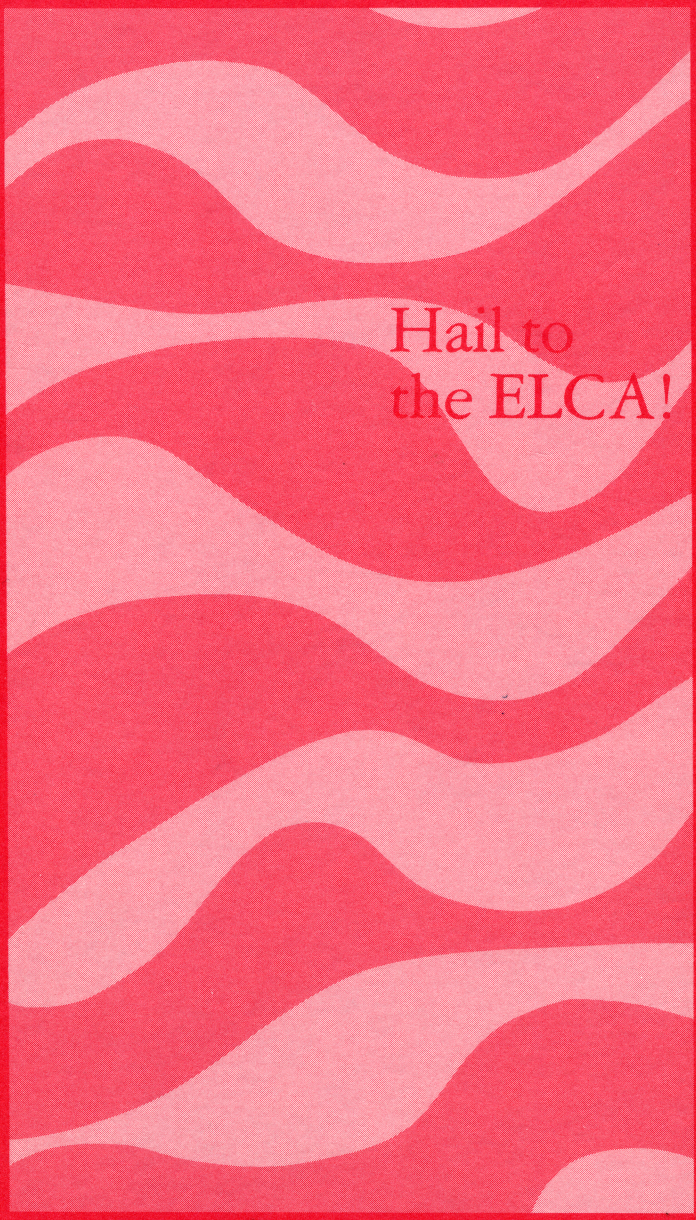
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CURRENTS

in Theology and Mission

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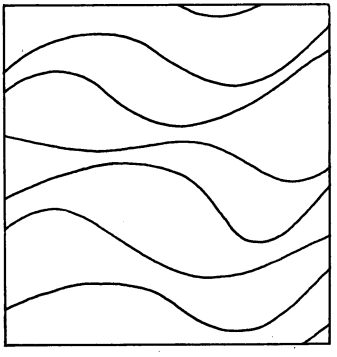
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Hail to the ELCA!

All readers of *Currents,* including those who are not Lutheran, rejoice in what is taking place in these days: the birthing of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This ecumenical milestone involves only Lutherans, to be sure, and not even all of the Lutherans in North America. But it does represent for the world and all Christians one more enactment of the Lord's promise that the church should be one, and it offers a foretaste of that unity for which we all pray daily.

With the coming of the ELCA, the ownership of *Currents* passes from Christ Seminary—Seminex to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Wartburg Theological Seminary and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary will cooperate financially and literarily in the project, as in the past. In other words we will stay at the same old stand, speaking our confessional and ecumenical word to and for the whole body of Christ. We look forward to your continued support.

Edward Foley, Capuchin, reminds us that Martin Luther was a model pastoral musician, who composed music from and for the people. Texts and tunes were often borrowed from familiar earlier hymns, and Luther chose a range of notes well within the abilities of average singers. Frequent use of the "barform" gave congregations a kind of built-in rehearsal. The article concludes its theoretical discussion with an analysis of "A Mighty Fortress" as a concrete explication of the Reformer's pastoral intentions.

Walter Wangerin, Jr., well-known novelist and story-teller, provides a stirring Advent poem. It opens with a wild cry demanding attention and alerting us to the advent of the parousia and to the presence of the Deity in power. All the elements we swim in, this existence, echoes ahead God's coming. The animals long for the crack of liberty of all creation, groaning an intensity of waitfulness. These animals are the priests, angels, druids, the primal knowers, the antennae of advent, as they are of the yellow-green storm on the farm. Start your Advent renewal here.

Jay C. Rochelle views theological education as a process of self-examination, begun in the seminary and continued throughout life. He proposes an organizing principle for that education: life in the Holy through Christ. Theological students are engaged in imaging, assembling of stories, invoking, healing with words, embracing the other, handling the sacred. Theological education evokes the deep center from the student. Since his thoughts got our juices going, we asked a number of colleagues to respond. **Norman Theiss** believes the seminary curriculum should provide students with the best of the church's witness to the gospel. **Gary Pence** finds "life in the Holy through Christ" to be undefined and feels that the author is unable or unwilling to define the crucial end of Christianity in terms anyone can understand. For **Paul F. Goetting** the seminaries offer few examples of shared leadership, and they foster instead a model of competitiveness. **Anne Marie Nuechterlein** reviews and discards the models of enabler, facilitator, servant, and prophet. The pastoral office is the vocation of Word and sacrament, proclaiming the good news of Christ's death and resurrection for us. **Robert W. Bertram** affirms that the disvalue of our lives must be borne away, not just once, but daily. We never attain our end unless and until we first of all are put to an end. Such a cruciform teleology converts the most distracting diversions into usable means.

Madeleine Forell Marshall looks for theological resources in literature. Reading literature is the time-honored means of learning to think, speak, and write clearly. Literature extends and details our understanding of human experience. While the great day of the printed words is almost done, the experience of great literature will prepare us for this twilight. John Donne inhabited a world more alien than Khadafy's, but his writing is meaningful and helpful to us. We can and do appreciate the otherness of this great writer without judging him ridiculous or surrendering our own cultural integrity. As she mentions a number of poems in passing, you may be tempted to look them up and check out their potential for an enriched ministry.

Bruce K. Modahl recounts a mother's twenty-eight-year quest for the meaning of suffering. She knew that God must have been angry with the pains her son bore, and she could not rest content with the hope that all things will work together for good. Finally, she discovered that the suffering and death of God's son made God better able to understand all the hurts in the world. As a result, her care for her son was a way of telling the evil gripping him and the rest of the

world that its days of oppressing us are numbered. God indeed has worked things out—all things good and bad.

Martin E. Marty once called ecumenism the great new fact of our century, and for the ELCA these are the facts of life: It ought to last as long as it is needed—and not one day more! The church is and remains one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, despite all evidence to the contrary. From my pew that credo becomes a little bit more believable on January 1.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Martin Luther: A Model Pastoral Musician

Edward Foley, Capuchin
Assistant Professor of Liturgy and Music
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"Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world."[1] Such unabashed enthusiasm for the muse might not seem surprising, had it sprung from the pen of Johann Sebastian Bach or even some new-breed "minister of music." That these words, however, originated with Martin Luther, could catch the uninformed by surprise. Yet this statement does not exist as singular testimony to Luther's propensity for hyperbole, but rather as a summation of

[1]Martin Luther, *Preface to George Rhau's Symphoniae iucundae,* trans. Walter Buszin in "Luther on Music," *Musical Quarterly* 32 (1946) 83; a full translation of this preface is found in Ulrich S. Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns,* Luther's Works 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 321–24.

theological and pastoral pursuits—writing, composing, and celebrating—which affirm his belief that next to the Word of God, music *is* the greatest of all treasures.

There are many fascinating aspects of the musical Luther which could occupy us here. A biographical sketch of the Reformer's own training and performing, for example, could supply us with valuable background for understanding why he composed the way he did. On the other hand, a study of Luther's perception of music as gift, the primacy he gives to hearing, and his belief in the close relationship between music and Word could provide sufficient basis for sketching a theology of music in a "Lutheran" mode.[2] What seems more valuable, however, and what in some way touches upon these others, is a brief but focused study of Luther as pastoral musician: as a proponent and composer of music from the people and for the people, especially evidenced in his chorales. It is hoped that such an investigation might not only increase our appreciation for this monumental figure, but also inform and guide contemporary composition, that it might achieve a similar integrity and success.

> Luther was a proponent of music from the people and for the people.

Though the compressed nature of this article does not allow for an extensive study of Luther's music, it is nonetheless hoped that the following progression might at least introduce those central elements which underline Luther's pastoral musicianship. First, we will briefly consider the main melodic and textual sources for the chorales, which in themselves seem to indicate a pastoral perspective. Second, we will survey some of the specific compositional elements of Luther's music and discover how these served his fundamental attentiveness to the congregation. Third, we will attempt a similar analysis of the texts. Finally, having theoretically summarized some of the pastoral elements in Luther's chorales, we will attempt to concretize our analysis through a brief study of the chorale "A Mighty Fortress" (*"Ein feste Burg," LBW* 228, 229). Hopefully this final exercise will draw together the various strands of our thesis, and allow for clear and credible conclusions.

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[2]Besides Luther's own writings, a fine introduction to the reformer's musical thought is Paul Nettle's *Luther and Music* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948); for an exploration of a "theology of music" based on Luther's thought, see Oskar Soehngen, "Fundamental Considerations for a Theology of Music," *The Musical Heritage of the Church* Vol. IV, ed. Theodore Hoelty-Nickel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1954), 7–16; *idem,* "Music and Theology: A Systematic Approach," *Sacred Sound,* JAAR Thematic Studies 50/1, ed. Joyce Irwin (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983), 1–19; also, see Joyce Irwin, "Shifting Alliances: The Struggle for a Lutheran Theology of Music," *Sacred Sound,* 55–69.

I. The Sources

In discussing the thirty-seven chorales of Luther,[3] Konrad Ameln identifies four major melodic and textual sources or "inspirations" behind his writings. These include, first of all, what Ameln calls the "Gregorian chorale" or those Latin chants from the ordinary and proper of the Latin Mass which punctuate the liturgical year. One example is the Pentecost hymn or sequence entitled "Come, Holy Ghost" (*"Veni Sancte Spiritus"*) which served as the basis for Luther's hymn of the same name (*"Kom heyliger Geist,"* *LBW* 163). Second, Luther relied upon popular unison hymns of the Middle Ages called *cantios.* It was a *cantio* entitled "In the midst of life we are in death" (*"Media vita in morte sumus"*) which the Reformer shaped into a chorale of the same name (*"Mitten wyr im leben sind,"* *LBW* 350). Third, there are the religious folk songs which Ameln considers to be the most powerful sources for the chorales, though these are often the most difficult to trace. "All Praise to Thee, O Jesus Christ" (*"Gelobet seystu Jhesu Christ,"* *LBW* 48), for example, is known to be based upon a popular folk hymn which was sung on Christmas as a congregational response to the sequence, but it is not sure whether Luther retained the original folk melody, or wrote his own. Finally, Ameln notes that the secular folk songs were an important source for Luther, such as that which served as the basis for his "To me she's Dear, the Worthy Maid" (*"Sie ist mir lieb die werde Magd"*).[4]

Besides considering specific examples of textual and melodic influences, it is also informative to take a broad look at the sources of all of the chorales together. Here we discover, for example, that only five out of the thirty-seven chorales have texts which could be considered original: the rest consisting of translations, paraphrases, or adaptations of biblical, liturgical, and popular songs. A similar picture emerges when summarizing the musical resources behind the chorales. Most of the tunes predicated of the Reformer were either borrowed from secular folk songs (e.g. "Death held our Lord in Prison," or *"Christ lag ynn Todes Banden,"* *LBW* 134) or Latin chants (e.g. "Come, God Creator Holy Ghost," or *"Kom Gott Schepfer heyliger Geyst,"* *LBW* 284), and the rest show such a clear affinity with a specific style of composition that they can be said to have relied upon other sources, though such sources are not always identifiable. "Dear

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[3]The question of the actual number of chorales composed by Luther is confusing. First of all, the number thirty-seven refers to *texts.* There are many more *tunes* (at least fifty-five) which are thought to have been composed by Luther. Second, the exact number of texts which Luther composed is disputed. Third, even where there is agreement as to what Luther wrote, the total number of chorales varies insofar as some authors include one or more of the Mass Chants (e.g. the "Gloria in excelsis") with the chorales and some do not.

For the sake of clarity, we will follow the listing of chorales employed by Erik Routley in *The Music of Christian Hymns* (Chicago: G.I.A. Publications, 1981), 22–23. Furthermore, in our discussions of these chorales, we will forgo any references to their variant melodies. All our references will be to the first tune listed in the critical edition of the chorales, *D. Martin Luthers Werke,* Vol. 35 (Weimar: Herman Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1923), 487–531.

For a complete discussion of the question of authorship, see Nettle, *Luther and Music,* 28f.

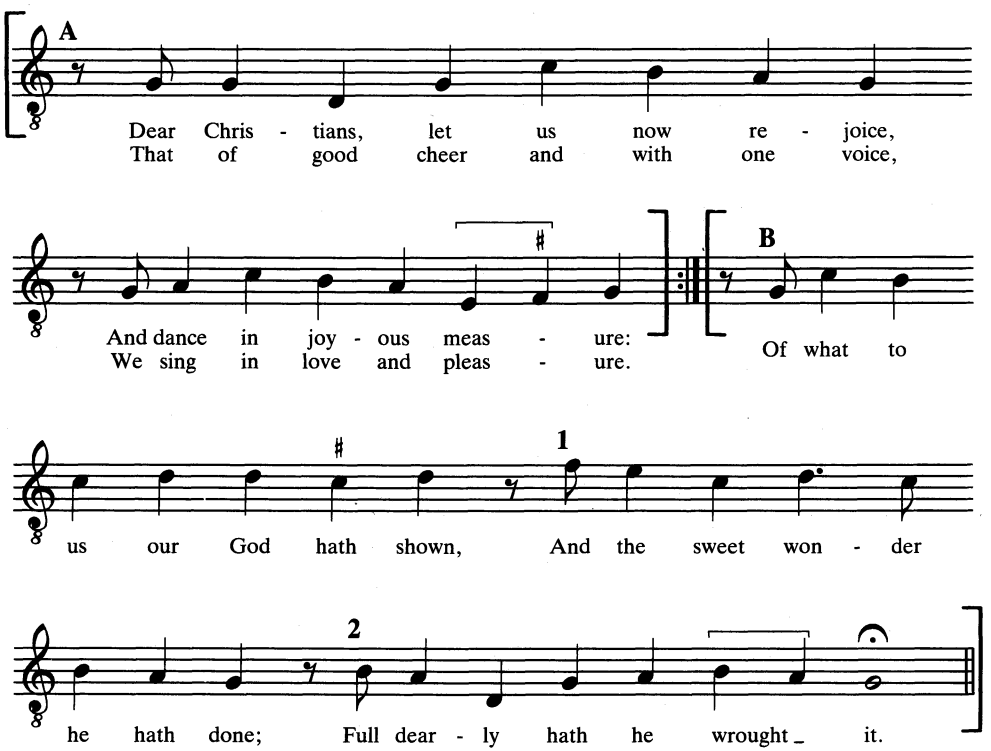
[4]Konrad Ameln, *The Roots of German Hymnody of the Reformation Era* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 3–19.

Christians, Let us now rejoice" (*"Nun freut euch," LBW* 299), for example, is clearly in the style of certain folk music of the period, though it is not certain whether one tune alone served as the basis for this chorale.

The point of this source tracing and comparison is not so much to prove something about any single piece of music but rather to begin developing a wider consciousness about Martin Luther the pastoral composer. And though it would be possible to scour his writings to discover how Luther thought an effective pastor should shape worship and song for the people, it is more informative—and in some ways accurate—to see how the Reformer himself realized his principles in the concrete. Thus this initial foray into the sources seems to illustrate that, true to his word, Luther believed that music was a gift: but not only a gift from God to people and therefore one which must answer only to the criteria of art, but also a reciprocal gift of praise from people to God, which therefore must allow the people accessibility. This accessibility Luther reinforced through familiarity. The consistent and predominant employment of familiar texts and tunes thus begins to reveal the makings of a traditional yet imaginative talent in a clearly pastoral mode.

II. The Music

Now that we have at least entertained the suggestion of Luther's pastoral musicianship in light of the previously discussed sources, it is for us to explore how the Reformer speci-



fically employed both the borrowed and original materials in his chorales. We begin with a consideration of the musical forms he employed.

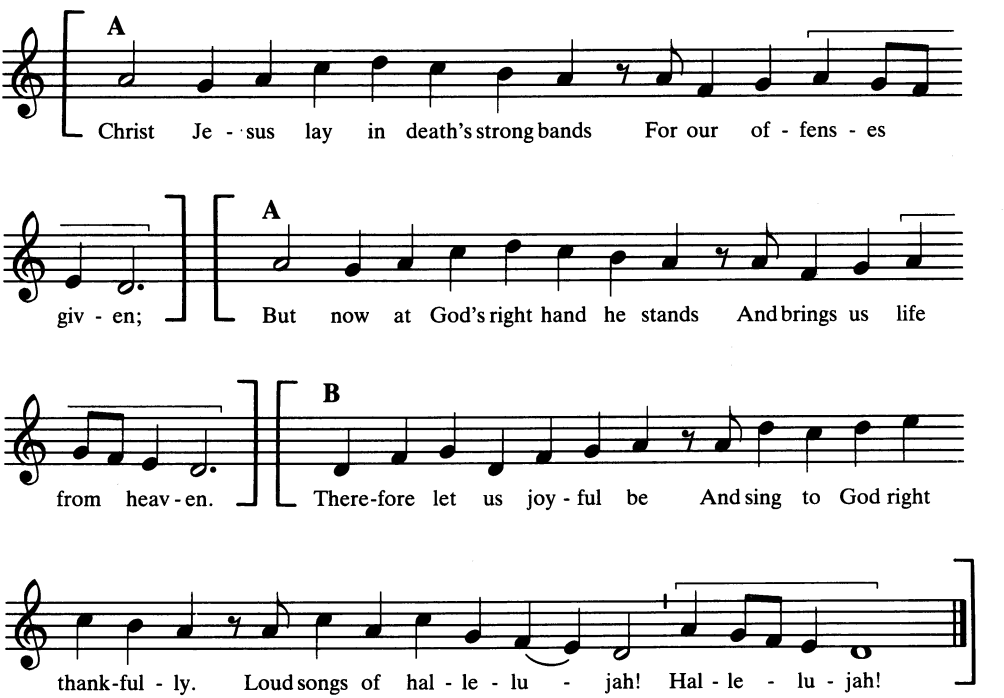
Forms: One of Luther's most consistent structural devices is his employment of some variation of that form known as the **barform.** Very simply, the barform consists of a first musical phrase (A) which is repeated (A) and followed by a second musical phrase (B), resulting in an A-A-B structure. This form, which at least in principle can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and is detectable in some segments of Gregorian chant, became one of the most employed forms of the *Minnesingers* and *Meistersingers* who dominated the popular music scene in medieval Germany.[5] A well known example of the barform is Luther's hymn, "Dear Christians, Let us now rejoice," or "Dear Christians, One and All" (*LBW* 299, cf. example on page 408).

