie (cf. 1 John 4:20; 5:10).

The Day of Pentecost May 22, 1988

Psalm 104:25–34
Ezekiel 37:1–14
Acts 2:1–21
John 7:37–39a

A FIRST READING

From whose innards (*ek tes koilias*) will the Spirit of God flow like rivers of living water (cf. Rev 22 and Fifth Sunday of Easter)? Will the Spirit flow from Jesus or from the believers?

Strange river, strange garden of Paradise. Try to picture this: John says that in the place where they crucified Jesus, there was a garden, and in the garden there was a tomb (19:41). At his crucifixion a river of water and blood flowed from his riven side. Life sprang forth as from a mighty fountain. His death is the source of our real and eternal life. And the place where they crucified him is a new Eden, brimming with newly created life.

But does it stop there? His life is given for sharing, and it is never diminished in the giver or the sharer but runs all the stronger and all the deeper the more it is given away and shared.

Women and men in Christ, one with the Father and the Son (John 17, Seventh Sunday of Easter), refreshed by his ever-flowing life (the Spirit that can only be given when he is "glorified" or lifted up on the Living Tree of the cross, 7:39), will be sources of life for others as they also live in the joy of trust and obedience. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The Day of Pentecost is, at once, intensely personal and intensely communal, the tension of which is a necessity for the life of the church. In the church year it marks the shift in focus from the identity of the church to the mission of the Body of Christ. Now that the Christ event has taken place in our lives we are called to go out and proclaim the event with our lives. The long "green season" or, as the Roman Catholic Church calls it, "ordinary time" is about to set in.

The weariness of dried bones, lost hope, and being clean cut off can sneak up on us and strike our hearts as individuals and as the

church at any moment, seemingly out of nowhere. The dramatic moments of incarnation, death, and resurrection, the gift of the Spirit, a building project, or an exciting parish program don't seem to sustain most of us for long after the event. The lows after the highs can send us into downward spirals that claim an enormous amount of energy in order to come back to an even keel. The ongoing proclamation of the gospel is dependent on the drama of the events in the life of Christ happening over and over again in our daily lives. More than empowering us for the big moments, the crises, the Day of Pentecost empowers us to call on the name of the Lord in our boredom, frustration, disappointment in the little moments. We have communal and individual rituals to bring us through the devastation of death, the joys of baptism, the delight of confirmation and marriage. The Spirit gives us breath, peace, and the ability to interpret God's presence in the dried bones of relationships neglected, tedious tasks that have been put off too long, daily housekeeping of being the Church.

The third major festival of the Church year is often lost in the shadow of Christmas and Easter yet it is the one that, in our celebration, gives us staying power. It needs to set us up: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" is the reminder we need to hear daily. Isn't it ironic that the work of the church that requires the most elbow grease is stressed just at the time when we are looking fondly towards vacation and a summer lull that will gear us up for the onslaught of fall programs? RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

Until the Day of Pentecost the disciples were caught up in the popular mythology that "the day of Yahweh" (Joel 2:31) meant that a God "out there" was going to act in some miraculous way on behalf of the people of God.

But then suddenly on Pentecost they were filled with fresh insight and power. Suddenly "they were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4), and suddenly some words of Jesus took on meaning: "As God sent me, so I am sending you" (John 19:21). And suddenly (although in reality we must assume they had to work hard at overcoming past ideas) the followers of Jesus were opened up to the possibilities for new approaches to life. It is clear that they began to distance themselves from the prevailing system and authorities. They were no longer competing with each other for places of honor in some new order around a newly enthroned superking. They were becoming a community which, led by the Spirit, was beginning to recognize a diversity of gifts which empowered them to act on the dreams and visions of a new and different way of life. DP

The Holy Trinity
May 29, 1988

Psalm 149
Deuteronomy 6:4–9
Romans 8:14–17
John 3:1–17

A FIRST READING

"If I have told you earthly things (*epigeia*) and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things (*epourania*)?" (John 3:12). It is rather a shock to realize that the "earthly things" in Jesus' speech with Nicodemus are such big items as rebirth, the kingdom of God, being born of water and the Spirit, the movement of the Spirit of God like the blowing of the wind. Yet that is Jesus' label for those apparently high and spiritual topics.