Besides the simple AAB structure there are a number of variations on this form which Luther employed.[6] One of these is the **repetition barform,** in which material from the first musical phrase (A) is integrated into the second musical phrase (B). An example of the repetition barform is found in the hymn "Death held our Lord in Prison," or "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands" (*LBW* 134).

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[5]Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns,* 219.

[6]For a more detailed discussion of the barform and its variations in the works of Martin Luther, see Johannes Riedel, *The Lutheran Chorale: its Basic Traditions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967), 41–49.



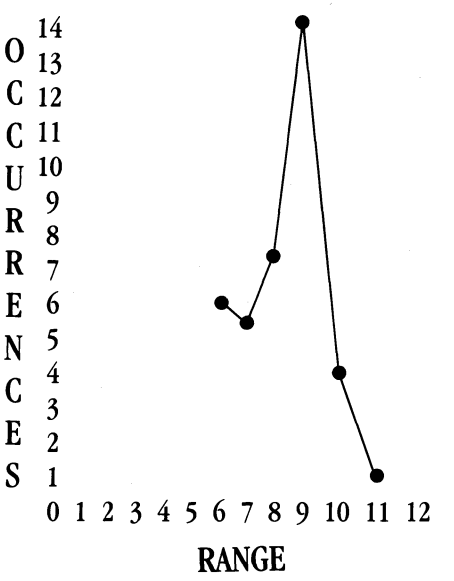
Here we find that the last five notes of A are *repeated,* becoming the last five notes of B: thus the name, repetition barform.

There are other variations on the barform which Luther employed. What is important for us here, however, is not an exhaustive listing of these variations, but rather a basic awareness of the fundamentals of this form, Luther's use of it, and what it achieved. Essentially, regardless of the variation employed, the barform is marked by continuous melodic repetition. This repetition is, in effect, a kind of built-in rehearsal. Learning is thus reinforced through the repetition of the first two phrases of the chorale (i.e. the A section), and in a form like the repetition barform, there is repetition of some main musical fragment again at the end of B.

This "self-rehearsing" form is employed in fifteen out of the thirty-seven chorales attributed to Luther. Though that number might not seem especially significant at first—only 41%—the number grows in significance when one considers that of the remaining twenty-two chorales, sixteen rely heavily on previously existing melodies. It is consistently in the context of new melodic material that Luther employs the barform; and there are only six out of thirty-seven chorales (15%) which either do not employ the barform or do not employ pre-existent material. Consequently, we begin to understand the formal manipulation of Luther's melodic material, both old and new, as an indicator of the Reformer's pastoral intent: generally employing either well known melodies, or a well known formal structure which itself reinforces the new melody.

Range: Besides considering the forms or structural designs of the chorales, we can also detect clear pastoral intentions by examining other compositional building blocks which Luther employed. The range employed in these chorales, for example, is quite instructive. Range or ambitus refers to the gamut of notes within the capacity of a voice or an instrument. It can also refer to the gamut of notes which a specific piece of music requires of a given voice or instrument.

When examining the chorales of Luther, we find that most often his hymns require the range of a 9th, i.e. an octave plus one note. This range of a 9th is employed in fourteen out of thirty-seven chorales. The next most frequent range employed is that of an octave (7 times); then a seventh (5 times), a sixth (6 times), a tenth (4 times), and finally an eleventh (one time). Graphically, this gives us the following curve:



Summarily we see that, most often Luther employed the range of an octave or an octave and a note (9th) in his chorales (57% of the time), which is very good range for congre-

gational singing. The more demanding range of a 10th is seldom used (11% of the time), and the difficult range of an 11th virtually never appears (3% of the time). Rather than making serious vocal demands on the congregation, therefore, we see that in matters of range, Luther tends to write for the capacity of the ordinary assembly. Furthermore, it is statistically clear that the Reformer tended toward the more restricted range of a 6th or a 7th (employed 30% of the time) in his composing, than the congregationally more demanding 10th or 11th (employed only 14% of the time).

No one is suggesting here that Luther set out to mathematically balance the number of times he employed a given range in one of his chorales. Yet, this simplified analysis does reveal that the Reformer's congregational attentiveness shaped his composition, placing it clearly within the range of an ordinary assembly.

Luther tends to write for the capacity of the ordinary assembly.

Mode: A similar picture emerges when analyzing the various modes which Luther employed in his music. The word mode designates the arrangement of tones in an octave, which in turn forms the basic tonal substance of a composition.[7] Most of us are well acquainted with two "modes," i.e. the major mode and the minor mode.

The musicians of the Middle Ages, however, did not think of music in terms of the major or minor mode (or key) as we do, but used another system of scales or modes. This system was based upon the location of the half-steps within the octave. In what we call a major scale, for example, the half-steps occur between the third and fourth tones, and the seventh and eighth tones. A simple minor scale, on the other hand, has half-steps between the second and third tones, and the seventh and eighth tones. Some modes in this system are easier to sing while others appear intrinsically more difficult to sing: all because of the placement of the half-steps in the octave.

The Lydian mode, for example, has half-steps between the fourth and fifth tones, and the seventh and eighth tones.[8] This mode, therefore, includes the interval of an augmented fourth[9] which is such a difficult interval to sing that its late medieval nickname was "*diabolus in musica,*" i.e. "the devil in music."

A survey of the modes employed by Luther, however, indicates that the Reformer employed the Lydian mode only once: for the "German *Sanctus*" or "Isaiah 'twas the prophet" (*"Jesaja dem Propheten das geschah," LBW* 528, alt.). Furthermore, this was an adaptation of a pre-existent melody from a Gregorian *sanctus.* Thus the occur-

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[7]Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music,* 2nd rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), s.v. "mode."

[8]The Lydian mode is easily found on the piano by playing the white keys between F and f.

[9]F to B natural on the piano.

rence of this mode in the chorales of Luther is some what akin to the existence of the range of an 11th in his chorales: both occur only once, and under the influence of borrowed material.

> Luther shaped his texts for broad comprehension.

Much more usual was Luther's employment of the Dorian mode, which is very similar to our "minor" scale with half-steps between the second and third tones, and the sixth and seventh tones, and which is used in twelve of the chorales. The second most frequently employed mode was the Ionian, which is equivalent to our "major" scale and occurs in nine of the chorales. Thus those two modes which sound relatively close to the major-minor system, which definitively established themselves in the seventeenth century, which were already becoming the most popular modes in the sixteenth century, and which avoided the most difficult intervals, were employed in the majority of Luther's hymns (57%). Here again we see that ease and accessibility, now in tonal language, were important guiding principles for the composing Luther.

The congregational attentiveness which we have implied through our discussions of *form, range,* and *mode* is also evident in other aspects of Luther's composition. His preference for conjunct or stepwise movement over disjunct movement in the chorale melodies certainly makes for easier congregational involvement, as does his penchant for syllabic settings (i.e. one syllable to one note) instead of neumatic (i.e. one syllable to a few notes) or melismatic (i.e. one syllable to many notes) settings for his texts. Further investigation of these and other elements, however, would only seem to support the pattern already beginning to emerge: one that distinguishes Martin Luther as a fundamentally congregational composer. It was not only professionals or the naturally skilled who were invited into this music, just like it was not the professionals or skilled who were invited into being church. Ministry belonged to the whole of the baptized and so, therefore, did their sung praise.

III. The Texts

That Luther's pastoral intent can also be deduced from a textual analysis of his chorales was already alluded to in our initial discussion on sources. There we noted, first of all, that out of the thirty-seven chorales only five have texts which could be considered original—and some of these have well known textual referents. Therefore, as with the music, so with the texts did a clear continuity through familiarity exist. Beside the mere employment of texts familiar in theme if not in language, however, there are other specific and significant patterns which Luther weaves through his liturgical lyrics which further reveal his congregational empathy.

Literary Style: Aside from the obvious employment of the vernacular, it is also clear that in literary style, Luther generally shaped

his texts for broad comprehension, liturgical durability, and easy access. In discussing the simplicity and directness of their language and vocabulary, for example, Leupold has observed that, "Like the ancient Hebrew poets he knew so well, Luther used few adjectives and formed brief, pungent lines consisting almost exclusively of verbs and nouns."[10] Leupold's point is clearly illustrated by citing the first ten titles of these hymns as they appear in Leupold's volume, whose translations well mirror the original German:

A *new* **song** here shall be begun
Dear **Christians,** let **us** now rejoice
From **trouble** *deep* **I** cry to thee
Ah **God,** from **heaven** look down
Although the **fools** say with their **mouth**
Would that the **Lord** would grant **us grace**
Come, the heathen's *healing* **light**
Jesus we now must laud and sing
All **praise** to **thee,** O **Jesus Christ**
Happy **who** in God's **fear** doth stay[11]

Out of the sixty-seven words which comprise these ten titles, only six (9%) are adjectives (here italicized), and six are prepositions. Seventeen of these words (25%), however, are verbs (here underlined) and twenty-two (33%) are nouns or pronouns (here in boldface): a number which would increase to twenty-five (37%) if we included the possessive forms of nouns and pronouns. This simple word survey of random titles, therefore, bears out Leupold's observation that adjectives are clearly secondary in the language of these hymns, and that nouns (plus pronouns) and verbs predominate.

Furthermore, it is almost without exception that each line—each musical phrase—encompasses a single, compact unit of meaning. One need not scan ahead in a Luther text for some focus for praise while struggling through thickets of prose. On the contrary, virtually every line can bear the weight of congregational attention, and may even invite a lingering fermata of reflection. Consider, for example, the opening verse of "From Heaven on High" ("From Heaven Above," *LBW* 51). The translation, which follows the original German quite closely, is by George MacDonald (d. 1905), and reproduced in Leupold.[12] The original is offered for comparison.[13]

From heaven on high I come to you.
Vom himel hoch da kom ich her,

I bring a story good and new;
ich bring euch gute newe mehr,

Of goodly news so much I bring,
der guten mehr bring ich so viel,

Of it I must both speak and sing.
davon ich singen und sagen wil.

Note the concision and clarity of each line, which communicates a unit of meaning without necessarily spilling over into the next line. Thus Leupold remarks,

> "The carrying over of one or more words from one line to the next, so as to bridge the break between verses is

[10] Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns,* 198.
[11] Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns,* viii–ix.
[12] Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns,* 290.
[13] *D. Martin Luthers Werke,* XXXV:524.

> quite uncommon. There is never a break in the middle of the verse . . . [which] again agrees with the nature of mass singing. The crowd sings a verse at a time, and so each verse must make sense as a unit."[14]

This is thoughtful and demanding writing, which Luther has achieved with such apparent effortlessness that it usually escapes our very notice.

Meter: Allied to this compact literary style is Luther's employment of meter, which aided the accessibility and memorability of his texts. Meter, in this context, simply refers to the number of syllables Luther employed in each line of his verse. Though we may not be accustomed to think in terms of the textual meter, but rather only of the musical meter (which is indicated by the "time signature" at the beginning of the piece, e.g. a work in 3/4 time), the textual meters employed by Luther can be quite instructive for us.[15]

The vast majority of the time, Luther employs a seven or eight syllable line. We see this in the previously cited hymn, "From Heaven on High," which consists of four lines of eight syllables, noted as 8.8.8.8. In all, twenty-five out of the thirty-seven chorales employ only seven or eight syllable lines (68%). Furthermore, in almost every other chorale, the seven or eight syllable line plays a dominant role.

The significance of this textual meter, becomes clear when we recall our previous discussion of Luther's literary style. There we noted that the Reformer tended toward clarity and concision in his texts: with a predominance of nouns and verbs, capsulizations of single units of meaning in each line, and little textual carry over between one line and the next. Considering the requirements of this style, it is little wonder that Luther continuously employed seven and eight syllable lines which, in a configuration of nouns and verbs, allow for the development of a single thought but little else. This textual metric complements Luther's literary style, whereas a shorter configuration of syllables could have required "carry over" from one line to the next, and more syllables could have invited the insertion of non-essential modifiers. In this regard, it would not be inappropriate to compare Luther's appropriation of textual meter to his use of range: both allowed sufficient latitude for development of essentials, without placing unnecessary demands on his assembly.

This textual meter also seems to complement a previously noted element of Luther's musical style, i.e. his propensity for syllabic rather than neumatic or melismatic settings. Fewer syllables per musical line could have meant that each syllable would have been wedded to more than one note: requiring more neumatic or melismatic writing. As we have noted, however, Luther clearly preferred syllabic writing, allowing one syllable per note. Consequently, we see Luther's deployment of meter as a further manipulation of the compositional building blocks to serve his pastoral purposes.

It could also be beneficial for us to study, for example, the patterns of textual rhyme which Luther employed: patterns which often coincided with "melodic rhyme" in the cho-

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[14]Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns,* 198.

[15]For an outline of the textual meters employed in the *LBW,* see pp. 949–954.

rales, and served as valuable mnemonic devices. A more extensive study could also explore Luther's use of word painting, the interplay between stressed and unstressed syllables in his work, and more. These, too, could help to confirm what already seems clear, i.e. that Martin Luther wrote scripturally based, well crafted, people-centered texts which comprehensibly spoke the message of salvation and enabled praise. To be able to instill this consistency with beauty is true art at the service of worship—and that is the very definition and demand of all liturgical music.

The Reformer tended toward clarity and concision in his texts.

IV. A Mighty Fortress

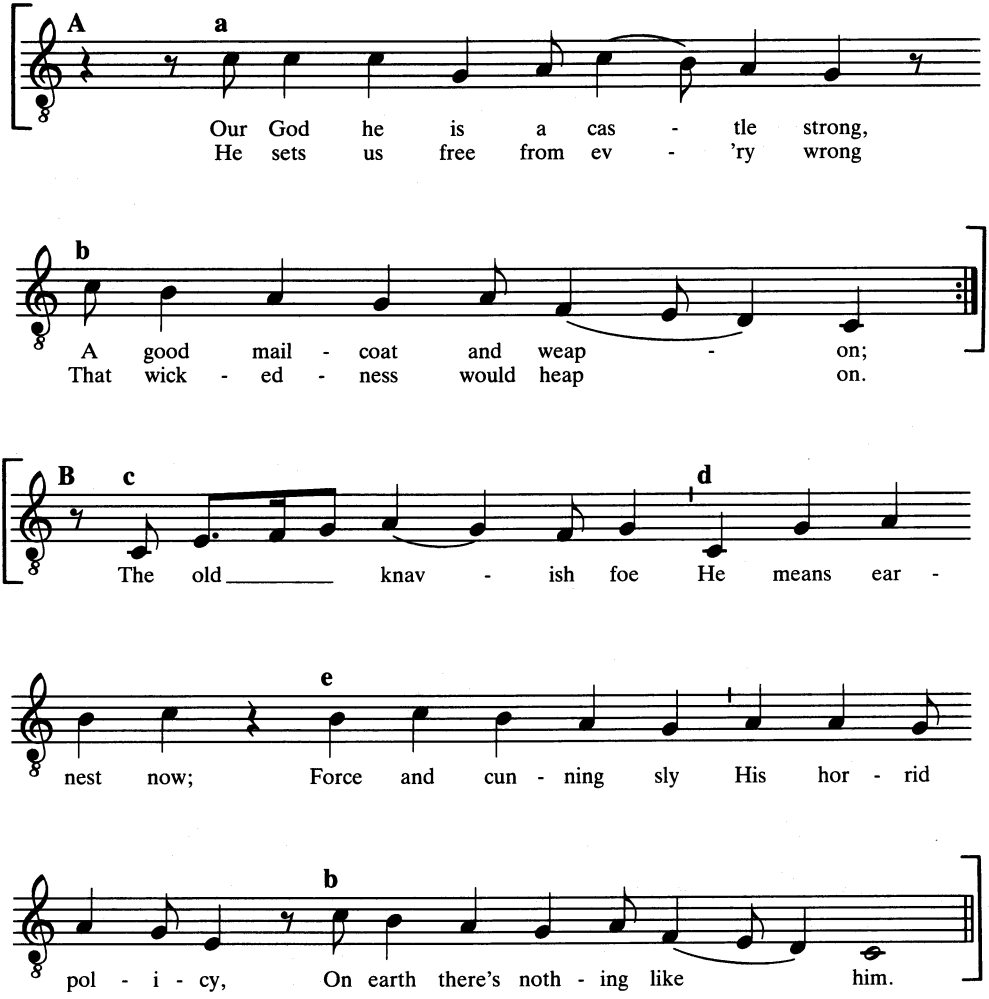
Now that we have set forth a brief theoretical analysis of Luther's chorale writing, and have demonstrated how these chorales could be interpreted as concrete explications of the Reformer's pastoral intentions, it is for us to be concrete as well. The vehicle for this concretization will be Luther's celebrated hymn, "A Mighty Fortress" (*"Ein feste Burg," LBW* 228, 229). We reproduce the hymn on page 416 as it is found in Leupold,[16] with the original German from the critical edition.[17]

Sources: As to the sources of this chorale, we find that, as is so often the case, the text is scriptural: here a paraphrase of the 46th Psalm. Musically the source is a little more difficult to agree upon. Some suggest that the melody shows a strong affinity to a famous *Meistersinger* tune, while other contend that it relies upon a Gregorian melody. Whichever the case—and it conceivably could be both—the strong suspicion here is that Luther employed a pre-existent work as the basis for this hymn.

Music: Turning to the music, we find that "A Mighty Fortress" is in barform. The first musical phrase (A) which encompasses the first two lines of the music is repeated (:), followed by a new section (B) which comprises the last three lines. Consequently, we arrive at the basic barform structure for this chorale of A-A-B. Moreover, we find within this fundamental structure a further variation, known as the repetition-serial-barform. This variation can be detected if we look for two additional elements to the basic barform structure, 1) a "serial" or a string of unrelated musical phrases, and 2) the "repetition" of an earlier musical phrase.

If, for example, we identify each musical unit with a small letter, we see that the first line of the hymn is a unit (a), and the second line is another unit (b). These two units together comprise the first musical phrase (A = a-b). Since the barform repeats the first musical phrase, we have A-A or a-b-a-b. Line three starts a new musical element (c), and the end of the line begins another (d). Line four includes our final new material (e). The last musical unit, or the last nine notes of the

[16]Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns,* 284.
[17]*D. Martin Luthers Werke,* XXXV:518.



Ein feste burg ist unser Gott, Ein gute wehr und waffen.
Er hilfft uns freh aus aller not, die uns ist hat betroffen.
Der alt böse feind mit ernst ers ist meint,
gros macht und viel list sein grausam rüstung ist,
auff erd ist nicht seins gleichen.

hymn, are identical to the second line (b). Consequently, the B section of this hymn is comprised of four musical units: c-d-e-b: the first three of these are the "serial" (i.e. c-d-e, which comprise the string of unrelated musical units) and the final unit comprises the repetition (i.e. b). Together our repetition-serial-barform looks like this:

A	a		
	b		
A	a		
	b		
B	c	}	(serial)
	d	}	
	e	}	
	b		(repetition)

This means that five of the eight musical units which make up this chorale are repeated each verse (i.e. those units designated as "a" or "b"), thus serving as a true "self-rehearsing" hymn.

Aside from the form we further see that the range of this chorale is an octave, one of the most common employed by Luther. The mode is Ionian, which along with Dorian predominates in these hymns. The ratio of conjunct or stepwise over disjunct motion in the melody is over 4 to 1, with about only 22% of the intervals involving a leap of more than a whole step. Finally, as to the wedding of text and tune, we encounter a predominantly syllabic setting, with no melismas and only an occasional neumatic passage.

Text: Finally, we turn to the text, whose scriptural basis we have already noted. As Leupold has suggested, we find here succinct writing with few adjectives, clear images and compact language. There are, for example, only two three-syllable words in MacDonald's faithful translation ("wickedness" and "policy"), and the original German only has one three-syllable word (the verb "*betroffen*"). Furthermore, each phrase expresses a relatively complete thought, and there is little carry over between phrases.

The meter is slightly irregular (87.87.55.567), with some affinity for lines of seven or eight syllables, so characteristic of Luther. More interesting is the relationship between the rhythmic stresses in the music and the accompanying text. Even in MacDonald's translation, the indefinite articles, conjunctions and prepositions usually occur on eighth notes, while the more important nouns and verbs occur on the quarter notes. Moreover, many of the latter stand at the end of a musical phrase or half phrase, followed by an eighth rest, and thereby receiving even more stress.

We also note a limited amount of musical and textual rhyme, which MacDonald has tried to maintain in his translation. The rhymed phrases "castle strong" and "every wrong," for example, have identical musical settings as do the words "weapon" and "heap on." The dovetailing of these textual and musical rhymes further contribute to a tighter wedding of text and tune.
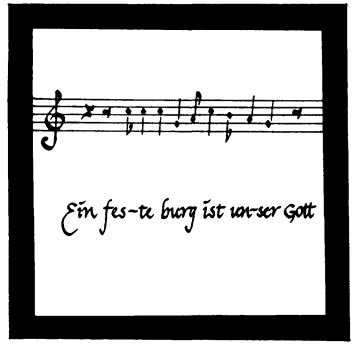
Summary: Summarily we might say that "A Mighty Fortress" in theory as well as in practice is a paradigm of liturgical "people-music" (*Volkmusik*). Scripturally founded and melodically traditional, this chorale employs a self-rehearsing form within a singable range and accessible mode, articulated with syllabic ease in conjunct motion. Furthermore, this well wrought tune is imaginatively wedded to a thoughtful and succinct paraphrase, parcelled out in digestible yet tastefully arranged morsels. The chorale, however, is memorable without being repetitious, accessible without being bland, syllabic without being pedestrian and concise without being curt. It is, in other words, that delicate combination of the usual in a most unusual way which appears entirely effortless in its art, but whose craft is attested to by its ageless singability.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study in reality exist not in words but in music—not in the saying, but only in the singing. The chorales of Martin Luther have endured for over 400 years, and are as effective today as they were in the sixteenth century. The question of why they have endured, however, and why they still move congregations to praise—though beyond any exact formulation—are valuable for us to ponder.

There exists yet today in the compositional arena that eternal tension between musical integrity and liturgical appropriateness; between the stirring of the muse and the submission of that muse to the service of worship. It is a difficult tension to resolve, and for each composer there exists a variant solution. The import of Martin Luther as a musical paradigm, therefore, is his ability to demonstrate that resolution is possible without sacrificing either art or the community's participation in the same. This is not to suggest, of course, that all of the Reformer's chorales are so exemplary: for the abandonment of some of them, even in his own lifetime, disproves that point. Many of these works however, are clearly exemplary, which in part explains why they have influenced other hymn writers for almost half a millennium, generating a form of praise which continues to dominate much of Western Christian music.

In these days of so much liturgical and musical energy, we need to look to the future for sounds and forms that will serve well our worship in this post-Christian era of reform and evangelization. We would do well, however, to first look to the past, to the work and genius of another visionary in reform and evangelization, and there discover again the true meaning of "pastoral" in praise. Only then might we avoid that cycle of error which results from ignoring our history, and enter anew the song of the Lamb.



Plenitudo Temporis

"But when the fulness of time was come—"

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i.

Mystacoceti! The whale displaces ocean where she goes:
The blue whale sweeps the sea, piling the element before her,
Drawing long green lines like ribbons down her body,
Lines of the crushing of sunlight, the rimming of marine-light, green,
Lines latitudinal (she bends the Capricorn to make her passage),
Water-lines that swoop her face and close behind her flukes. . . .

And can the krill not know what bulk approaches?
Does no fore-shock warn their myriad rocking economies,
No radiating wave, no surge precede,
Impacting them then sucking them apart in liquid rhythm,
Causing them a cold excitement at the advent?
God is coming! God is coming!
All the element we swim in, this existence,
Echoes ahead the advent. God is coming! Can't you feel it?

ii.

If sound is color,
Brown surrounds the cougar.

He thickens the atmosphere,
Hushing it,
This hunter.
This predator, he prowls forever
In a studious depression of light,
All the small deer falling silent,
Dimming their mammal-lights at his approach.
They study survival
Privately;
They contemplate his eye with wide ears
Solemnly;
They cowl their boisterous lives in brown—
And the cougar is the vortex of a forest silence.

Only the fool,
When the brown cloud, Quiet, overshadows him,
Stilling the grasses even at his chin,
Does not know the cougar causes the weather.
Unschooled, the damn fool laughs
And is eaten.

God is coming.
Have you no ears? No fears?
No eyes to see the silencing?
Look to the muting of the spheres.
Listen to the tarnish of the skies.
Why, the wind itself is tawny,
Contracting toward a lunge—
God is coming,
And not one canny mammal,
Mother of a small brood,
Moves.

iii.

In the days of the angels—
The hair on the necks of the people,
Didn't it stand like static?

In the days of the angels—
The air at their ears, the cloud in the heavens,
Didn't it crack like a solid?

In the days when the angels dropped,
Discharging news in the troposphere—
Could such electric language not
Have lit the nerves of the firmament
With signs, signs?
White words and understanding?

Skin,
The abdomen
And deep the human womb,
Must have been
Tympanic then.

Ho! In the days when archangels spoke—
Wasn't the smell of the weather ozone
Tasting of seltzer and ions?
And the look of the air thereafter—
Wasn't it crystalline, cleaner,
Dimensioned by nitrogen oxides
As somebody's breathing
Swells with well-being?
Wasn't the breeze of the evening green?

Surely, surely the people perceived
That angels were near and speaking?

"A son—"
Now, there's a bolt to strike an old man dumb.
A hundred bidders in the courtyard,

Jews devout at the hour of incense,
Should have been shocked in their nostrils,
Charged by a nitrogen excitement,
Their blood in a rush of bubbles.

"*A Son*—"
Let a maiden grab her skirts and run.
Let the citizens stare after her,
Stunned, wondering
What sends Modesty forking through the streets
Her knees indecently aflame,
Her hair unpinned, a fume on the wind:
"Cousin! Cousin! I've such a thing to tell you!"

"*A virgin's Son*—"
And the father who hadn't engendered it
Sprang from his pillow at night,
The crack of prophecy still ringing in his ears.
Surely Nazareth was startled with him,
Surely Galilee!
Surely Rome
At such an impossible pop of lightning
Moaned in her sleep.

"*A Savior!*"
Then all the stars, the wheeling galaxy, streamed down
Exploding songs of fire across the firmament,
Sheeting the fields of shepherds in a flaming rain,
Gloria, roaring: *Gloria in altissimis Deo,*
The storm of heaven hitting earth,
All angels in a fusillade!
Could anyone, could anyone have stayed asleep that night
When the whole air burned electric blue
And every hair on every head was singed?
Well, if they did
They smelled smoke in the morning
And didn't understand
It was themselves
Whom God had scorched.

But the leaves grew greener in their season.
The vines were nourished by the nitrogen.
Oh, grape vines comprehend an angel's discharge—
And vineyards that year produced a wine so red
That fools who lifted glasses to the sun
Were made uneasy by the crimson lens
And the dim suspicion
They were drinking blood.

iv.

But the salmon
Soaring from a shattered water
Knows;

And the hawk's aware
On his shelf of wind
The instant before he drops;

And the doe who suddenly
Lifts her face from a bank of fern
Twisting her ears like dishes,

And the prairie dogs
All standing watch on the tableland
Erect as pepper shakers,

And the ant
Twiddling her feelers in the universe,

And the rabbit
Caught in the gloaming of the cougar,

And the krill
Upheaving on an advent of seawater—

All these,
At the terminal nerves of their beings,
Know *Kairos,*
The fulness of time,
That the storm of heaven is at hand.

They long for the crack of liberty
Of all creation,
Groaning an intensity
Of waitfulness.

They have unsullied senses:
Watch them. Call them kin.

Oh, ye nations!
Let these be your angels!



Ends, Means, and Diversions in Theological Education

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Theological students today seem in a muddle. Perhaps theological students have always been in a muddle, but the situation today seems worse in this respect: the so-called explosion of knowledge in the twentieth century has thrown us all for a loop. As a book review editor I see the current printing of books as the equivalent of the publishing of essays and articles one hundred years ago, with some significant exceptions I will mention later.

Books have become expendable. This expendability is now subtly underscored by the United States copyright laws, which force religious publishers, in particular, to empty their warehouses every five or so years. Thus books published as recently as 1980 are already out of print.

Students notice this expendability. One is now forced into a sort of bibliographical popularity contest. I vividly recall students asking me why a book published in 1945 was on my reading list. I mentioned that no better book had been written on the topic since that time, and students were incredulous at the news (the book was Dom Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy*). I wondered what the response would have been had I assigned, say, Augustine's *de doctrina christiana.* Because of the whirl of publishing, one is tempted to forget that there is a body of classic literature to which one might pay attention, since all of the major questions humans ask are discussed within its corpus. Many students today (the exceptions will be some—not all—who are schooled in English literature) hear an impassioned plea to brood over fifty of the acknowledged classics of the last 2500 years as if you are speaking Martian. The message simply does not sink in. Books have become like styrofoam cups. They hold a good bit of content, but when you are finished with them you throw them away. The idea that one text could have so many layers of meaning as to be usefully and thoughtfully read ten times comes as a shock. At the same time, one is tempted to look at the spate of books published in a nar-

row band of research on individual concepts within one book of the Bible (discipleship in Matthew, for example) and conclude that they are all the same book written by different authors!

A second problem is like unto the first. Since the time of Gilbert Highet, late professor of humanities at Columbia University, we've grown used to the idea that education may not really educate. That is, education may not educe from the person undergoing its rigors any sense of self in relation to the Holy. Highet noted, in *The Immortal Profession,* that you can educate a bigot but you will wind up with an educated bigot, and that this condition could only exist in the twentieth century, when "education" is viewed more as a set of tools to be mastered than as a process of self-examination to begin in university and continue through life. Since I have spent some thirteen years in university settings as a campus pastor, prior to six years as a seminary professor, I can woefully attest to the truthfulness of his observation. As an aside, one often finds that the people in a university setting asking such basic questions are none other than campus ministers and pastors. May their tribe increase. I have found that very few professors even in the best universities are truly interested in the process of educing a whole view of life from students. In some settings the best people are tied up in individual research and they are not in the business of being and doing with students.

Students are awash in a sea of knowledge with very little in the way of significant or valuable guidelines on how to swim through it from A to B, let alone the rest of the alphabet. Hence a sort of fundamentalist approach to education develops: each subject is as important as the next, and the criteria degenerate to the relative abilities of the professors to titillate students out of the boredom which is the inevitable wake of valuelessness. This valuelessness, be it noted, often comes as a result of the universal clamor that ***this*** course is the most important one for you to take! Students have their problems but they are not stupid, and they will eventually judge the whole lot of it to be without value and use for their lives; and rightly so, for they have not been given any guidelines on how to coalesce their education around an organizing principle.

Many people wind up in seminary classrooms because they are seeking the organizing principle, and they hope that religion, which has traditionally been viewed as one of the options for organization, will give it to them. Then they can become whole.

The problem may be simply stated: most of us do not know how to distinguish between ends, means, and diversions. Let us make a beginning here and now, at least for theological education.

We begin with an assumption: the sole end of Christianity is life in the Holy through Christ. You may use all the biblical phrases you like: you may speak of becoming "children of God," "receiving eternal life," "entering the Kingdom of Heaven," and so on. You may not know what you mean by the word "God," but you are willing to use it to describe the end of your existence, the goal of your life, even if but dimly perceived.

If this assumption is correct, and we are going to work with it, then several things follow.

1. The goal of Christianity is not to "be good." Plato, Buddha, and Confucius are equally viable teachers if goodness is the

aim. C. S. Lewis once noted that it is a perversion of the faith to assume that our aim is "the creation of nice people." Moralities of various kinds are not ends; no specific way of being good is especially more deserving of the adjective "Christian" than any other. The joy of ethics professors is to fight for the right to call their approach "Christian."



2. The goal of Christianity is not "religious experience"—a term that is elusive at best, since you are never sure what either term means. I have known sad people in my life who seemed to be trapped in an endless cycle of collecting "experiences," each one more "religious" than the last. The accumulation of all sorts of mystical ideas is not an end; we are not "to convey experiences we've not yet had," as Lewis says in another place. Such ideas may, because of their seductive nature, becomes diversions, i.e. they entice you with the promise to be the final answer, the highest truth, the natural high. One more layer of the unconscious and we will have found IT!

3. The goal of Christianity is not even worship. We have to be careful here, because we still agree, albeit dimly, with the opening question and answer of the Catechism of Calvin (1545): "What is the chief human end? The chief human end is to glorify God." But the distinction needs to be made between worship as form and worship as content; only the latter is "the glorification of God," the former changes over the years. Worship as form becomes all too easily another category of religious experience and, therefore, may become a diversion. We have to put this question from the Catechism together with Ireneaus's observation that "the glory of God is a human being fully revealed."

4. The goal of Christianity is not "mental health." Thus the conjoining of Christian precept and insight with psychological method and theory is not an end. In some of its peculiar manifestations, psychology can become a long-term diversion. One must resist the temptation to psychologize religion. "Psychology," we remind ourselves, is the science of the *psyche,* and Freud is a brilliant example of one who accepted the calling to plumb the depths of the *psyche.* At the same time, psychology tends to reduce all speech to that which is self-referential. There is a difference between the language of description and the language of interpretation when it comes to emotions; Freud is reasonably clean example of the former, Jung of the latter. Description talks about emotions occasioned by an event, a presenting cause, some thing beheld. It is the event which is important because of its impact on the psyche. With Jung one is lured inside to play endless games of interpretation which always seem, to me, like running around the outside of a glassed-in garden whose flowers you can see but not touch to your satisfaction.

*A **diversion*** may be defined as a pleasant, intellectually stimulating, and enjoyable

amusement or distraction from what is central and/or essential. One may become lost in diversions through ignorance, fear, laziness, or perhaps a glut of information. To use the idea of fundamentalism once more: by failure to clearly distinguish what is central from what is peripheral, we become confused and this may result in our throwing out the bulk of the tradition in search of other metaphors. We call fundamentalist those folks who do not see that the resurrection of Christ is of more importance than that the book of Isaiah was authored by one person.

The sacraments are vehicles for the disclosure of the divine.

Diversions engage us in a search for answers to questions which are not basic, answers which are then not recognized as peripheral. A fabric of information is woven which, far from disclosing the basics, obscures what is basic and original; this fabric, laid like a blanket over the raw material of experience, attains an importance far exceeding its real worth. Thus one can become hung up for years in such peripheral matters as the "literal interpretation" of Scripture and never read the Bible seriously as a collection of books, all of whose aim is the disclosure of the mystery of the universe through the recitation of ordinary history from the perspective of eternity, *sub specie aeternitatis,* or from the theoultimate perspective, as Theodore Tappert would put it.

By-products come in relation to the end envisioned. So health or social awareness or worship are by-products of the end of life together in God, which is the goal of Christian faith. In a sense, by-products are also means, but this is problematic terminology if it implies that we climb a ladder to the goal, when in fact the goal is given and not earned, even if it feels for a while as if we have earned it. At the same time, we must remember that a by-product is a sign of the goal, and the by-products have been outlined for us rather neatly in such places as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and the passages regarding the Body and the gifts of the Spirit in Paul's writings.

The historically recognized means to the end are the means of grace, i.e. the sacramental actions and words of the community of faith. These are the ways by which we attain unto the "mind of Christ." We may understand that sacramental realism is much deeper in human consciousness than the narrow ecclesial definition of sacraments as baptism and Eucharist and, perhaps, confession and forgiveness. The sacraments are vehicles for the disclosure of the divine, and they gather the community in a sure and certain life.

If we lastly muse about what an education would look like that would press toward the End, and try to avoid the diversions, I think we can see that courses are not the issue; far fewer, in fact, may need to be offered, especially if they are offered in a competitive framework. There is too much clutter in the average curriculum; too many courses clamor for a student's attention. What we must have in mind is the minister as herald of good news and steward of the mysteries of

the Holy. If the enabling of ministry is the end, that will happen through the words and the signs that ministers make. Let us, then, give thought to some of the needs upon which a curriculum of words and signs might be built:

1. Imaging

Sacred texts and stories are mined to draw from them the ore from which metaphor may be minted. The minister is a wordsmith who brings from the wordhoard those words that will enable the Holy One to come into voice. We point people to sacred texts, personal and traditional. The image is both verbal and visible, and the Word again is icon.

2. Assembling

Since we are stories spun by the Holy One, we have the opportunity to come onto common ground with others by sharing our stories. As we perceive the Holy in our personal stories, so we shall know ourselves bound up with others in their stories, since there is One Author of all the stories. The aim here will not be to establish rank in a hierarchy but to take one's place in a circle dance. An amazing thing to contemplate: Christianity's remarkable ability to be broad enough to include so many people's stories under its own sacred canopy.

3. Invoking

The priestly function is to invoke the Holy by Name. Thus naming what is Holy is part of ministry, and to do that there are two forms: blessing and cursing. To bless is to sanctify a moment or action in time by referring it to the holy; to curse is to deny the presence of the Holy through discernment. Do we train people to bless, to curse, and to name?

4. Healing with Words

To enable a person to become, with all of her unique history and work and experience as a resource, the means to heal with words is a noble aim of education for the ministry. The dialectic for this is the ability to hear another person into speech (Nelle Morton's notion in *The Journey is Home*). Along with this would go a humble appreciation for the gifts of artists and musicians in and out of the church.

5. Embracing the Other

A systematic exclusion of women and people of color from the theological game has been played in the academy. The reign of Teutonic theology is broken in our age, and the fusion of experience with theological reflection will be attained: we learn that the personal is the theological. No theologian is alone in this age; each of us hears the witness and word of an Other, who is the beloved opposite to you, and who has the message which will make you whole. Salvation comes by participation and by incorporation. Friends and lovers will become theological partners, insofar as they are truly our Others.

6. Handling the Sacred

Ministers for a new age will be performance artists, technicians of the sacred; a return to ritual dexterity is called for, a penetration below the text of a form of worship to the dance that is within it, so that one becomes a choreographer of sacred moments.

The Word may be pre-eminent, but the Word is always an event, a happening, an occurrence, an action. An action is a planned intervention in the course of events with predictable and some unpredictable consequences; the Word-event is that kind of action. Once experienced it cannot be forgotten. Education for ministry would examine from a number of angles how that experience might be occasioned.

One sees a curriculum organized around such principles that offers many options for a student to program his or her own education, and in which maximum value is placed upon personal and public experience in work and life. Rather than pouring information into the student, perhaps we may think of evoking the deep center from the student—the Center which is the presence of the Holy. Then, finally, we shall arrive anew at theological education: dogma and doxa—teaching and praise—will again be fused, as in the early centuries of the faith. Content and process will kiss each other and no longer be viewed as aliens from one another, and ministry will arise out of the true ground of centeredness which enables us to become self-forgetful in the service of others, even when that service is rendered intellectually.