What then are the "heavenly things"? It is simply a fact that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus often has theological discussions with conversation partners, and he never lets them go until he has spoken of the highest and deepest mystery of them all: his death.

His death is not his end, not his destruction, not his defeat. It is not simply a bad end that must be reversed or trumped in resurrection. In the Gospel of John, Jesus continually speaks of his dying not as a downward movement, not as humiliation, but as his triumphant upward thrust, his exaltation, his glorification.

He will be lifted up, as the bronze serpent was lifted up, for healing. His descent (by incarnation) and his ascent (by means of the cross) are love's triumphant sweep through the world, gathering to God's bosom all who believe, blessing them with life. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* there is a chapter entitled "A Vision For You" which concludes with these words:

> Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man [sic] who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.
>
> Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.
>
> May God bless you and keep you—until then.

The folks who are "successful" in Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12 Step programs are the ones who take on the spiritual principles of the program as a daily attitude and action. They turn to a living spirituality that is written on their hearts, that they teach to one another, and that is useful in approaching any given moment of their lives. The program and their relationship with God become the eyes through which they see the world.

I take for granted how much my work as a pastor automatically gives me opportunity for daily encounter with God in preaching, teaching, preparation, meetings with other clergy, special worship services, and in dialogue with folks. As pastor, I am constantly being invited and even challenged to wrestle with my faith and with my relationship with God and the church. That doesn't even include the ways in which I consciously seek out nurture of my faith and spiritual life. Most of the folks in the pew don't have a fraction of these opportunities. The average member is in worship two or three times a month. Depending on the congregation's eucharistic practices, members may go two or three months without receiving the Sacrament. Many live in households where there is no one with whom to discuss their faith. I wouldn't even venture to guess how few work in environments in which they can openly struggle with the ethical issues that confront them in their jobs.

The task of "Trinity Sunday" isn't to teach a doctrine defined in the fourth century. The task is to encounter God. It is to experience God's presence and purpose in our lives and then speak of those encounters in ways that folks can teach diligently to their children, talk of when they sit in their houses, when they walk by the way, and when they lie down and when they rise, and bind as a sign on their hand and as frontlets between their eyes, and write them on the doorposts of their homes and on their gates. Indeed, perhaps this is always the task of our preaching! After all, none of us can transmit what we haven't got. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

Genuine spirituality calls us into the world, not away from it, just as we believe that God really entered the world in the flesh in Jesus "that the world might be saved" (John 3:17). Saved from what? John's list of saving acts on the part of Jesus is significant: saved from running short of necessities (2:1–11), from disease (4:43–54), from paralysis (5:1–18), from hunger (6:1–15), from blindness (9:1–7), and ultimately from death (11:1–27). These are all material realities, and that means that Jesus offers salvation from all that prevents living and celebrating life to the full in the way God planned it from the beginning.

The "born-again" spirituality of John 3 is one in which heart and soul and strength are devoted to setting up in the real world signs of life to counter all the signs of death, committed to bringing liberation and justice to places of oppression and injustice. DP

Second Sunday after Pentecost June 5, 1988

Psalm 81:1–10
Deuteronomy 5:12–15
2 Corinthians 4:5–12
Mark 2:23–28

A FIRST READING

Jesus bursts onto the scene in Mark's Gospel, full of divine energy and authority (1:10–11), striding forth to defeat Satan in the wilderness (1:12–13), and then returning to call disciples (1:16–20), and to cast out demons and cure the ill (1:21–45). In Mark 2, Jesus begins to encounter opposition, centered oddly enough in the religious establishment.

In the face of religious opposition Jesus speaks of the time of the wedding feast and of new wineskins for new wine (2:18–22). And then he permits his disciples to work on the Sabbath, harvesting grain by plucking ears of grain, rubbing it between their palms and blowing on it to separate the chaff from the edible grain.

Why not? David did it, and so Scripture provides a precedent, especially if hearers or readers can see in Jesus the great and prophesied Son of David, the Messiah. Furthermore, says Jesus, "the sabbath was established as a blessing for human beings." And now in this time of his appearing that "resting" of which the sabbath was only a sign has arrived. Finally, Mark sees Jesus, the great and final agent of God (Son of Man) as authoritative Lord (*Kyrios*) over demons, over illness, over all the old institutions and festivals and days, "Lord even of the Sabbath," and that means authoritative bearer of promised blessing. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In the season after Pentecost we encounter the earthly Jesus and his ministry amongst the people. Over and over again there are common themes: the ministry to which we are called and the reality that we cannot carry out our ministry without trusting in God to empower us with the Holy Spirit. In today's epistle we are reminded that ministry is what takes place in the way we live and know ourselves as earthen vessels.

M. Scott Peck begins his book *The Road Less Traveled* with this premise:

> "Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult—once we truly understand and accept it—then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters."

It is difficult not to live life as a series of events to be gotten through, with the assumption that once a particular hurdle is jumped over, everything will settle down. It is also difficult not to live life without doing a kind of "comparative suffering." We look at others and gauge the enormity of our problems by theirs. Some people look to have many more problems than us, others not as many.

Comparing our own suffering with that of the people around us is an attempt to create different levels of the human condition. Paul reminds us that we are *all* afflicted, we are all perplexed, we are all persecuted, we are all struck down. This is the human condition. There are no levels of the human condition. Nor are there levels of grace. We do not have to be crushed, driven to despair, forsaken, or destroyed. *Living* the events of our lives rather than getting through hurdles is life at work in us. We are given the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. Daily, through baptism, we are given the glorious opportunity to see the face of God in the face of whatever situations confront us. Daily, we are given the choice to accept ourselves as earthen vessels, and we are given the grace to become servants in the midst of it all. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

When Jesus appeared, the false glory days of Israel's empire and prosperity had passed. The promised land was in the grip of economic crisis. Amid hopes for the revival of an empire, people were falling through the cracks. There was hardly a meaningful Sabbath for the hungry, the lame, the blind and all the social outcasts, who often turned to any means of survival they could find. Sabbath had degenerated into a test of orthodoxy or a ritualistic burden.

But Jesus understood the old covenant in liberation terms, with a concern for worship related to life-giving, healing acts of mercy, not sacrifice. For Jesus, sabbath and all institutionalized religious observances and doctrines had meaning only in terms of how they preserved a relationship between God and the world, and how they served life-giving purposes. He acted on what he believed and died for it. A non-ritual spirituality in that pattern means carrying "in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may always be seen in our body" (2 Cor 4:10). DP

Third Sunday after Pentecost June 12, 1988

Psalm 61:1–5, 8
Genesis 3:9–15
2 Corinthians 4:13–18
Mark 3:20–35

A FIRST READING

Mark here offers a long passage on terrible opposition to Jesus. It is bracketed fore and aft by brief sections about Jesus' family. They (not just "friends" as RSV has it) come out to "seize" him, that is to take him home, saying to themselves, "He is beside himself," not quite right, a bit unbalanced (3:19–21). And at the end his mother and his brothers (see their names in 6:3) are "outside" (not with the insiders) calling for him. And Jesus announces that those who surround him as doers of the will of God (*thelēma tou theou*) are his brothers and sisters and mother (3:31–35).

Between that beginning and that end, scribes from Jerusalem, the religious hub of the nation, come down with their accusations that he is worse than "beside himself" (v. 21): "He is possessed by Beelzebul" (v. 22). What is at work in Jesus, they say, is "an unclean spirit" (v. 30).

They absolutely misread God's plan and purpose, calling satanic that which is godly, denouncing as unclean that which is holy, getting everything backwards. At the same time they imagine that they are perfect judges of all

teachings and teachers, and they think that their perceptions and decisions are infallible. What can ever break through such a shell? RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Today returns us to The Garden and the first spoken fear of the human race. "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." The fall from grace. The fall from the man's and woman's ultimate trust that God would care for them. Luther said that sin is our inability to accept the sheer goodness of God.