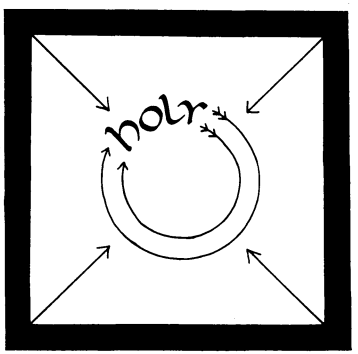
Response

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Washington, D.C.

Rochelle's concern for inner affect raises questions about the confrontational nature of the gospel in seminary education and in parish ministry. What is the relation between seminary education and the seminary student's inner growth? What is the relation between the Word and sacraments and our human response to them?

In regard to the first question about seminary education and inner growth, Rochelle writes, "Rather than pouring information into the student, perhaps we may think of evoking the deep center from the student—the Center which is the presence of the Holy." Yes, we would agree, but the student's "deep center " is not the only place where the Holy is present, nor the source of the student's education. Seminary education should be designed so that the "deep center" of the student confronts the Holy in the gospel as it is conveyed in the biblical texts (best understood in their original languages), in the tra-

dition (best understood in its historical settings through church history), as formulated and re-formulated for each age (in its systematic theology), and as practiced currently in the life of the church (described in liturgy, pastoral practice, social outreach, etc.). Seminary curriculum should not attempt to chart a spiritual journey for students, but to provide the best of the church's witness to the gospel for students on their individual journeys.



In regard to the second question about the Word and sacraments and our response to them, Rochelle describes the ministry almost entirely as producing human response to the Holy One, rather than proclaiming the gospel and administering the sacraments by which the Holy One evokes human response. In reference to his six "needs upon which a curriculum might be built" I would suggest the following qualifications:

Imaging—It is not the "wordsmith" who enables the Holy One to come into voice, but the Holy One who gives the minister the Word of the gospel to speak, and who causes hearers to respond.

Assembling—God is not simply the author of all human stories, but of the one story of Christ in whom all our personal stories are incorporated and understood. Telling my story is not telling the gospel until I tell how my story has been made part of the story of God's redemption in Christ, a crucial point for those who use storytelling as a method of preaching.

Invoking—The minister can only proclaim that God has blessed us by making us part of the covenant which God made with us in Christ, or declare the curse that results from violating it.

Healing With Words—Ministering is more than "hearing another person into speech," though that is an excellent psychological technique. It is assuring the sick that our illnesses are part of the suffering and death of Christ, and that we already now experience signs of participation in his resurrection.

Embracing the Other—We do not form the body of Christ by our friendships and mutual appreciation of each other's theology, but God forms us into the body of Christ through the gospel.

Handling the Sacred—The power in our liturgies lies in God's Word in Christ, not in our techniques. The Holy Spirit, not the minister, causes the Word to be experienced. This is not to encourage inept handling of the Word and sacraments, but to make sure that our performance of them points to where their power lies.

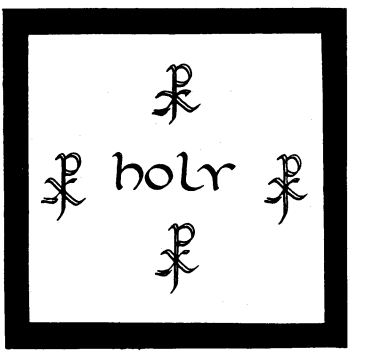
Response

Gary Pence
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I would restate Jay Rochelle's first sentence to read that "theological *professors* today seem in a muddle." It's we as much as the students who have been thrown "for a loop" by the explosion of knowledge that keeps us scrambling incessantly merely to remain "current" in our narrow disciplines. Students for their part are awash in a sea of professors, each of us, as Rochelle aptly notes, convinced that we represent the incandescent core of the curriculum and the indispensible insight for ministry. In self-defense, students "judge the whole lot of [us!] to be without value and use for their lives," while we bewail our loss of influence on students who seem to us increasingly resistant, impermeable, intractable, "uneducable."

Rochelle's statement of the problem is helpful: "most of us [presumably, professors] do not know how to distinguish between ends, means, and diversions." The problem is not that professors are unable to define the difference between an end, a means, and a diversion. The problem is that we, like most human beings, become so attached to our own individual penchants that we fail to recognize them as merely partial means among many to an end that transcends them all. As a result we are caught inadvertently substituting our pet means for that greater end, thereby turning them into diversions away from that end instead of means of attaining it.

Rochelle's response, however, far from providing a solution to the problem, merely exhibits vividly its roots. Why have we professors, Rochelle included, placed such ultimate trust in the particularities of our disciplines? I believe we have done so because we are at a loss to describe the end of Christianity, of ministry, of theological education, or of life itself in simple, direct, concrete, therefore intelligible language.



Rochelle says "the sole end of Christianity is life in the Holy through Christ." Fine. What *is* "life in the Holy through Christ?" It's not "being good," not "religious experience,"

not "worship" (i.e. ritual), not "mental health." Then what is its concrete content? Rochelle never says. With some brief remarks about the above (viz. health and social awareness) as "by-products" (like those unmentionables ground into sausage and dog food) of "the end of life together in God" and with appeal to sacramental actions and words as "the ways we attain unto the 'mind of Christ,' " he moves on to his curricular proposals. He does not define the end of it all, "life in the Holy through Christ."

Lacking any concrete definition of the end of it all, Rochelle falls back for his solution, as professors are wont to do, on the obscurantism of his own discipline. His rationale? "What we must have in mind is the minister as herald of good news and steward of the mysteries of the Holy"—a predictable assertion from a professor of liturgics, but hardly self-evident as the solution to the problem he has outlined in the earlier part of his paper. Hardly self-evident precisely because Rochelle, like all the rest of us teaching in theological seminaries, seems sadly unable or fastidiously unwilling to define that crucial end of Christianity and of the theological enterprise in terms anyone can understand.

Rochelle's solution, therefore, derives not from a clear end, but from the terms (albeit restated in somewhat upbeat, contemporary, and obscure fashion) of the discipline which is his own penchant. If his metaphorical, therefore imprecise, language is stripped away, we appear to be left with something like the following proposals: Know the Bible as the energy source for metaphor, share personal testimonials, commend good and denounce evil (preach law and gospel?), heal through good talking and good listening (pastoral care?), link theological reflection to human experience, learn to produce Word-events (liturgics?). Somehow these are to evoke "the deep center from the student—the Center which is the presence of the Holy."

Before we proceed with curricular proposals I believe that we professors need to get at our own "deep center." We need, in a secular, empiricist, and pluralistic world, to be able to describe simply and understandably what is this presence of the Holy that we Christians claim to have experienced (or to have "encountered," if that language is more acceptable). I agree with Rochelle that we need to know the end of Christianity before we can begin to reform seminary curricula to overcome the muddle in which we now find ourselves. But we need to ***know*** the end of Christianity and not merely invoke it, demonstrating that we know it by our capacity to communicate it to our colleagues, to our students, and to the church we serve. Otherwise we will continue to be unintelligible or simply beside the point. Then we can have no complaint if our students judge us and the theological enterprise to be without value and use for their lives. For we will be exposed at our "deep center" as hollow and empty.

Response

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Jay focuses on today's seminary students whom he assesses to be in a muddle brought on largely through the information explosion and our culture's inability to distinguish the classic from the fad. He also identifies the failure of today's education *to educe* "a whole view of life from students." He proposes a solution.

Let's first lift Jay's concern to a wider field, beyond the problem of seminary, professor, and student. Yes, it is a problem of *theological students,* meaning however our failure as the baptized people of God to be both students of the Word and effective communicators in our interpersonal associations. "Witness where you are" was an evangelism slogan of the church some years back. It still says something to the problem and conditions which Jay raises. On an assumption (and I am confident) that the Word is believed and known among us, then the communicating and the educing process is the task of the whole (baptized) people of God. Hopefully, seminary professors, churchwide executives, and parish pastors would model that sharing in both the explicit spoken word of the gospel and through genuine personal caring. Here's where I suggest we may be slipping. An example: A bright college student returned home after her first year in a fine Lutheran college, announced to her parents in genuine sophomoric style, "I've discovered the resurrection cannot be supported as authentic. There are no grounds for its historicity in the New Testament." She had just completed a course on the Synoptic Gospels. "Well," said her parents, "that's interesting, but did your professor identify where he himself stands on the resurrection?" "How did he personally view the resurrection?" she was asked. "Oh," said the student, "he was very professional and objective. He never shared his own feelings. You wouldn't expect him to do that even in a Lutheran college, would you?"

To speak a clear word of faith in informal, interpersonal relations is not seen as the "in" thing to do along the many paths I travel—except in more formal settings.

Jay is on target. There is a problem of compartmentalization and competitiveness within faculties and between units of the church and among executives, let alone between parish pastors. Certainly this competitiveness thwarts a holistic understanding of the Christian faith. Indeed, changing the structure, a new curriculum, a redesign of the organization may be important considerations, but first there is a need to effect change within me—where I work and in what I do. "Pogo" may be a good reminder: "We have found the enemy and he is us." My

study of organizations and organizational change leads me to insist that nothing changes a work unit faster than a positive change in the attitude and behavior of leadership. Yet the common frustration in consulting with an organization: to see clearly a major problem in the style of the dominant leader who resists being open to reasonable feedback, and who instead insists that "they" or "it" must change or be changed.

Institutions resist radical change.

All the rhetoric about shared decision-making or participative decision-making in the ELCA and shared leadership in the parish ministry will remain mere rhetoric, unless there is both a willingness on the part of leadership genuinely to share power for mission rather than to use power to control people, and unless there is a spirit of supportive relations within the community (faculty, churchwide agency, local congregation). The gospel speaks directly to this. But in so many of our work places we sit back waiting for someone to fail; then when someone fails, the attitude: "We gotcha!" We would do well to pray, "God, reform your church beginning with me"! All this is to say: if we are interested in somehow moving beyond the questionable level of current performance, we need critical review of our faith practices and faith expressions as individuals and as leadership groups. Is this asking too much?

Jay's article stimulates me in other directions. A lot more could be said, especially how the seminary as one of a number of institutions in the church may need at times only minor changes that could have significant impact. An example: In interchanges with recent seminary graduates, we have discussed the unfortunate fact that seminary education has few strong models of shared leadership; indeed, the persistent model is competitiveness. I like to ask pastors: "When were you ever required to develop a research paper as a team of three or four students? And risk sharing a common grade?"

Institutions are conservative, especially church institutions. And for good reason. They resist radical change. Yet there are tested models, within seminaries but often forgotten, that may need to be revisited. I would like to think the experimental *TIME Quarter* (Theology In Metropolitan Experience) carried out at Concordia Seminary—St. Louis in its waning years is an example of a component to seminary education that could be recovered and reused today. It was an intensive effort to develop theological integration in supportive relations, with training in team building while testing ministry in a highly contextual manner. There are other possibilities. Let's however recognize there are some basic disciplines which may understandably resist reform; an example: A class focused on Isaiah, practicing skills using the Hebrew original. And yet too the faith of the professor should surely permeate the discipline, even as one deals rigorously with the text in the best of modern methodologies.

I found Jay's statement of the problem more helpful than his solutions. For the latter I need a few illustrations.

Response

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By and large, theological education seems to be in reasonably good shape. It is customary to engage in questioning what we do and how we do it, but before we chastise ourselves too severely, it might be well to remember that theological education has produced a fair number of faithful pastors and seminary professors. The glass is at least half full.

A few years ago, many students wanted to be "enablers." An enabler was one who would be a catalyst, one who would help the members of the parish to grow, perhaps even to help actualize their potential. An enabler would lift up others, and true community would be generated.

Such ideas sound quaint these days. This is not because the idea is bad, necessarily. The description may sound quaint, but there is nothing wrong with it. Congregations have become a bit leery of it, though, because their experience has not confirmed these high expectations. Seminarians interviewing with church councils have found that describing themselves as enablers has failed to impress.

The basic idea continues in another guise, however. Mark Ellingsen reports that Lutheran clergy often consider themselves "facilitators." One hears such phrases as "equipping the saints for ministry," and talk of sharing authority and organizing resources. This is a major focus for many Lutheran pastors' view of ministry.

Again, there is nothing wrong with this *per se.* In fact, there is much that is right about it. But is there not a sense that our congregations are at least faintly uneasy with this? Is there not a sense that laity want and expect something more?

It is not easy to advocate strong leadership. It sounds too much like authoritarian leadership—too much like "Herr Pastor." Even if the sins of "Herr Pastor" have been a bit exaggerated, few would recommend such a stance today.

There are other options, however, besides those of "enabler" and "Herr Pastor." One hears a good deal of talk about being a "servant" these days. It is a bit daunting to suggest that something might be lacking with this model. Who would dare suggest that there is anything untoward about pastor as servant, especially with words of our Lord that come to mind so readily: "The one who would be first among you, let that one also serve."

Contrary to first impressions, however, a sizable issue is at stake here. Are we trying to justify ourselves by working through an ethic

of servanthood so that we may sit next to Jesus? After all, what did Christ do but put an end to all such striving after righteousness?

That is the main concern, and it is sufficient to give us pause before we rush to embrace the model. But there are other practical matters as well. Aside from the pious ring of it, what is the actual content? What does being a servant really mean? Is it some kind of churchly enabler? A facilitator? An ecclesiastical doormat?

Another model often heard is that of "prophet." Different people mean different things when they suggest pastor as prophet. If there is a place to start in order to apprehend the model, it would of course be the Old Testament prophets. These prophets were courageous and faithful witnesses who called on Israel to abandon their wicked ways and return to God. Certainly, there would seem to be a place for that. In its capacity for wickedness, the modern world can top anything Israel ever did.

Peter Berger recalls a comment made by Sergio Mendez Arceo, the bishop of Cuernavaca. He said that when the church speaks politically, it should only condemn, never bless. No doubt many of our modern-day "prophets" would blanch at that. But as Berger rightly points out:

> The church has the authority (*exousia*) to proclaim the gospel, and, ipso facto, the moral consequences of being a Christian. The church must not remain silent in the face of gross injustice; speaking up against such injustice is, indeed its prophetic mission. But when the church goes beyond this and arrogates to itself the authority to prescribe specific social and political programs, it not only goes beyond its competence in mundane terms, but it proceeds to violate its own nature. To say that political program A is God's will in our time forcefully implies that those who follow political program B are going against God. In other words, when the church becomes politically partisan, it engages in *implicit excommunication.*

Secondly, parishes sometimes (but not always) frown on such activity. That is, unfortunately, too often dismissed as the self-protective reaction of those "comfortable and well-to-do" people who occupy the pews.

But consider this case: The Roman Catholic Church in Latin America is the center of liberation theology. Why is it, then, that the most dynamic and growing elements in Latin American church life are Protestant evangelicals? Certainly, this is not because liberationist priests are offending well-to-do parishioners and driving them to the evangelicals. Perhaps, just perhaps, parishioners are just as hungry for spiritual revival as they are for political liberation.

Yes, the church needs to speak prophetically at times. Like the prophets of old, we too must denounce wickedness and call for a return to God. But before we get too self-satisfied at our political acuity and prophetic insight, we might do well to consider that many of the professional prophets in the Old Testament were false ones.

What is left after all this is what has been right under our noses all the time—a vigorous and unqualified reaffirmation of the Reformers view of the pastoral office. The pastoral office is the vocation of Word and sacrament. It is not superior to any of the other vocations to which God calls God's

people. Pastors are set apart from the laity only in that they do different work.

But what work is! Through the Christian community, God calls pastors to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. As Luther said, the parish pastor is "the highest office in Christendom." It is first, last, and always centered in God's word of liberation and love in Jesus Christ. The pastor may enable, facilitate, be a servant, and speak a prophetic word. But one may be assured that none of it will amount to anything if it is not centered on Christ. Word and sacrament are the ground upon which we stand, and the vocation to which we are called.

We must be very clear about this. If students want "to help people," well and good. The world needs helpers. But let them consider whether their energies might be so dissipated in this very noble endeavor that they might overlook their primary role as preachers of the gospel and caretakers of the sacraments.

Theological education and ministry must be centered on proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ's Death and Resurrection for us in the Word and in the sacraments. It is only in this context that enabling, facilitating, and serving add to, rather than take away from, the pastoral office. The end, means, and diversions in theological education must all point to pastoral ministry as a vocation to Word and sacrament.

Response

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Jay seems preoccupied with helping students become Christian, focusing on their own most elementary spiritual formation. But should not the seminary curriculum be able to presuppose that seminary students are already mature or maturing Christians and then begin from there, concentrating instead on how they, as public communicators of Word and sacraments, are to convey to others a faith of which they themselves have already had extensive firsthand experience? Well, whether or not the seminary curriculum ought to be able to presuppose such prior spiritual readiness, Jay seems to think—and so do I—that for at least many of our entering students that expectation is premature. As Jay says and we all can confirm, "Many people wind up in seminary classrooms because they are seeking the organizing principle [for their lives], and they hope that religion, which has traditionally been viewed as one of the options for [such] organization, will give it to them. Then they can become whole." I think I have known

first year seminarians who even before they had a conscious brush with the Christian mystery of the Trinity were sporting clericals, though they knew in their bones that it was more for the former than for the latter that they had originally left home to come here. Is it not true of seminarians what Jürgen Moltmann in another connection has said of us all, "You can't give what you don't have"?

On the other hand, Jay seems also to be saying that the best way to educate church professionals, at least at the heart of the curriculum, is to attend to the universal human need, namely "life in the Holy through Christ," which after all is the "end" of every Christian, ordained or otherwise. Again I concur, also in Jay's warnings that sometimes it is the very seminary curriculum which often diverts from rather than leads to the common Christian goal. To be sure, as Jay goes on to add, there are also those other needs which characterize specifically the church's public "minister as herald of good news and steward of the mysteries of the Holy," namely, his or her need of such skillful arts and charisms as imaging and involving and healing with words. Nevertheless, Jay's firm foundational point is worth reemphasizing: The way toward being a professional steward of the mysteries is the same way which is common to all Christians, namely, to learn to be a beneficiary of the mystery.

Beyond my basic agreements with Jay's proposal, there are a few modest suggestions I would offer for rendering this theological base, or at least his theological rhetoric, more basic still—in that sense more radical.

1. Jay speaks of theological education as "evoking the deep center from the student." The Holying Spirit, as I understand her, goes deeper than that. She replaces the sinner's "center" altogether, mortifying us eccentrically in Christ. He then becomes our center—sheer gift yet every bit our own new, autobiographical alter ego.

2. Jay calls for the "organizing principle" which will provide "value for [students'] lives." Maybe I'm quibbling but I would think the more fundamental need is that the very deadly dis-value of our lives must first be borne with and borne away, not just once but daily and not by ourselves of course but by "him who died for us and rose again." But then, being re-valued with the same value as he is, our "lives" are for the first time something to which we have an ultimate filial right, lives to which in Christ we are now entitled.

3. Throughout, Jay speaks of theological education but also of Christianity itself in terms of means toward an end, teleologically. I would only add that the Christian life is never teleological without being antecedently eschatological. We never attain our end unless and until we first of all are put to an end. Our end—namely, resurrection, our final resurrection as well as all our proximate resurrections—comes only through prior endings, dyings, all-out losings. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." Such an interrupted, discontinuous, cruciform teleology can convert the most distracting "diversions," even death and evil, into usable "means."