Why should we trust God to be only good? After all, we learned at a very early age that people will disappoint us and it seems impossible to not translate that lack of trustworthiness to God. Our parents *seemed* absolutely trustworthy. They fed us and clothed us and took care of us but then there was that awful moment when we learned, but still denied, that even *they* would let us down. Perhaps it was when no one responded to our cry to be held. Still, we went on believing until that ultimate moment when we were forced to say to ourselves, under our breath so that no one else would hear the awful truth: "She's not perfect . . . He's not perfect." Perhaps up to then we had begun to face the every day cruelty of the world around us: older siblings hit us; friends steal our toys; children say terrible things to one another. But not *them.* Mom and Dad would always come through. Until the day that they didn't. Perhaps it was in that same moment that we suspected that God would also let us down.

Just as we had to learn that our parents' love for us was not synonymous with giving us everything we wanted, we had to learn that God's love is not synonymous with making things turn out the way we want them to turn out.

Our trust in God is our trust in God's grace, given to us in every moment so that we do not lose heart. It is a child's faith that trusts in a God who gives them a prayed for bicycle. That faith won't sustain us when someone we love dies in spite of our prayers. Mature faith is trust in the goodness of God, in the wisdom of God, in the power of God not only to carry us through the disappointments, pain, devastation of our lives, but to bring us through gracefully, healing the wounds. And it is precisely in the healing of wounds that we become servants. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

Working on behalf of a theology of creation and the sabbath has always brought the curse of struggle and conflict. One has to be a bit out of his or her mind (Mark 3:21) to get involved. Jesus' own family did not understand him, and the representatives of institutionalized religion said, "Beelzebul is in him." Responses rising from the flesh rather than from the Spirit have a hard time handling revolutionary truth.

Those who throw themselves into the struggle on behalf of revolutionary truth, on behalf of peace and rest (sabbath) in a world in crisis, are going to make mistakes and even sin. But there is forgiveness for sin, and that is power! However, to resist the Spirit's drive toward life-giving action is unforgiveable!

There are risks, but Paul says they are worth taking. The deeper we get involved the more grace is multiplied (2 Cor 4:15). DP

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost June 19, 1988

Psalm 92:1–5 (6–10) 11–14
Ezekiel 17:22–24
2 Corinthians 5:1–10
Mark 4:26–34

A FIRST READING

The power at work in Jesus often seems weaker than the powers opposed to him and

the kingdom he announces. His deeds, his words, his life are so vulnerable.

He tells parables of weak and insignificant beginnings, of mysterious middles, and of impressive endings. In fact Mark 4 contains three such parables, two of which are the Gospel for this day.

The farmer in 4:26–29, once he has scattered the seed, spends his days waiting and his nights sleeping, full of confidence even though he sees nothing and understands nothing of the mysterious processes of nature. He is patient, and finally the good earth produces "of itself" (*automate*). With or without worry, with or without anxiety, with or without faith, "the harvest has come."

So also the mustard seed. We are surrounded by many examples of small beginnings and great conclusions. If we see them and acknowledge them in the whole realm of nature, why not in relation to the kingdom?

At any rate what Jesus is doing should be clear. To disciples (and also to readers) who may be dismayed and discouraged by lack of results, by the ferocity of opposition, by the power of the enemy, Jesus shares by means of these homely images his own vision of God's eventual triumph. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

When I was in seminary I used to dream of having a full-time salary that would afford me the glorious luxury of a housekeeper. I had it all planned out: once a week someone would come in and clean the bathroom, vacuum the floors, clean up my clutter, wash the dishes and do my laundry and ironing. It would be grand not to have to worry about such mundane tasks so that I could turn my attention to the nobler task of ministry. In fact, I have come to covet those mundane tasks in my life because I can work like crazy for a couple of hours and have very visible, immediate, concrete results of my labor, a luxury I rarely have as a parish pastor.

It seems that much of the work of the ministry we do in the call of ordination as well as the ministry done in the call of baptism is seed planting. It isn't often that we see the shrubs, trees, flowers that result from the seeds we have planted. The blooms in my own life are often traced back to seeds planted years before by preachers, teachers, friends; seeds which none of us realized at the time had been planted. Sometimes it was an idea, or a simple moment of real compassion, or perhaps a challenge to a pattern in my life that wasn't healthy. At the time, the idea didn't make complete sense but it stayed with me. The depth of the compassion was not known. I wasn't ready to hear the challenge. Others along the way watered the seeds and still others pulled the weeds out so that they could grow into full bloom. Sometimes all that is needed is time for gestation.