Best of all what I appreciate about Jay's theology of theological education is his understated jubilation: "The goal is given and not earned, even if it feels for a while as if we earned it."

Theological Resources in Literature

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My own pilgrim's notebook contains observations on the "theological resources in literature" that fall under five heads:

1. *Language.* Careful attention to literature, particularly poetry in our mother tongue, reveals to us the nature and capabilities of language, which is, of course, the primary medium of worship, theological discourse, and pastoral counseling as well as of poetry.

2. *Experience.* The experience of literature extends and details our understanding of human experience, both past and present. Human experience is the unavoidable context of all religious experience.

3. *Rhetoric.* As we study texts and examine our reponse, literature tutors us in rhetorical theory.

4. *History.* Literature makes history immediate and tangible, assuring us of the integrity and intelligence of our ancestors.

5. *Pluralism.* Literature insists on critical pluralism. *King Lear* can be read from dozens of different perspectives, each "true" and complete to the extent that it is faithful to the text and coherent in itself. Far from being disconcerting, this pluralism establishes the importance of the text and the inevitable partiality of the reader, constrained by time and culture.

1. Literature as Language

While the importance of literature to the theological endeavor might be disputed, nobody dares impugn the importance of language. Clarity of private or public communication, preaching, praying, choosing hymns, composing news and business letters, all these pastoral functions, even the clear thinking that ideally backs them up, depend upon linguistic resources, upon an understanding of what language can do.

Reading literature is the time-honored means of learning to think, speak, and write clearly. This is an acknowledgment that great literature is, among other things, perfect language, pushed to its maximum communicative power. Poetry is the most essential literary communication, richest in sound and sense and associative scope. We need these standards of perfection. They chasten us and keep us honest as we deploy language.

Reading literature, we become aware of the artificiality of language—how and why

particular words or constructions are selected, how more is said than meets the eye. Just as the sound patterning of poetry shapes and disciplines the sounds of normal, non-poetic speech, the poetic association of ideas is an artful, conscious version of the normal wealth of verbal association.

The most obvious of these associations is the simile—an overt, clearly defined comparison, signaled by "as" or "like." In Watts' hymn, "Man frail, and God eternal" (*TLH*#123, *LBW*#320), we see how the similes in stanzas 5, 7 (2x), and 8 call attention to themselves. Each takes something eternal, imponderable, or abstract and compares it to something familiar: a thousand ages in God's sight are *like an evening gone;* time is *like an ever-rolling stream;* the sons of time disappear *like a dream at dawn;* the nations stand *like flowering fields, facing the mower's hand.* Through the comparison the unfamiliar is brought to life. In bad similes the difficult, inaccessible end of the comparison is trivialized. In good similes we learn something or find our understanding clarified.

You may recall the elaborate simile of Donne's Sonnet 14. There the speaker compared himself to a usurped town, detailing and expanding the comparison—Reason is God's viceroy, in charge of the town but weak or untrue. You are familiar with some of Shakespeare's great similes:

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end;
> Each changing place with that which goes before,
> In sequent toil all forwards do contend.

Similes tend, rightly, to be memorable. They illustrate and clarify an idea, providing a vivid picture.

Similes are hardly subtle. We are meant to recognize them and appreciate their usefulness and precise construction. In contrast, tracking metaphors is a detective job that takes us into the nature of language itself, and, in the case of religious metaphors, onto high and rocky theological ground. Like similes, metaphors are comparisons; unlike similes, they are subtle, half hidden.

Nobody dares impugn the importance of language.

We return to the first two stanzas of the same Watts hymn for illustrations of metaphors: In the first stanza, God as help and hope, simple abstractions, lightly touched on, are hardly metaphors. They lack the necessary development and tangibility. In contrast, God as shelter from the stormy blast and as eternal home take on life. In the second stanza the idea of security is further developed while the picture of our royal eternal home is detailed, the throne's shadow, the sufficient arm. A complete, specific comparison is implied here.

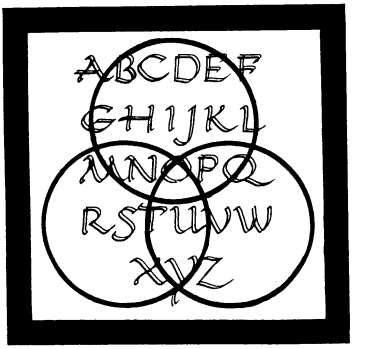
If we realize that all language is metaphorical and that poetry, as heightened language, is particularly insistent in its use of metaphor, we face a heated discussion over

inclusive metaphors in Christian poetry. Certainly God the Father is a metaphor just as God our eternal home is a metaphor. Both relate an intangible to familiar experience of fathers and homes. Both metaphors are conventional, reassuring comparisons. Nothing in them startles or challenges the mind's eye. One good feminist question then becomes whether God the Father is *more than a metaphor* and, therefore, idolatrous. Does it, because of cultural circumstances, limit our spiritual understanding to a masculine god, rather than extending and expanding that understanding? Does the metaphor stop us short or offend us? If we are offended, can we separate out our feminist criticism from that common, fundamentally ascetic resistance to *any* metaphor?

For now I will only suggest that the test of the protest is poetic. When inclusive language deploys fresh metaphors or revives meaningful feminist metaphors used in the past, when inclusive language respects the power of metaphors to associate transcendent experience with quotidian experience of fathers, mothers, lovers, children, houses, gardens, and so on—then the cause is pure—good for language, good for the communication and clarification of Christian ideas. This is a job for the poet, not the ideologue. Our authentic experience, in honest detail, which is often in conflict with our ideology, rivets home a good metaphor.

All too often inclusive language muddies metaphors. God the Mother is too often a political statement rather than a metaphor. Like Watts' tentative God as help and God as hope, she is not clad in imaginative flesh.

The origin and failure of hermaphroditic metaphors is similar. As we know of no one who is both father and mother, so the jumbled metaphor fails to relate to our experience. It may relate one imaginative construct—which is God—to another—which is the perfect combination of our parents. But metaphors are, like us, imperfect by nature. One foot of any metaphor must be firmly planted in the dirt of our experience.



While conventional metaphors die and dry up when they fail in their associations or when they become automatic, when they are recast, freshened and revived, they give us special satisfaction. Herbert's poem "Virtue" (#61) freshens conventional metaphors and organizes them to serve his final simile. "Redemption" (#57) takes a familiar comparison and dramatizes it, detailing and expanding its meaning. Best of all, in the poem "Love" (#66) the genders of the conventional divine love metaphor are reversed. The Lord is a female personification of Love who invites the unworthy male soul to enter her house and enjoy her meal.

If "Love" is a gentle transformation of a conventional metaphor, Donne's poems tend to be forceful recastings. In Sonnet 14 the simile of the usurped town cedes to the love metaphor, but a distressingly violent version.

We are asked to compare the soul's situation to that of a woman who, paradoxically, cannot be pure unless divorced from her husband, God's enemy, and ravished by God. We work through the metaphor, recognizing both its truth and its limits, as we read. Donne is usually startling, delighting in paradox and in the discovery of unexpected features of conventional metaphors.

Conventional metaphors are capable of infinite variation and elaboration. They remain conventional to the extent that the basic analogy is familiar. Enjoying a long tradition, rich in analogy, the Christian poet is particularly inclined to conventional metaphor.

Unconventional metaphors have neither the advantages nor the disadvantages of familiarity. They please us by their novelty but run the risk of superficial silliness, even of giving offense.

2. Literature and Experience

You have all heard the normal arguments how the people we come to know and the feelings we find expressed in novels and plays and poems become items in our experience, expanding our consciousness and refining our discriminations. I would, however, encourage you to press on beyond this literature-as-life-enrichment starting point. The characters and their feelings are really not all that important—they may become our friends or entertain us, but they are not the literary "experience" that makes literature worth time and effort. Even the particular ideas to which we expose ourselves when we read great expository prose are less important than the lessons we learn in how we think.

Allegory, as C. S. Lewis understood it, is perhaps a particularly positive example. Reading allegory we enjoy the dragons and the fair ladies certainly, but they are not the memorable, profitable experience. What we retain and learn is, rather, a unique kind of introspection, the distant precursor of psychology, the *psychomachia* which externalizes and dramatizes what will become inner conflicts. The allegorical vision keeps its place in our imagination and enriches our daily experience. Tragedy provides an alternative example. The form and its constraints enter our imaginations and affect how we think about guilt and grief and hubris and accountability. Epic imagination and the novelist's imagination work upon us similarly.

I suppose what it all comes down to is that literary experience of form feeds and disciplines the ethical imagination. A balanced diet is recommended, containing a variety of novels, plays, poetry, and prose.

3. Literature as Rhetoric

Recognizing the truth to life of Donne's sonnet "Batter my Heart" is more important to our reading than recognizing that it is a sonnet or that it uses the divine love metaphor. The genuine desperation of Hopkins' "Carrion Comfort" is essential. Expressions touch us, move us, affect how we feel. Like sound patterning, simile, metaphor, and genre, expression provides a critical filter, highlighting one aspect of the poem.

Poetry as expression is, however, hardly a simple idea. Treating expression responsibly we begin by asking *who* it is who is feeling what is expressed. (This is the question of persona.) Is Donne asking for divine rape or is Donne the creator of a dramatic character

who expresses this need? When a poem expresses joy—often the case with Charles Wesley's hymns—can we take this expression at face value or is it the expression of an "exemplary" attitude, the feeling of a construct, the perfect believer, who molds our feelings under Charles Wesley's direction. Readers who look to poetry primarily as an emotional experience often oversimplify. They are attached to a Romantic view of the poet as a particularly holy and sensitive soul who speaks directly from the heart, without screening or sorting and without ulterior motives beyond expression. Oversimplified standards of authorial sincerity quickly lead to illegitimate moral judgment.

Imaginative literature may also be appreciated as persuasion. Persuasion makes an emotional appeal, but its purpose is rhetorical rather than expressive. The message of the poem, if it can be abstracted or summarized, is its persuasive aspect. Herbert's "Virtue" carries an overt message about the indestructibility of virtue in comparison to days, roses, and springtime, which are, not incidentally, the raw materials of a great deal of secular poetry celebrating the pleasures of wine, women, and song. We are meant to be persuaded to cultivate virtue. The perfect goodness of Chaucer's Parson is meant to enlist us as supporters of honest clergy as it lays open the abuses of their lazy, exploitative fellows.

The rhetorical aspect of poetry may endanger our reading. At heart prosaic, it encourages us to abstract the message from the poem and to think we've got it. Clearly Herbert's "Virtue," with its echoes of *carpe diem* poetry and of real-life pleasant spring days means more than the simple abstract.

At the other extreme, we may be offended by the rhetorical aspect of poetry, which is highly manipulative. Our emotional responses may be toyed with, we may be moved against our wills. We may be overcome by sentiment. Patriotism and mother love and innocence distressed may drown our better judgment. Because our faith is an affair of the heart—to use Donne's metaphor, the viceroy reason proves weak or untrue—religious verse is particularly apt to manipulate us.

Finally, literature as persuasion must be differentiated from literature as lesson. One example of poetry as lesson is the "Essay," a didactic poem like those of Pope—elegant, memorable, reasonable. Proceeding quite differently, many hymns and lyrics are lessons in model devotion—traceable, interestingly, to Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises.* They teach us a devotional process, how to get from here to there, using the materials at hand.

Literature as rhetoric offers models to the preacher and suggests discriminations that are useful resources for biblical study. Literature as rhetoric also introduces us to communication theory. Differences between the experiences of listening to and reading literature lie behind the different genres—epic, drama, lyric, novel, essay—and determine their histories. Oral communication, evident in performed literature, including sermons and lectures, is absolutely linear; the hearer cannot flip back a page or review a paragraph. Mixed metaphors or careless syntax slip by unnoticed. Nor can the hearer skim over a dull page when speed is controlled by the speaker. Communication theorists warn us that the great day of the printed word, the

Gutenberg era, with all its Renaissance and Reformation appeal, is almost done. The experience of literature, both oral and written and combined traditions, prepares us for this twilight.

4. Literature and History

My fourth notebook heading rules a list of titles—poems, plays, novels, and essays, works of imaginative literature which open up before us a world view or an historical situation or a doctrinal controversy or a particular universal Christian experience. A list of titles makes dull listening and we haven't the time for a poetry reading or an exegesis of a text. The point is simply that the literary productions of an epoch contribute a great deal to our understanding of that epoch, particularly the collective religious consciousness and the theological writing it generated. We may be able to separate the work of Philip Roth from that of Paul Tillich in our own century, but to study the English Reformation without reading Donne and Crashaw and Milton is foolhardy.

5. Literary Study and Pluralism

Studies of communication systems are discouraging. Words, gestures, systems of belief, and social convention all defy translation. We are blind and deaf and illiterate in a global village. We either condemn and dismiss the unfamiliar as insane, underprivileged, or inscrutable, or we surrender all claim to powers of discriminating between the reasonable and the unreasonable, good and evil, right and wrong. We merely collect disordered experiences. This quandary, which has led literary criticism into its arcane thicket, is paralyzing.

Literary historical study offers reassuring, albeit rigorously controlled, exercise in cross-cultural communication. John Donne inhabited a world more alien than Khadafy's. He held beliefs and practiced customs more peculiar to us by far than those of contemporary Japan. Yet his writing—despite its difference in language, form, and idea—is meaningful and helpful to us. We learn that we can and do negotiate cultural difference. We can and do appreciate otherness without judging Donne ridiculous or surrendering our own cultural integrity. This is a precious lesson.

Literature as rhetoric offers models to the preacher.

I have not done a title count, but it appears to me that the academic study of religion and literature most often treats modern texts. Of course literary historians consider Christianity when they must, but the critical edge of the religion and literature discipline is contemporary. Perhaps the combination of a third perspective—the historical with the theological and literary critical is too complicated.

More probably, the fundamental ahistoricity of partisan scholarship has wreaked

its havoc. Marxist critics seem more interested in demonstrating the applicability of class analysis to Richardson's society than in understanding what Richardson was doing in the context of his society as he understood it. Freudian critics are more interested in molding pre-Freudian literature to Freudian paradigms than in tracing the insightful, if different, psychology of the earlier period. Feminist critics are often guilty of imposing modern feminist politics on texts that have their own feminist perspectives.

The greatest Christian literature was generated in the past.

Now it would seem that religion and literature specialists would exploit their profound advantage. Shakespeare had not read Freud. Richardson had not read Marx. Austen was unfamiliar with Millett's *Sexual Politics.* In indisputable contrast, the poets of the past knew the Bible and many were heavily involved in theological controversy. It would seem that the faith we share with the past would open up to us the literary context of the great works of former days. Unfortunately, many considerations of the Christian literature of the past are at least as marred by ahistoricity and the superimposition of modern ideology, masked by oversimplifications of shared conviction.

Indeed, the work of the Freudians, the Marxists, and the feminists is precedented by volumes of partisan scholarship of the religious literature of the past. The work of all too many scholars of Christianity and literature is marred by essentially similar adaptations of textual interpretation. The texts are moulded to conform to particular modern Christian convictions. The objective is not to understand what the authors of the past have to offer but rather to judge their orthodoxy—by modern lights—or their sincerity or their good taste.

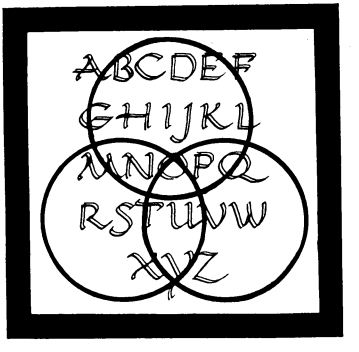
By far the worst examples of partisan religious criticism of the literature of the past have proceeded from the "hymnologists." Devout and intelligent, hardworking and dedicated, these scholars have produced, and continue to produce, hundreds of books and articles detailing the achievements of hymn-writers. The Methodists generally see Charles Wesley as the greatest religious poet of the millennium. Congregationalists similarly credit Watts. Most read the hymns as though they were written yesterday, puzzled by but pardoning the blood and wounds imagery and the hints of sexual metaphor. In treating poetry proper, i.e. not hymns, scholars of Christian poetry too often either enthusiastically skim the surface, ignoring important and instructive differences with modern understanding, or they dig in and are offended. Elizabeth Jennings, author of *Christian Poetry,* illustrates the skimming method, a kind of devotional literary appreciation. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, author of *Religious Trends in English Poetry,* illustrates the second.

We may demonstrate the problem of ahistorical Christian solidarity with the past from the work of Fairchild. His six volumes tracing *Religious Trends in English Poetry* are meticulous in their detailing of Christian verse

in Britain. Fairchild provides important information, unavailable elsewhere, on minor figures of the tradition. His critical judgment is, however, extremely narrow. He is appalled and deeply offended by Jonathan Swift—Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, a great preacher, a great poet, and a profoundly committed Christian. When moved, Swift talked dirty.

I am not impugning the fine work that has been done on the religious verse of the seventeenth century. William Halewood's *The Poetry of Grace: Reformation Themes and Structures in English Seventeenth-Century Poetry* is invaluable. C. S. Lewis, of course, combined historical and Christian perspectives without faltering in his treatment of medieval allegory. It can be done. The danger seems to lie in the scholarship that sets or permits a partisan agenda—and almost immediately loses its historical grip and the profit of historical study.

Perhaps it's safe to stay in the modern world, but then we miss so much. Indubitably the greatest Christian literature was generated in the past, and it is well worth our while to read it and to grapple with it, remembering all the time the cultural difference we must negotiate and profiting from our growing skills in negotiating difference. Perhaps when we learn all we can about these theological resources we can craft a new Christian poetics that will resuscitate the tradition, opening our ears to the eloquence of Scripture, clarifying our discourse, and bringing new metaphors to birth.



The poems cited on page 440 can be found in *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse,* Donald Davie, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

All Things Good and Bad

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I never knew George Cooper Jr. But I can picture him in my mind. I feel his presence on grey mornings and in hospital corridors outside the closed doors of Intensive Care. George had died years before I came to the church where his parents and he belonged. He had died after 28 years of lying comatose in a bed set up in the dining room. It became a dining room again after he died.

I visited the Coopers often during my tenure in New Orleans. I would sit in the kitchen of their camel back house (called that in the local parlance because the second floor covered only the back half of those long narrow homes) and eat the Pepperidge Farm cookies Mrs. Cooper just happened to have on hand, but that I knew she bought just for me. I would drink cup upon cup of that agitating coffee-and-chicory concoction that was standard fare down there. As far as they were concerned it was the rest of the world out of step and a little eccentric when it came to coffee and such.

Hour after hour, speaking in the accent of the lower ninth ward New Orleans that sounded like a bit of Brooklyn in the deep South, she talked about their son, while her husband sat silent and passive at her side. My visits started after George Sr.'s heart attack. So often in a large parish, you don't get to know people well until there's some crisis. But it was the other crisis, the twenty-eight year long crisis, that was to overshadow our visits until her struggle became mine and the cries and pain she emptied from within her took also my thoughts and monopolized my wrestlings with God.

George was struck by a truck when he was five years old. The truck wasn't moving fast; it just knocked him down. However, his head struck a stone in the road. He couldn't break his fall; it all happened so fast. He was thrown backwards on his head.

He didn't die. But neither did he ever again see or speak, or walk, or move an arm.

Mary Ellen, his mother, took care of him from that day until the day he died twenty-eight years later. Twenty-eight years! Twenty-eight years she spoon fed him, bathed him, cleaned up his messes, changed the sheets sometimes twice a day.