None of us can ever know fully who we might be touching with our words and actions. We may be directing our attention to a particular person or problem and our efforts seem to fall on hard soil. We may think we are planting an apple tree, only to discover years later that it was an evergreen. We may not think we are planting anything at all because the sermon doesn't seem very inspiring or because we were simply playing volleyball, only to discover that a tulip pops up. What we can know is that God's hand is always in the planting. And we can relax in the knowledge that we are not responsible for the results of our work. We are only responsible for acting faithfully. In this knowledge, we can relax and enjoy being in the garden, digging in the dirt, watering, weeding and delight in watching whatever it is that comes into bloom. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

The global economy is in crisis, something my American Heritage Dictionary defines as "an unstable condition in which an abrupt or decisive change is impending." So it's a time

for decision-making about change, and God is a decision-maker. Some parables are quite clear about that:

> And every tree of the field will learn that I, Yahweh, am the one who stunts tall trees and makes the low ones grow, who withers green trees and makes the withered green (Ezek 17:24).

It may seem to be nothing among the "tall trees" of this world, but even the tiny mustard seed grows "into the biggest shrub of them all" (Mark 4:32). The Spirit of God is at work in the world, the kingdom is coming, and we shall overcome.

We do not always know how the seed grows. The processes of growth may be hidden from us. But it is always time for planting the seeds of the kingdom of God. DP

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost June 26, 1988

Psalm 107:1–3, 23–32
Job 38:1–11
2 Corinthians 5:14–21
Mark 4:35–41

A FIRST READING

Beginning in Mark 2, Jesus suffers misunderstanding and opposition. God's kingdom makes its way not easily but only under pressure. Sometimes that pressure is too much for disciples and they begin to be overwhelmed. Jesus replies to the cares of disciples with parables (last Sunday), and sometimes he responds with power.

Jesus has performed exorcisms and healings (Mark 1–3), and he has claimed high authority (2:28; 3:45), but now he displays even more awesome power and authority.

He was on the lake in a boat with disciples, and other boats were with him. The small flotilla was overtaken by a violent storm, threatening to swamp those boats and all that were in them. But he slept soundly, his head resting on a pillow in the stern.

Fearing for their lives, they shook him awake and rebuked him: "Master (Teacher), do you not care if we perish?" He woke and rebuked the wind and he spoke to the sea, "Peace! Be quiet!" And the great storm (v. 37) was replaced by a great calm (v. 39).

And his disciples were filled with great fear (v. 41, cf. 16:8), and wondered, "Who is he?"

He has left the crowds and the accusations of Galilee and is crossing "to the other side" (v. 35–36). He is heading toward pagan Gerasa and will there calm the raging of the demoniac (5:1–20), presaging the triumph of the good news of the kingdom among the nations (cf. 13:10). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

A few days after a first pre-marital counseling session, the young woman called for a private appointment with me as soon as possible. She was in tears. When we met later that day she told me that she and the man she was about to marry were fighting on a daily basis. Until they were engaged, she told me, they never had a single fight. I listened to her pain and invited her to stay with the struggles. The wedding was still several months away and we met on a monthly basis. The next few meetings with the couple held a lot of tension. Finally, about three weeks before the wedding, there was an obvious shift. The tension was gone, the delight of their upcoming marriage was evident. What they realized was that they had been testing each other. Now that the commitment was finally made to get married, each wanted to find out if the other really loved them or if they would be abandoned when the partner was exposed to the raw edges.

To fight with God, to wrestle, struggle, question, demand to know if God really cares if we perish is a necessary part of a maturing faith. Like the two year old or the adolescent who has to push her parents to their absolute limits, we push to find the limits of God's love. We demand answers to our suffering, no matter how sophisticated our theology. We ask "WHY?" in the face of tragedy, as if there is a sane and acceptable reason why. We are angry when we have acted faithfully and did not get the desired results of our actions. We cry out when the prayer and worship life that has been so rich and life-giving becomes a dry dusty desert. The fight is necessary. Like Jacob, we must wrestle with God all night to receive the blessing. If we do not come face to face with the battle, we will never know. We will never know that we cannot reach God's limits of love. If we walk away, God will always be smaller, less powerful than the anger and rage and disappointments and gnawing questions.