"It wasn't so bad when he was little," she said, "but he got big just like a full grown man and I couldn't lift him. Me and George Sr. together couldn't lift him, the best we could do was roll him to a side. But when he got big that didn't change anything. I still took care of him like always. I put powder on

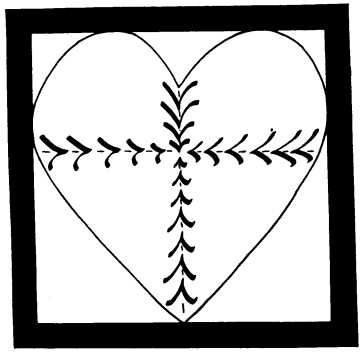
him so he wouldn't get sores. I shaved him everyday, and cut his toe nails and finger nails and put deodorant under his arms. All of those things he couldn't do for himself I did.

"They got onto me at the hospital one time when George was in there. They got onto me for all I did for him—the nurses and one of the doctors. They said, 'Who do you think you are making such a fuss over that boy, putting deodorant on him and powder and all? He doesn't even know you're doing it or even who you are. You think you're going to get into heaven because you're doing all this. Why, that boy should be in an institution.'

"That really hurt me. I cried in front of all of them. I told that doctor, 'No, I don't think I'm going to get into heaven because I do this. I do all this for that boy because he's my boy and I love him and he can't do for himself. It doesn't change my feeling for him just because he doesn't know who takes care of him or even that he's being taken care of. He's still a human being and my son."

George Sr., her husband, worked for the steamship lines and they could have taken many trips but Mary said no, she couldn't leave, obviously, because of the boy. She urged him to go ahead and go. But George Sr. wouldn't go by himself and so they stayed home. Mary told me she never went out of the house except to shop for groceries when her husband could stay home with George. She never even got to church all those years. Instead the pastors came to visit them.

"Pastor Abram was with him the night he died. Oh, I did appreciate so much his visits and was so happy that he was with us when George died. He was sitting right there holding onto George's hand. Later on he told me 'Mary, you know all things work out for good for those that love God.' Pastor, I just couldn't go for that. I often feel so guilty for talking back at him—he was just trying to help and we thought so much of him. But I told him 'Don't say that to me, Pastor. People have been telling me that for twenty-eight years. Don't you tell me that. I just can't believe God wanted it this way. It's wrong to say what happened to my boy could in any way work out for good—not for me or my husband and certainly not for George.'



"God must have been against it. I've thought a lot about it for a long time—for the twenty-eight years he was like that and for the ten years since he died. I believe God was against him getting hurt and against him lying there like that and against all the toil and sorrow and tears I put out all those years. He had to be against all that hurt if he's a God of love like you pastors tell me he is.

"You know I've allowed myself some daring thoughts about God these years. I've always hesitated to share them because when I do, you pastors sometimes get aggravated with me.

"When George was first hurt, all these people were telling me how all things work

for the good for those who love God. I didn't see how this could be good and then I was afraid because I thought maybe this happened because I didn't love God. I really felt guilty for awhile thinking that something I had done had caused George to be hurt, but old Pastor Wegner, bless his heart, talked me out of that idea. He spoke about God's love and about how his love for us is not dependent on our feelings or what we do.

"So, then I took comfort in that and began to think that the good this might serve would be that I would better understand God and his mind and how he felt and what he went through when his son was killed.

"I thought that way for a number of years, and friends and pastors encouraged that thought since I was able to take comfort in it. But then I began to feel that this was awful proud of me to think that God would damage another life so that I might better know his mind.

"First, I felt ashamed for being so proud and then I felt mad—at a God who would destroy a life of another so that I might better understand him. If that was the case, it didn't work because I didn't understand him and didn't want to understand him, didn't want to go to heaven bad enough for it to cause my boy to be the way he was; in fact, I would gladly go to wherever he might want to send me rather than have my boy like that.

"When I let all those thoughts and feelings out, all they, the pastor at the church then and friends, all they could tell me was 'Don't question God.' Well, how could I help but question? What else are we expected to do anyway with the mind he gave us but to question and to try to understand?

"Then I had this really daring thought. It occurred to me when I was thinking about God having taken the life of my boy to cause me good—my boy being a kind of sacrifice taken by God for my benefit—that that is what we say happened when God's Son Jesus died, a sacrifice for our good. And that troubled me and made me even more angry because it seemed to confirm the possibility of God doing such a thing to my boy. But then I thought that God's sacrifice of his own son would surely be enough if it is sacrifice that is required. How could my boy improve on that? What quality was it that my boy had or me or any other person—what do we have that God does not? And then it dawned on me that the thing that marks all of us humans is that we suffer and that my son's hurt didn't make me better able to understand the mind of God but the other way around. The suffering and death of God's son made him better able to understand me and little George and all this hurt world.

"I believe that God has beaten evil."

"Now, don't you think that's a daring idea? I thought on this for about two years and my feeling just got better and better. I would tell myself 'God understands, he knows.' But then the thought began to creep in, 'Well, so what he knows, what is he going to do about it.'

"I went through another period of being mad at God and accursing him but you see I had left out half the story. In all those years I

hadn't gotten from Good Friday to Easter. Resurrection! That's what God had done about it. Raised him from the grave.

"I laughed that day—that day I got to the Easter half of the story. I shook my fist at my son and I shouted 'You've lost, death. You've lost, whatever power or evil or blind chance of circumstance you are that made my son this way. You've lost!'

"You see, Pastor, the problem with people quoting to you 'All things work to the good for those who love God' is that they're trying to tell you that the evil which befell you is in some way good if you're counted as one of God's own. It's plain to me that evil is not changed by the beliefs or unbeliefs of its victims. I believe that evil is evil. However, I also believe that God has beaten evil—that death and tears and suffering have all been destroyed in the grave with God's sacrifice. And I'll tell you something else, Pastor. While I don't believe that me taking care of my boy like that all them years will get me to heaven, I do believe that what I done was a way of telling the evil gripping him and the rest of this world that its days of oppressing us are numbered; that God has worked things out—all things good and bad."

Book Reviews

COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON. By Peter T. O'Brien, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44, Waco: Word Books, 1982. liv and 328 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

1 & 2 THESSALONIANS. By F. F. Bruce, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 45, Waco: Word Books, 1982. xlvii and 228 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

Word Biblical Commentary is a relative newcomer; these are the first two volumes of a projected fifty-two, edited by David Hubbard and Glenn Barker. The "Editorial Preface" makes the character of the new series clear. The writers are all scholars "committed to scripture as divine revelation," teachers in university, college, or seminary. From many denominations, each scholar prepares his own translation on the basis of the original languages. [The masculine pronoun in the last sentence was intentional; no writers listed are women. That is surprising in this day and age!] The commentaries, while scholarly, aim to make technical scholarship intelligible to the beginning student and the working minister, not just the professional biblical guild.

Each commentary begins with a long list of abbreviations (13 pages in O'Brien, 5½ in Bruce) followed by a full scale introduction to the particular writing[s]. There are few surprises in Bruce's views; the authenticity of both letters in the traditional order is defended with

knowledge and literary acumen. O'Brien argues for the authenticity of Colossians and dates it either in the supposed Ephesian imprisonment (54–58) or in the first Roman imprisonment (60–61). He is less definite about the character of the Colossian heresy, passing the major theories in review only to conclude that the ascetic and mystical elements are important, but greater precision is impossible. Each introduction concludes with a short outline; brief lapidary tags indicate the content. Little attention is paid to rhetorical or literary analysis in determining the outlines, a shortcoming in each case. That is surprising in the case of Colossians especially, since the rhetorical analysis ought to be a major part of the discussion of authenticity.

The commentary proper has an interesting format. Each section begins with a special bibliography, followed by the writer's original translation. "Notes" that discuss text critical questions follow. Next the section "Form/Structure/Setting" deals with form critical, historical, and rhetorical questions. These sections are at times long, e.g. O'Brien on Col 1:15–20; in other cases they are quite short. "Content," is the word by word or phrase by phrase commentary proper. Here both writers do excellent work; their comments are helpful and interesting. "Explanation" is the final section, where the writer ranges freely in pointing out the significance of the text for theological issues, suggesting homiletical values, or even expressing personal reactions. This structure reminds one of the Old Testament *Bibliscber Kommentar* series; it is arranged under the rubrics "Text, Form, Ort, Wort, Ziel," where "Ziel" deals with the significance of a passage. O'Brien prints a long bibliography at the end of the work, Bruce does not. Each provides extensive indices of modern authors, passages cited and subjects. [In O'Brien's commentary the proof reader nodded. Pp. 323 and 325 are in the wrong location, so that the index of passages is interrupted by the subject index arranged in the wrong order.]

By the time I write this, four additional New Testament commentaries in the series have appeared; they are excellent too. I know from my Old Testament colleague Ralph Klein that the editors have allowed their writers editorial freedom to adopt critical positions they feel the text compels. [Klein and Roddy Braun are the only Lutherans in the list of authors.] *Word Biblical Commentary,* for all its announced evangelical character, is a series that pastors should give high marks. It is very promising.

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DISTANT FIRE. By Martin Bell. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. x and 161 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

Distant Fire is a meditation on Scripture. The style is poetic, not narrative; Bell weaves together Scriptural passages with reflection and vignettes from modern life. Life experiences are seen to be inseparable from the Scriptural witness to faith.

The book's strengths and weaknesses are related. Bell takes creative risks. Sometimes the results are pretentious or unnecessarily cryptic. At other times Bell gives us a startling, fresh expression of the ancient witness. He describes the Christmas event:

> Opportunity had been heralded, and fulfillment was waiting at the borders of the universe. Along the continuum of events, a certain buckling could be perceived: purpose was speeding toward the heart of a small Judean village. . . . A fierce Shepherd God took the creation by ambush as no-time converged with daily time and fulfillment thundered on into eternal night.

Bell challenges complacent images of God. He confronts the reader with the God "who kills and bring to life," who is incomprehensi-

bly the source of both good and evil. Animal imagery is used to stress God's fierce power and distinct otherness from human beings. He depicts "Spirit people" as those who commit themselves to God's "Holy insecurity," instead of to the false idols of time, education, or religion itself.

Distant Fire is a book for contemplation, not to be read all at once. It contains many short passages which would be suitable for use in an informal worship setting. I prefer Martin Bell the storyteller, as in *The Way of the Wolf;* however, others may find this book equally valuable as a spiritual meditation.

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW: A STRUCTURAL COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW'S FAITH. By Daniel Patte. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. 432 pages. Paper. $19.95.

What is new about this commentary is its commitment to *structural* reading in a refreshing, liberating contrast to the more familiar forms of reading pastors and parishioners are used to.

Structural reading is based on, and informed by, the identification of the convictions shared by author and readers. These convictions make up "a system of convictions" encountered in each passage, as each passage builds up to the gospel narrative as a whole. Reading structurally leads, indeed "drives" a reader to "nothing else than 'being oneself,' implementing [the reader's] true identity." Conversely, when the reader's convictions are threatened in any way in the course of reading as interaction with the world of the text, the reader will do (as do characters *in* the story) whatever is necessary to protect those convictions. It is one's true identity, one's meaning in life, which is threatened or implemented.

The faith which Matthew expresses in the system of convictions operative in his narrative is discerned by Patte in two ways: (1) In the relatively few "narrative oppositions" (e.g. in the temptation story)—for a complete list of *all* narrative oppositions in Matthew, see Appendix pages 406–17; and (2) in the ubiquitous "themes" found in every passage. A "theme" is what Matthew intends to express, and readers are intended to experience, concerning "something new in terms of the old knowledge of the readers." Most commentaries of recent vintage, informed by redaction criticism, took seriously the author's perspective (Matthew's theology, etc.); Patte's structural commentary takes seriously the reader's perspective which involves the reader's *development.* Matthew's 28-chapter development reflects, as Patte emphasizes, *not* "the *actual* situation of [the first century Matthean] church, [but . . .] a reconstructed view of that church." Historical consideration and the use of sources and traditions are invoked in this commentary only when they underscore connotations in the minds of author and readers. Matthew's reader's development (and, thereby, experience of identity) is the reader's vocation and the conditions for implementing this vocation as "children of the kingdom," beginning with the genealogy and ending in the assurance of Christ's (non-physical, but nevertheless "real") "presence" with disciples/readers "till the end."

What is useful and promising about this new type of commentary is the shifting of the reader's focus, traditionally riveted to Matthew's theology (or ethics, or eschatology, etc.) as expression of the evangelist's witness (analogous to the pastor's witness from the pulpit), to the reading of Matthew as a sharing or experiencing of Matthew's faith by the reader's faith (analogous to the faith community's experience of worship).

A 15-page Introduction to the well-articulated methodology of structural reading, first presented in non-technical language in

Patte's book on *Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel* (Fortress, 1983), a 6-page Bibliography, and an Index of Biblical Passages make this a welcome and useful aid for every serious student of Scripture.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH. By Roger Beckwith. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. xiii and 528 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

In this comprehensive and well-argued study of the canon, written over a twenty-five year period, the author arrives at a number of significant—and at times controversial—conclusions that are of great importance for all students of the Bible. He has also pulled together an invaluable collection of data that must be considered in all future discussions of the canon.

Among the most convincing of his conclusions: The Jews in Alexandria did not have a broader canon than their Palestinian colleagues (thus the idea of an Alexandrian canon, first proposed in the 18th century, is wrong); the rabbinic disputes over five books—Ezekiel, Esther, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs—were not about whether they should be added to the canon, but about whether they should be removed from it; what happened at Jamnia was not a synod or council, but the issuance of nonbinding decisions dealing primarily with Ecclesiastes and, perhaps, the Song of Songs; the Samaritans' restriction of the canon to the Pentateuch does not mean that only the Pentateuch was canonized when they split off from the rest of Judaism, but it reflects instead their theological objections to the Prophets and Writings because they supported worship in Jerusalem and polemicized again Ephraim; the Sadduccees accepted all three parts of the canon, not just the Pentateuch; the wider collection of Jewish works in codices like Vaticanus and Alexandrinus are not evidence of a different canon, but only of the reading habits of fourth and fifth-century Christians.

Much more problematic in my judgment are the following: the Decalogue was canonical from the time of Moses, and Deuteronomy from the time of Josiah (Here the definition of the word canonical is crucial. To Beckwith it is a God-given written rule of faith and practice—is this an adequate definition?); the Jewish-canon was closed by the second century B.C.E. or before; about 164 B.C.E. Judas Maccabeus and his colleagues divided the existing non-Mosaic canon into two sections (later called Prophets and Writings) and added to the canon Esther and Daniel; the complete, twenty-four-book canon is presupposed in the Prologue of Ecclesiasticus and in the New Testament. Very few critical scholars would accept his idea that Ecclesiastes and Daniel were composed in the 5th century B.C.E.

Two final comments. 1) While Beckwith accepts with appreciation A. Sundberg's vigorous arguments against the Alexandrian canon, he dismisses the latter's alternate proposal of an open-ended third section of the canon in the first century C.E. with a wave of the hand (p. 382). If Sundberg is right, the canonical status of the Apocrypha within some sections of the early church rests on far weightier historical bases than Beckwith allows. 2) The sharp distinction between canonical and apocryphal that he attributes to the Reformers is more appropriate to the Calvinist than the Lutheran tradition. The authority of the Scriptures, I would argue, has more to do with their central message, than with their canonical status. Note that Lutherans did not draw up a list of the canon in their confessional writings of the 16th century.

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THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF POPES. By J. N. D. Kelly. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. xiii and 347 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

J. N. D. Kelly's books always fill holes, demand re-prints or new editions, and become classics: *Early Christian Creeds* (1950, 3rd edition 1972), *Early Christian Doctrines* (1958, 5th edition 1977), and *Jerome* (1975). His latest work will match or surpass such standards, and become an indispensable reference work for all of church history. Unlike most reference books, however, this work will delight and divert anyone—student, pastor, scholar, lay—who enjoys learning more about the history of Christianity.

By its title alone, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* commands attention. All that we would expect from this author and this publisher is here: concise sketches of each pope's life and reign, with a thorough and scholarly bibliography for one and all; excellent binding, type-face, index, and even price, thanks to the Oxford quality; the extras that make Kelly's (and Oxford's) books special, in this case, inclusion of the anti-popes and a definitive appendix on the legend of Pope Joan.

Beyond these predictable virtues, Kelly's "Papal Who's Who," as he puts it, makes a genuine breakthrough in presenting the two hundred and eighty-odd thumb-nail biographies not alphabetically, as dictionaries usually do, but sequentially, in their chronological order from St. Peter to John Paul II. This splendid novelty he humbly credits to persuasive friends. Yet it is to Kelly's credit that we can consider these popes in historical context simply by turning a page or two, which unfailingly sparks a new appreciation for papal continuities or contrasts. (A particular pope can easily be investigated by first consulting the initial alphabetical index for the appropriate page numbers.)

An Anglican priest, Kelly claims a "cool but not unsympathetic detachment." No whitewasher, he levels criticisms both blunt and barbed. Witness the line on Leo X, not unknown to Lutherans: "A polished Renaissance prince, Leo was also a devious and double-tongued politician and an inveterate nepotist" (p. 257). Nevertheless, despite such individual assessments, the overall project implies Roman papal primacy, a debate best left to other books and other reviews.

Finally, as the quotation on Leo indicates, Kelly's cool detachment does not mean that his style is dictionary dull. Quite the contrary, the sketches are consistently sharp, lively, and a pleasure to read. All in all, Kelly's latest is a true treasure for scholars and amateurs alike, the kind of book that makes you want to keep it at your bedside, tell your friends, and write an unsolicited review.

Paul Rorem
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

PASSION NARRATIVES AND GOSPEL THEOLOGIES. By Frank J. Matera. New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986. 256 pages. Paper. $12.95.

The worst thing I can say about this book is that it treats only Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I like it so much that I wish the author had also tackled John. The present work is free of the jargon of professional interpretation, so readers will not find themselves wading hipdeep through swamps in the cant and argot of sociology or literary criticism or ancient history. Matera tested his material on several audiences: professional researchers and teachers like himself and also on clergy and lay people. The result of field testing is a work remarkably clear, direct, and useful for meditation and proclamation.

Matera approaches each of the Synoptic evangelists in the same way: a brief statement regarding the theological perspective in the

passion and a look at the question of sources are followed by a long section of commentary on the passion. Then Matera rounds out his treatment with a discussion of basic themes showing how the evangelist has woven them through the entire gospel.

In the commentary section I appreciated the way Matera pays close attention to such matters as symmetry and parallels and the arrangement of material. And his overviews of the contents of each gospel are delightful pieces.

Matera supplies solid food for students and for pastors preparing to preach on texts from the passion narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke

Robert H. Smith
Christ Seminary—Seminex
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

THE PASSION OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW. By Donald Senior. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985. 200 pages. Paper. $8.95

Donald Senior has worked for a long time on the Gospel passion narratives, and he is particularly well known for his publications on Matthew's Gospel. Now he undertakes to treat the four passion narratives of the New Testament in four separate volumes.

The bulk of the present volume is verse-by-verse commentary on Matthew 26–28 (115 pages). The commentary is preceded by a section showing how all the prior material in the Gospel, including the infancy narrative, is preparation for the passion. "Long before Golgotha was mounted, the Son of Man had been pouring out his life for the sake of the many." And enemies were active, and readers were being called to costly discipleship.

The third and final section of the book is reflection on Matthew's message as a whole, dealing with such themes as these: the passion narrative as a story of fidelity, Jesus' redemptive mission coming to fullest expression on the cross, exploitative power unmasked as ultimately impotent while the way of discipleship turns out to be triumphant, the revelation of human character in response to the suffering of Jesus.

Unobtrusive scholarship combines with clarity of expression and personal faith to yield an exceedingly fine book on Matthew's passion narrative.

Most highly recommended for pastors, preachers, and students as well as for lay people seeking understanding and illumination.

Robert H. Smith

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. Edited and with an Introduction by Fernando F. Segovia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. 213 pages. Paper. $16.95.

Nine essays on the general theme of discipleship, written by various scholars, are gathered in this scholarly volume, more or less traversing the New Testament. As is to be expected, this does not result in a unified approach or in a neat package but reflects the views of each individual author. The papers are based on a symposium on the theme of "Call and Discipleship: New Testament Perspectives," held in 1982 at Marquette University. The Introduction by the editor defines certain principles and terms. "Discipleship" was not to be limited to the "teacher/disciple" relationship but to be understood in terms of Christian existence as a whole. The theme became prominent because of various publications (by Schweizer, Schulz, Betz and Hengel). Some of the authors stay close to the theme, others

stray. The Introduction contains a convenient summary of the individual essays.

According to Werner H. Kelber, the Gospel of Mark alienates the reader from the disciples, but it directs them to the earthly Jesus. Richard A. Edwards sees in Matthew an alternating pattern of positive and negative portrayals of the disciples which is contrasted to the stability of Jesus and his Father in heaven. In Luke/Acts, according to Charles H. Talbert, discipleship means total allegiance to Jesus, including mission and formation, and is shaped by the tradition of five stages in the Lukan Jesus. Fernando F. Segovia discusses the Johannine community in self-definition and self-assertion over against the Jewish "world." His interpretation of the footwashing on p. 87 is strange and questionable. William S. Kurz, S. J., discusses the "Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3." Even if these chapters should come from different letters, the redactor had literary sensitivity in putting them together to encourage the imitation of Christ and Paul. According to Robert A. Wild, S. J., Eph 5:1 is a Middle Platonic statement of the purpose of human existence according to which imitation of God is achieved and made manifest in living responsibility in this world. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza sees Revelation as a poetic-rhetorical construction in which the readers are admonished to renounce the world of Rome since compromise with it would mean an affirmation of the dehumanizing and destructive powers of Rome. For James, according to Luke T. Johnson, friendship with the world is enmity with God, and discipleship constitutes the opposite. John H. Elliott concentrates on 1 Peter 2:21, the "following in his steps," and argues for a pre-synoptic, pre-Petrine tradition.

The essays are not easy reading but they reward the careful student with interesting insights into the various understandings of discipleship.

Wilhelm C. Linss
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE IRONY OF IT ALL: 1893–1919. By Martin E. Marty. Vol. 1 of Modern American Religion. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. xi and 386 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

Martin E. Marty's latest book is the first in a projected four-volume history of religion in twentieth century America, which he will publish between now and the turn of the century. In Marty's own words, the series "will make up the first attempt to discern its basic shapes whole."

Volume 1 begins in 1893 at the World's Parliament of Religions during the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and takes the story of modern American religion to 1919. Marty's method is to slice through the almost three decades that comprise the period five times, providing "transverse sections [*Querdurchschnitten*] of history" that can be correlated.

For Marty "modern" is not only a time designation in the title of the series, but the key to understanding what happened in the period that inaugurates twentieth century American religion. The five transverse sections deal with the Modernists, the Moderns, Modernity, Countermodernism, and the Transmodern.

The Modernists were "the liberal agents of the modern, progressives who actually wanted to advance the processes of change from within the Protestant core-culture," such as Josiah Strong and William Rainey Harper. The Moderns were the historians and philosophers who developed a distinctly modern consciousness, such as Charles Beard and William James. Marty uses Modernity as a neutral term to serve as a background to describe those who resist the modern while allowing themselves to be influenced by it, such as ethnic groups like Blacks and Hispanics and denominations like Baptists and Lutherans. Countermodernism describes reactionary efforts, like those of Roman Catholics and developing Fundamentalists. The Transmoderns were the creative people who tried to pass through or beyond the

culture to reclaim basic religious traditions, such as ecumenist John R. Mott and social gospeler Walter Rauschenbusch.

Marty's use of metaphor is brilliant. He compares the different reactions to the modern era to the varied vantage points for observing a hurricane: the plane in the eye of the storm, the objective observer on the fringe, those fleeing the howling winds, the people battered down in huts. He employs the images of cocoons and canopies and carapaces to picture the way different groups dealt with the advent of the modern age.

Throughout Marty stresses "the irony of it all" as the basic interpretive theme. Whether they were modernists, moderns, antimoderns, countermoderns, or transmoderns, all experienced results of their efforts diametrically opposed to the original intention. Marty does not overwork the theme. Having stated it at the beginning, he marshals the evidence to let it speak for itself.

This first volume in "the first coordinated history of twentieth-century American religion" provides illuminating insights into one generation of our modern era. It promises that the series as a whole will be the benchmark by which to measure other histories to come.

John H. Tietjen
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Chicago, Illinois

MOTHERS OF FEMINISM. By Margaret Hope Bacon. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. 273 pages. Cloth. $16.95.

The strength of feminism within the Society of Friends and the prominent role that Quaker women have played in the development of the women's movement make this an important book. Of the five women who planned the Seneca Falls convention in 1848, four were Quakers. Many Quaker values have become embedded in the women's movement:

> The use of nonviolence, . . . the insistence on including women of all races and walks of life in meetings, the tradition of working for consensus rather than making decisions hierarchically, the ties between the women's movement and the peace movement . . . all represent values of the Society of Friends (p. 2).

Bacon traces the stories of individual women, interweaving the history of the Society of Friends with the history of the American society at large. These connections are significant and well made. She is careful to say that calling George Fox a feminist would be to read history backwards, but his respect for women, appreciation of their buried talents and willingness to work for their rights led the Society toward gender equality in the centuries that followed. His persistence is certainly due in part to Margaret Fell, for they practiced equality in marriage, resulting in a "burst of creativity for both partners" (p. 22). The gender equality of the Quakers challenged Puritan values, including the male as sole authority of each household, values which came to dominate American culture.

Readers will find fascinating and encouraging the recounting of "The Traveling Women Ministers, 1650–1800." From Mary Fisher to Hannah Barnard, the traveling Quaker women ministers were an adventurous lot on land and sea. They often followed the call in pairs, an older and a younger woman. Many were married, and while most of these women's travels began when the children were grown, some left numerous children in care of husbands, friends and neighbors. A woman's home meeting provided her support and encouragement and was responsible for her expenses.

The author of this very readable book does not hesitate to critique contemporary Quakerism. Inevitably unconscious forms of sexism have crept into Quakerism itself. Quaker women may have become obscured by their

own successes. To read such a book not only provides important historical information, but an appreciation of both the contributions of this religious group to society and the subtle irony that those who have led through the prophetic voice of being outsiders may need renewed vision to see the challenges of the very new age they have helped to bring to pass.

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SAYING YES AND SAYING NO: ON RENDERING TO GOD AND CAESAR. By Robert McAfee Brown. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986. 137 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Brown's underlying thesis is that in matters of faith it is essential to spell out negations implicit in affirmations. Specifically in this book, Brown is concerned with the "No" that must be said to the "false gods of the state who crave our allegiance," when one says "Yes" to the "God of the Bible."

Brown takes as his archetype the Barmen Declaration, in which the "Yes" to Jesus Christ is followed by the "No" to national socialism. He acknowledges that the distinction between the true God and the false god was extraordinarily clear in 1934 Germany. Nevertheless, he asserts that there are certain current policies and demands of the US government and its leaders in which the distinction approaches the same clarity—in which the "Yes" of God requires a "No" to Caesar.

Since Brown has established himself as a social critic with his own following, is this book any more than a reiteration of the obvious from him? Yes it is. First, Brown spells out the theological framework which informs his critique. Second, he applies it consistently across a broad range of policy issues, from Nicaragua to South Africa, from nuclear armaments to sanctuary.

The effect of his dealing with all of these issues in one book is powerful. Issues which had front-page urgency when the book was written have the same urgency as this review is being written, and undoubtedly will remain urgent when the review is published. The theologian's dispassion is generously complimented by the prophet's passion.

The book may be read by a wide audience. It can be used both to guide discussion among lay persons (questions for reflection are included at the end of each chapter) and as a resource for preachers. A bonus is the variety of styles employed: descriptive and analytic; expository and narrative; emotive and reflective.

If you are feeling uneasy about matters relating to God and Caesar, and are looking for assistance in locating, reflecting upon and articulating that uneasiness, this book is for you.

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CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN EAST AND WEST. By Herman Wegman. Translated by Gordon Lathrop. New York: Pueblo Press, 1986. 390 pages. Paper. $19.50.

Lathrop offers us a very good translation of this book by a professor of liturgy at Utrecht.

The book was used as a principal text at LSTC in the introductory course to worship in Fall 1986. The review reflects that usage.

Pluses

The book masterfully covers the important history of the development of the liturgy in both East and West until the time of the Reformation, and into the 20th century through the liturgical renewal.

The book offers massive amounts of bibliography for scholarly pursuits. All the important European writings are represented from the 20th century scholars.

The book sets the development of liturgy in the wider cultural and historical context, which is exceedingly helpful for gaining a wholistic picture of what's happening in each era of development.

The book is concerned to show how Baumstark's principles of liturgical development actually came to pass in the history, but Wegman does not slavishly follow a "period" concept in the development of liturgy.

Minuses

The book, despite all attempts, offers us a disconnected history of the liturgy. Supplementary outlines were necessary for use in an introductory course on liturgy, in order to render the material memorable.

The bibliography is, for the most part, restricted to European scholars and, hence, materials within easy reach of pastors in parishes in the USA are not listed. You need to have access to a good library to use this book rightly.

The following is, of course, a denominationally-bound remark, but nonetheless Lutherans will find the coverage inadequate for their own peculiar history of worship and liturgy. This holds true for other branches of the Reformation. The Roman tradition is the criterion for proper worship, though his treatment of the original reforming work is reasonably faithful. One notes, however, that he quotes G. Cumming with approval (p. 339) to the effect that the Reformers abolished the canon as a principle of faith, when only 17 pages before he has given us the full text of the Braunschweig canon!

Christian Worship in East and West is subtitled, "A Study Guide to Liturgical History." As such it is masterful and none of the comments in the minus column should be taken to disregard its importance for the scholar. We emphasize, however, that the book will be of most use to those who have already spent some time in the study of liturgy.

Jay C. Rochelle
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THE THREE FACES OF GOD: TRACES OF THE TRINITY IN LITERATURE AND LIFE. By David L. Miller. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. 164 pages. $11.95.

Three Faces of God is a remarkable synthesis of classical theology, medieval Christian spirituality, myths of pagan antiquity, traditional and revisionist psychology, and contemporary anthropological and literary theory. Miller's challenging and courageous (given current antipathy to theological "foundationalism") thesis is that religion has forgotten its most basic insight into the nature of ultimate reality: God, even life itself, is at base trinitarian.

Since at least the time of St. Augustine's *Confessions,* theology has had difficulty expressing this mystery, and yet "traces" of the trinitarian nature of reality and truth are discernible today in reappropriated myths, in the symbols of contemporary religions, and in secular literature. Because "threeness" is so persistent, the very theology which has best attempted to express it must now, ironically, look to new sources for its recovery. Religion, but particularly Christian theology, must "relearn its own sacred truths from secular culture" (p. 2).

In a trinitarian movement from remembering to contemplating to loving, Miller develops what he variously calls a theopoetic, a depth theology, or an imaginal theology. *Remembering* involves a movement backward to the images by which our lives are constituted. Convinced that theology must be "learned on oneself," Miller uses the work of Freud and Jung to rediscover the transpersonal dimensions of the human self. Against criticisms of psychological reductionism or solipsism, Miller argues that this depth theology reveals finally the very partial nature of the human ego and the trinitarian nature of God. *Contemplation* of this difference leads us even further out of ourselves, into the tragic dimension of the trinitarian vision. In the third "ghostly" or absent element is a symbol of brokenness which

beckons us into the gap between the givens of Western dualistic categories of thinking. The in-betweenness or liminality of the trinitarian vision thus parallels contemporary literary theories such as deconstructionism, in which binary oppositions are seen to collapse upon themselves and we are left staring at the third face, that of the unknown. The threatening uncertainty of this experience, a contemporary *via negativa,* paradoxically allows for the experience of God as love.

Loving, the third movement in this trinitarian program, is another "not given" which must be approached indirectly rather than through positive, systematic theological language. Thus literature, particularly drama, engages us in the actual experience of embodied love. The plays of Harold Pinter demonstrate best for Miller the positive value of the third in a love triangle, and it is here that he finds a secular theology which values positively the "nothingness" of the third face of God. Love has a face but is ultimately unspeakable.

Ironically, this failure of language and the very liminality of Miller's own theopoetic genre will likely provoke an either/or response in readers. Although he claims not to be writing a solely Christian theology of the Trinity, Miller grants privilege to the Augustinian and early church discussions and thus suggests the very conversation which his alternative to doctrinal and pietistic theology would seem to reject. As we see happen with deconstruction, the conversation would seem to have stopped. For Christian readers, whose faith is unquestionably historical and incarnational, further work should attend to the "something" as well as the "nothing" visible in the third face of God.

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PRAYER: PERSONAL AND LITURGICAL. By Agnes Cunningham, SSCM. Vol. 16 from Message of The Fathers of The Church. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986. 147 pages. Paper. $12.95.

"If you are a theologian, you will truly pray; and if you pray truly you are a theologian" (Evagrius of Pontus).

The bulk of the book is quotations from fathers from the 1st to the 5th centuries of East and West. Here are comments on the Our Father by Origen, instructions on prayer by Augustine and John Cassian, hymns and poems of prayer by Ambrose, Gregory Nazianzus, Ephrem of Syria. Most of the material is found in other books; unfortunately, the other and larger collections are out of print now. So the collection fills a need.

The first 23 pages are a brief, concise and clear exposition of the meaning of prayer in the patristic period. Origen was first to give us the customary modes of Christian prayer: supplication, intercession, prayer (which is to ask in praise for greater things than in supplication), and thanksgiving. Tertullian taught us to see Christian prayer as a new thing, ushered in by the Lord's Prayer and fulfilled in the Eucharist. As time went on, further amplifications of prayer entered the church through gestures (sign of the cross, bowing), through expansions of the meaning of prayer (esp. as almsgiving and martyrdom), and through the distinction between feast and fast. Christian prayer is characterized by an emphasis on mission, Christ-mysticism, and memorial of Jesus. The early understanding of prayer: "An activity by which a disciple of the Lord, with him and through him, seeks God in faith, intercedes with God in hope, experiences and communes with God in love and, filled with the Spirit of Jesus, reaches out in concern and service to others" (p. 31).

Jay C. Rochelle

MARK: PROCLAMATION COMMENTARIES. By Paul J. Achtemeier. Second edition. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. 138 pages. Paper. $4.95.

JOHN: PROCLAMATION COMMENTARIES. By D. Moody Smith. Second edition. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. 133 pages. Paper. $6.95.

Both of these volumes were well received in their first incarnations ten years ago. Now the publisher is issuing revised editions, granting these works a new lease on life.

Some chapters are almost untouched. But both authors bring the discussions up to date and incorporate relevant fresh materials.

Both books offer entirely new and very helpful chapters on the Gospel as literature and the evangelist as author and narrator, reflecting recent developments in the study of the Gospels.

Smith has extensively rewritten his opening chapter on "The Distinctive Character of the Fourth Gospel," providing sharper and more detailed comments on John and the synoptics, on the history of exegesis, and on the relations among the Fourth Gospel, the Epistles of John, and the Book of Revelation.

The section on exegesis now contains treatments of John 5 and 1 John 1 in addition to the studies of John 1:1–18, John 9, and John 16.

In his new edition Achtemeier has made numerous changes. He has added to his excellent chapter on the structure of Mark his own view of the outline of the Gospel instead of leaving us only with the views of others and his misgivings about those other views. He has rewritten the chapter on Christology, and in fact he seems to strike theological notes more insistently and regularly everywhere in his treatment, emphasizing for example the fulfillment of the divine plan in the passion of Jesus and underscoring how the resurrection and not the cross is the climax of Mark's story.

Both Achtemeier and Smith take more seriously in these revised editions that the Proclamation Series is designed for preachers intent on edifying the church.

Two good books have suddenly become even better.

Robert Smith

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

Preaching Helps

The Epiphany of Our Lord—The Transfiguration of Our Lord, Series B

The Lord's Epiphany

One of the typewriter companies is distributing free of charge a "New Compact Webster's Dictionary," and so I immediately sprang for it. I turned to "epiphany" to check my perceptions against that of the experts. Mostly what I learned is that "epiphany" follows "epilepsy" and "epilogue" and it precedes "episcopal" and "episode."

Dare a grace-oriented Lutheran say that Epiphany "ought" to be at least as wrenching and shattering as petit mal, that it "ought not" be a mere epilogue to Christmas, that it is every bit as laic as episcopal, and that we "ought" to treat it as more than a mere episode in Jesus' career and in our own?

Michael Aune tells me that Epiphany suffered a kind of squeeze play in the early running. Both the Christian Pasch (Good Friday-Easter) and the Christian Pentecost (Ascension-Pentecost) sprang full grown from the forehead of Judaism and were celebrated from day one. Epiphany developed a little later as a Christian response in Egypt to local culture. "You have a light-god? So do we! And our light and water and wine are better than yours!" So Epiphany was born around the year 200 in the neighborhood of the Nile, and Christians focused on the birth and baptism of Christ and on the wedding and transformation at Cana. But then a hundred and thirty years later Roman Christians confronted their culture and the pagan celebration of the Unconquered Sun god (Sol Invictus) by promoting the celebration of the birth of Jesus at the time of the winter solstice. That was fine, but it stole thunder and light from Epiphany. Furthermore Christian baptisms, once associated with Epiphany, were being connected more closely with the Easter Vigil.

So it happened that by the end of the fourth century the adoration of the infant Jesus by the Magi was fast becoming the dominant motif. And so matters have remained.

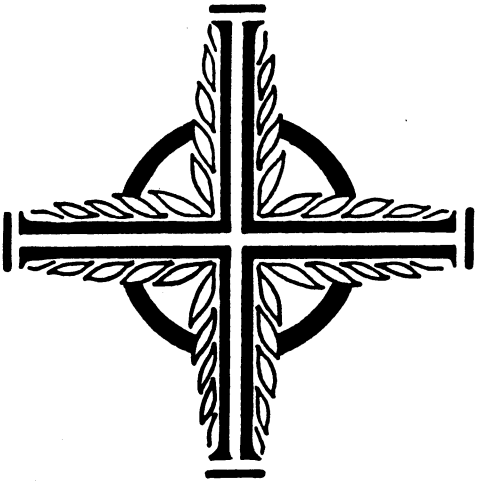
The great theme of Epiphany over the centuries has been not simply the historical manifestation of Christ to Eastern sages, but the revelation of the

gospel in the life of the universe. Epiphany is all about the power of the gospel in the world. And so Carroll Simcox was right when he said somewhere that Epiphany is what our ancestors called a manifestation but what we would call a showdown. I like the sound of that!