It is in wrestling all night that we receive the blessing of reconciliation and compassion. Until we go to battle in which we are armed with our indignation. we cannot know our need for reconciliation. In our reconciliation with God, we can begin to be reconciled with one another and see ourselves and others, not through the eyes of sin, but through the eyes of grace, as the new creation in Christ Jesus. RES

PROPHETIC VOICE

When we are asked to choose sides in the midst of conflict, someone can always be counted on to say, "But shouldn't the task of the church be that of reconciliation?"

When we reflect on God's work of bringing in the new creation in the context of 2 Cor 5:14–21, or in any other context of Scripture, there is no neutrality. God single-mindedly aims for a reconciliation based on making things new and different, based on change.

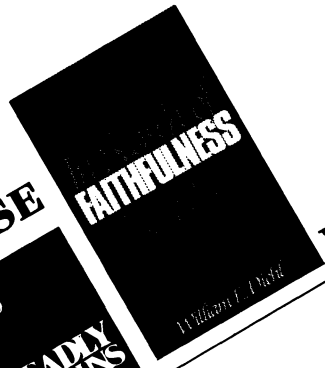
Forgiveness is a change agent. God forgives, so that we should no longer live for ourselves (2 Cor 5:15). Forgiveness incorporates us into God's plans and purposes, and that compels us to take sides. Taking sides means risking all that God has risked in the first place, and that's where we discover the real power to bring about change: In Christ we become the justice of God (2 Cor 5:21) and participate in bringing in the new creation. DP

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Ralph W. Klein Editor

We Laughed Too Soon

Gary Pence
Interim President, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

We laughed when we read it. The Mission Statement of the New Oakland YMCA was emblazoned on its Aerobic Schedule, its Pool Schedule, its flyer on Fitness Testing, I guess on all its promotional literature: "To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy body, mind, and spirit for all."

Judy (my wife) and I had just bought a trial one-month membership in the "Y." For us and probably for most of its members the New Oakland Y is a fancy health club, with computerized exercycles and rowing and climbing machines; a roomful of Nautilus equipment each aimed at trying one particular muscle; a gigantic heated indoor pool; and sauna, steam room, and jacuzzi. "Christian principles" were not on my mind when I suggested we try the Y. At 48 I was more concerned about the total collapse of my lost youth.

Not so long ago everyone around me used to look older than I was. Truck drivers, police officers, sales clerks used to remind me of my parents. I used to imagine that truck drivers must begin their career at 50. It dawned on me a couple of months ago that most truck drivers I spotted out on the freeway, not to speak of the police and sales clerks, were beginning to look younger, almost as young as my two daughters.

I didn't join the Y because of Christian principles. I joined to try to hold on to youth. I joined to see if I could extend the years ahead, to hold back the decrepitude of old age. Dust I am and to dust I will return, but not yet if I can help it.

So when we read that Y Mission Statement solemnly invoking "Christian principles," Judy and I laughed.

But we laughed too soon. Since that first laughter we have been faithfully riding the cycles. We have been subjecting first one muscle then another to the Nautilus implements of torture. We have swum our laps. We have let the sauna roast us dry. And we are beginning to feel good, in body, mind, and even spirit.

It's not just that I discover I can endure more, stretch myself more, with each new day, the evidence my body is working better than before. It's not only that the Nautilus machines have yielded to me some of their mysteries—mind over machine, I have actually figured out how to make them work. Though I hestiate to admit it, I think I have discovered a spiritual gift—trusting God more, trusting God's world more, maybe even finding the strength and desire to love the neighbor at least a little more because at the Y I have set aside time to love and care for myself.

So I've stopped laughing. Instead I've asked myself how we help future pastors to worship God with "heart, soul, mind, and strength" by seminary programs almost exclusively comprised of motionless sitting. We know that the peace of God we declare in worship is SHALOM—vigorous health and wholeness more than it is sedentary repose. Should contextual education (and congregational letters of call) prescribe something like a membership in the Y, where Christian hope might take on flesh in strenuous exercise of body as well as mind and spirit?

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