The Rev. Susan Karen Hedahl has written the "Pastoral Reflections" in this issue. In the past she has taught in Tanzania and served on pastoral teams in university and parish settings in the upper Midwest. Currently Sue is a Ph.D. candidate in Homiletics and Rhetoric in the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. We welcome her on board as contributor and consultant. Another contributor to this installment of Preaching Helps is a veteran "Prophetic Voice" who keeps on raising the question of the connection between lectionary and liturgy on the one hand and economic justice on the other. He is the Rev. Don Prange, pastor in Nora, Virginia, and we thank him for his provocative input.

Wishing you well on your way to Epiphany empowering!

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor



The Epiphany of Our Lord January 6, 1988

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

"Lead us now by faith"

A FIRST READING OF THE TEXTS

Isaiah 60:1–6 is part of "a lyrical description of the new Jerusalem." Exilic existence, the life of captives is no life at all, far from home, far from promised land, far from temple. And the temple lay in ruins, and the life of people was a shambles. "Darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples." The fortunes of the people were at lowest ebb.

The cry is heard, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." Release, redemption, salvation, new beginning. From the pit of despair to the heights. From being objects of derision and pity, to life that is envied and admired by all the nations. "Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising." A vindicated people of God will be a magnet for the nations and for the wealth of nations. They will come to pay homage, to honor, to glorify. "The wealth of nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you. . . . They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord." This is one scriptural description of the way Gentiles, the nations, will come to Israel for blessing, will join the children of Abraham and Sarah (cf. Rom 4; Gal 3).

Matthew 2:1–12. A story of kings: "Herod the king" and "the king of the Jews." Wise men, sages, magi, priests from the east (not kings, but bearing royal gifts, presents fit for a king). Herod hears from the magi and then also from the Scriptures about the king: the Christ will be born in Bethlehem, "By no means least among the rulers of Judah . . . for from you shall come a ruler who will govern (shepherd) my people Israel."

The ruler of God's people (Herod) plans murder, while the wise men from the pagan orient, not "people of God," have only worship in their hearts. The gospel begins as it will end, with openness to the nations, the pagans, the Gentiles. It begins and ends with meditation on the mystery of the reception of God's gifts. Why is it that the people of God, blessed, richly endowed, nurtured over the centuries, are so often stubborn and resistant?

Two responses: that of Herod and that of the magi. Two different kings and styles of kingship: that of Herod and that of Jesus.

In the larger context (1:18–2:23), the contrast is between the responses of Herod and Joseph. Both are given epiphanies: Scripture, wise men, prophets, priests, angels, or dreams. Herod is the picture of opposition; Joseph models discipleship.

Elsewhere in Paul "the mystery" is the same as the gospel. It is the news of God's grace in Jesus Christ and his cross. But in *Ephesians 3:2–12* "the mystery" is God's plan to include the Gentiles as "fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

In fact it is God's settled plan to make peace throughout the entire universe, to reconcile all peoples to one another and all humanity to God. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

For many Christians, the Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated in the darkest hours of winter. The somber, often tired days after Christmas provide the backdrop for the Psalmist's amazing affirmation. "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." This announcement of the beginning of the journey from obscurity to light, from hid-

denness to revelation, alerts us to the fact that things are not always as they seem. The miracle of Jesus' birth is not an event far off, but rather something intimately related to us, an event in our own backyard. Confronted by the ordinary, the birth of a child, we find the very heart of the extraordinary close at hand. Of all of God's miracles focused through the life of Jesus, his birth is the first. George Macdonald has noted the way God has continued his epiphanies in the person of Jesus: "The miracles of Jesus were the ordinary works of his Father, wrought small and swift that we might take them in. . . ."

The paradox of the Good News is its foundation in a stable's darkest shadows, its total triumph as proclaimed in the affirmations of hope and life in Scripture. Epiphany is similar to the wintertime experience of watching the unexpected dance of the Northern Lights. Marooned in the midst of winter darkness, we are suddenly illumined by a display of intense beauty we had not expected.

It was so with the magi, with Herod, with God's people, with us, as we are presented with God's presence in Jesus. Had we expected this? Of all the gifts we share and exchange, this one from God to us is overwhelming in its implications. T. S. Eliot's poem, "Journey of the Magi," depicts one of the now-elderly magi pondering what he had seen on the trip to Bethlehem. The journey had been difficult and this prompts the old man to say, "We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, But no longer at ease here in the old dispensation. . . ."

The arrival of Jesus is both gift and challenge as we are called out from familiar places to events and places of uneasiness and newness—called as individuals, families, as congregations. A sense of anticipation pervades all. Transition is in store for us as worshipers of the Christ child.

The gift of Jesus began as shyly and unexpectedly as a crocus blooming in a snowbank. Jesus' birth tells us we have seen the light and in its grace we continue to journey. SKH

PROPHETIC VOICE

Epiphany means manifestation. In economic terms a "manifest" is an account, a list of what's included in a delivery of goods. Epiphany celebrates the fact that God delivers the goods: that in Christ we seen the actions bringing shalom, a wholeness and inclusiveness to the human condition. So it's only natural for us to link up discipleship, economic justice and the mission of the church, and to look at these realities with wholeness and inclusiveness. DP

The Baptism of Our Lord January 10, 1988

Psalm 45:7–9
Isaiah 42:1–7
Acts 10:34–38
Mark 1:4–11

"Faithful children"

FIRST READING OF THE TEXTS

Isaiah 42:1–7. First of the great Servant Songs, hymns or poems in which Israel (apparently) is celebrated as God's "Servant," God's obedient child (cf. Amos 3:7).

Like Moses or David or all Israel, the Servant is "chosen" and is called one "in whom my soul delights." And the Spirit of God is upon him. The Spirit is the one indispensable endowment, promised to the Messianic King (Isa 11:1) and finally to the whole people of God (Joel 3; Acts 2).

Enjoying the ointment of the Spirit, God's Servant will bring forth justice (40:14) to the nations. And the Servant will accomplish all tasks quietly, working with enormous gentle-

ness, not subduing nations as Cyrus had by force of arms, but transforming them inwardly. The task is difficult but the Servant will not fail or be discouraged.

5–7. Readers might be discouraged! But the prophet reminds us that it is God who speaks and promises, the same God who created the heavens and stretched them out, who enlivens the earth, giving breath and spirit to all who walk on it. God has in mind righteousness and rescue, and addresses the Servant: "I have called you; I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the darkness of their dungeon."

Mark 1:4–11. After centuries during which it seemed that the Spirit had departed and the prophetic voice was forever stilled, John the Baptist suddenly appeared in the wilderness in fulfillment of the ancient promise of Isaiah. Isaiah had seen a new day from afar. And Mark declares that that day has begun its dawn in the appearance of John the Baptist.

St. Jerome commenting in the 4th c. on the habit of symbolizing the four evangelists with a human figure, a lion, an ox and an eagle, wrote that "the lion stands for Mark, because at the beginning of this gospel the voice of the baptist is heard like that of a lion in the desert" (see Amos 3:4,8). The Lord had whispered his secrets into John's ear, and John roared in the wilderness, calling people to repent and to signal their change of heart by submitting to his baptism.

In every way John was a counter-cultural figure, dressing not in the style and fashion of his own day but in odd clothes deliberately chosen to call to mind the figure of ancient Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). He is a prophet and has come to confront the people with the word and will of God, to get them ready, to prepare them to face God and meet God and greet the deed of God.

He is a preparatory figure and knows it. He craves no limelight for himself. He wants to play second fiddle to the great and powerful coming one. He is, in words of John's Gospel, not bridegroom but only best man, and he is happy to decrease if only the mighty coming one can increase (John 3:27–30).

The coming one will bring stronger stuff than the water of Jordan; he will pour out the Spirit of God, Holy Spirit, creator Spirit, to wash clean not only the body but the consciences and hearts of God's people, giving them fresh birth so that they can stand in the presence of God as beloved children of God, sweeping away in that flood of the Spirit all that pollutes and distorts human life.

But when the Stronger One arrives, the Great and Mightier One prophesied by John, he comes as one of the crowd, to be baptized. He comes submitting to John's call and John's baptism, placing himself under John's call, heeding John's cry, hearing in it the voice of God. He comes neither as John expected nor as John wanted.

He stands in the water, submissive, obedient, trusting, and the sky cracks open and the Spirit descends upon him and the voice from heaven declares, "You are my beloved Son." This man standing in the crowd is uniquely one with God, agent of God, present with the power of God to act for God in reclaiming the world. But as the ancient prophet had said, he is present and acts with meekness, like a servant, servant of God and servant of the creatures of God.

John and Jesus are different. Human expectation and divine fulfillment do not always mesh. John wanted power and fire, and Jesus came authorized by the Spirit and breath of God. But as Luke says in Acts (10:38), "He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." Not slaying, not punishing, not breaking, not compelling, but "doing good" in patience and in stubborn gentleness. That the sky broke open above such a one means that that was and that is how God appears in our midst setting right the world's wrongs.

Acts 10:34–38. This is one of the very few places outside of the Gospels where the NT speaks of the life of Jesus that preceded his crucifixion. And it proclaims that life in remarkable fashion. God who "shows no partiality" preached "good news of peace by Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all." And that news was proclaimed in and through Jesus beginning at the moment of Jesus' baptism at the hands of John. Through John at the Jordan, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" so that Jesus then embarked on a mission with specific content: "He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

That is the biography of Jesus in a nutshell, and the same words should mark the church, the community of those anointed by the same God with the same Spirit through the same Jesus Christ. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

When someone is baptized in a congregation, it is a time of joy, a moment of intense concentration by all on splashing water, flickering candles, fragrant baptismal oil, sometimes the indignant cries of a surprised child! A spirit of eagerness marks the occasion as everyone tries to catch a glimpse of the activities.

Jesus came to John for baptism and emerged from the waters of the Jordan intent on living out his covenant with God, leaving a private life for a public ministry. Like Jesus' baptism, like our own, we are forced to ask, "What does this mean?" Luther's explanations in his *Small Catechism* speak about the reasons and benefits of baptism, but in another work he writes of one special aspect of baptism. "The sign consists in this, that we are thrust into the water in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit; however, we are not left there but are drawn out again" ("The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism").

We are drawn out, directed in the Name of Jesus to daily ministries which may range from the placid to the controversial. Further, our model for the daily baptismal life is the intentions of God for us affirmed in the words of Isaiah. We are called to do justice, to be patient on behalf of the most fragile parts of creation, called to announce that darkness does not have the last word.

There is, however, in all of us a reluctance to be drawn out. We know what the end of the baptismal road meant for Jesus and we wonder if we are talented or faithful or capable enough to follow that same path. But piercing to the core of our questions is God's response, the pouring out of his enabling and compelling spirit upon us. In one of his sonnets, "What I Do Is Me," Gerard Manley Hopkins, describes the human shapes which this outpouring assumes.

> I say more; the just man justices
> Keeps grace; that keeps all his goings graces;
> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
> Christ—for Christ plays in ten-thousand places
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces.

In the remembrance of Jesus' baptism, in the living out of our own, we meet a humanity which desperately needs to hear the voice of justice, to escape from darkness and to see the Christ life active in us. The baptismal font initiates the journey, and we are drawn away from it. New adventures are waiting. SKH

PROPHETIC VOICE

Jesus was born into a tradition called to justice: "I, Yahweh have called you to serve the cause of right" (Isaiah 42:6, JB). For some reason it seems all too easy for the church to fall into the heresy of false dichotomies. With a ter-

rifying ease the church fails to understand the unity of the pastoral and the prophetic, the oneness of proclamation and justice. Acts describes Jesus of Nazareth as one whom "God had anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil." To be pastoral, to do good to those who have "fallen into the power of the devil," involves ministering to real people in real social, economic, and political conditions. To be pastoral means to "bring true justice to the nations." Jesus was called and anointed for a mission of justice and liberation for the oppressed. And being pastoral to the oppressed involves being prophetic to oppressors. DP

Second Sunday after the Epiphany January 17, 1988

Psalm 67
1 Samuel 3:1–10
1 Corinthians 6:12–20
John 1:43–51

"Lead us to perfect faith"

A FIRST READING OF THE TEXTS

1 Samuel 3:1–10. The Call of Samuel. "The word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision." That kind of time we can all well understand: no word, no vision. But precisely in such times, when doubt and superstition begin to seep into every corner, God has always finally broken the silence—or the roar of irreligious babble—and found a prophet attentive to God's truth. God spoke to Noah when the whole world was unheeding, and called Abraham in the midst of paganism, and Moses in Egypt, and then young Samuel at a time when no one else heard, no one paid attention.

John 1:43–51. Jesus called disciples beginning with Andrew and Simon Peter. And the next day Jesus found Philip (not the other way around), and then Philip went and found Nathanael and dared to say, "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote." Nathanael was skeptical, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Not as bad as more radical forms of skepticism: Has God really spoken in Jesus? Can God really know and care about us? Is there really a God?

Jesus stunned Nathanael by revealing a few bits and bytes about Nathanael's personality and past. Nathanael became effusive and began to gush: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the king of Israel." Jesus responded with strange words. "You will see greater things than these." OK, that is not yet strange. Here it is: "You will see angels ascending and descending on the Son of man."

"Son of Man" is one of Jesus' favorite ways of speaking about himself. Sometimes it means "Agent of God on the great day of reckoning," and sometimes it means "Me, this human being speaking to you."

You will see angels ascending and descending upon "me," upon "yours truly." That is to say, this Jesus is none other than Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28—patterned after the stepped pyramids or ziggurats of Babylonia), stretching between earth and sky. He is "Bethel," House of God (Genesis 28), in whom God's Word tents and tabernacles in our midst (John 1:14).

Not just a prophet pointing beyond himself. Not a teacher offering wise sayings that can be detached from his person and contemplated at our leisure. Not a poet offering splendid verses and memorable lines. But this one with all his biography from birth and baptism (Christmas and Epiphany) through suffering (Lent) and resurrection (Easter), this one is the Presence, the Ladder.

And because "Son of Man" means also Judge and Final Touchstone, right connection with him is a matter of utmost, ultimate, eternal significance.

If the Gospel reveals Jesus as place of the presence of God, *1 Corinthians 6* focuses on the community and even on individual believers as "temple of the Holy Spirit" (6:19). In fact Paul says that the body, the created materiality of the believer, is temple of God. In a marvelous phrase Paul says not only, "The body is for the Lord," but also, "The Lord is for the body" (6:13). And Paul calls upon his readers to draw strength for living from the thought that their whole self, body as well as soul, is united to the Lord. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The texts for this Sunday are preoccupied with the issue of names: names called, names bestowed, names acknowledged. These affirmations of identity and relationship are given in early life and continue to be the focal point of our best and worst moments. The incredible power of naming might have been naively chanted in that childhood verse many of us flung at warring playmates.

> Sticks and stones may break my bones,
> But names will never hurt me.
> [But!]
> When I die, you will cry
> For all the names you called me.

Even as youngsters we intuited the power of blessing or hurting that resided in the use of a name. One need only ask anyone whose name has been changed by marriage, divorce, or for religious reasons how powerful the matter of names continues to be in daily life.

This Sunday's texts continue to meditate on the drawing away which Luther speaks of in relationship to baptism. Once baptized, then what? In both the story of Samuel and Jesus' calling of the disciples, it is evident that we are named to proclaim!

But as Christ-followers we need to be clear that we assert our names within the context of Our Lord's. That changes everything. Because we are baptized in the Name of Jesus, our relationships towards one another are deeply affected. If we speak the name of the Crucified One, we speak all names differently than we might have. Might we reject the calling of our name and that of Our Lord's? Our response can just as easily be, "Who? Me?" But the calling persists nevertheless.

A poignant description of God's call is described in a story about a young priest dying of cancer in his first pastorate among a village of native Americans. According to their insights, the call of the owl signifies death to the one hearing it. After hearing the call, the priest's visiting bishop speaks what legend has already confirmed within the young priest's heart.

> "it has always been easier here, where only the fundamentals count, to learn what every man must learn in this world."
>
> "And that, my lord?"
>
> "Enough of the meaning of life to be ready to die," and the Bishop motioned to Mark to start the motor and they went on.
>
> (*I Heard the Owl Call My Name,* by Margaret Craven)

We are called by God, from our baptism to our death and to victory. Epiphany sounds our name. SKH

PROPHETIC VOICE

Christian theologies can mislead us when they speak of "righteousness" instead of "jus-

tice." The application usually comes out in a concern to get right with God. Discipleship involves a capacity to recognize the sin of the world in its economic dimensions, along with cultivating whatever processes seem necessary and effective to struggle to set the whole world right with God. Epiphany puts discipleship in an international and global context. Discipleship means being "a light of the peoples so that God's salvation and rescuing may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). DP

Third Sunday after the Epiphany January 24, 1988

Psalm 62:6–14
Jonah 3:1–5, 10
1 Corinthians 7:29–31
Mark 1:14–20

"Anoint us"

A FIRST READING OF THE TEXTS

Jonah 3:1–5, 10. Jonah had several problems: He talked with God and God talked with him. The silence of God was no problem for him. God was close and God spoke and Jonah could hear. But he was not obedient. In that sense he did not "hear" God, and that of course was a problem. He disobeyed the very clear voice and call of God and tried to outrun God and flee to the west (Tarshish) when God told him to go east to Nineveh.

But Jonah had an even more interesting problem than disobedience. And this second problem is really his first problem in the sense that it lies behind the first. He did not want what God wanted. He did not love as God loves. God commissioned Jonah to go to Nineveh and call the Ninevites to repentance because God loved those people in spite of all their sin, and God wanted to reclaim them as his own.

Once Jonah discovered (in the sea and in the fish) the futility of fighting God on the issue, he set off. And wouldn't you know it; the Ninevites repented and God forgave them. Just what Jonah had feared!

Mark 1:14–20. As God called Jonah (and all the prophets), so Jesus called disciples. They were not exactly like Jonah. They seem anything but reluctant. They leap to the call of Jesus, immediately abandoning their nets, their livelihood, their families, their homes. Their response shows that the call of Jesus is itself a kind of miracle, a wonder.

The message of Jesus seems very much like that of the book of Jonah: Repent, and God will forgive and have mercy.

But will the people of Israel and the people of the nations repent as quickly as the people of Nineveh? Are the disciples flawless in comparison with Jonah? What will it take to bring Israel and the nations under the lordship and sovereignty of God?

It will take a cross, and we know it. Why? Why is it so hard for God to get his due in Nineveh or Judea or Rome? Or in New York, North Dakota, and New Mexico?

Instead of focusing on the Ninevites or the nations, it is better to focus on Jonah and the disciples—and ourselves. The question is not why it is so hard for people to believe, but why is it so hard for God to get his way with people who already believe in him, call him "God" and "Lord," and want very sincerely to be God's people.

The mystery of unbelief, and the mystery of God's hiddenness are great puzzles, but the mystery of the failure of disciples is deeper.

The Gospel for this Sunday starts us thinking optimistically, fills us with hope, but the story of Jonah and our own personal experience raise warning signals and compel us to ask hard questions of ourselves. Who are we? People graced by the epiphanies of God, and at the same time people haunted by failures to

perceive, to believe, to trust and act. But the one who called still calls. And that's good news.

Disciples see from a distance the new world of God. They can already taste it. Paul (*1 Corinthians 7:29–31*) calls us to live already now by the power of that new world and to loosen our grip on this old world, for "the form of this world is passing away." RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

A popular hymn, "He Leadeth Me," contains the phrase, "His faithful follower I will be." How do we feel when we sing that? It is probably with a mixture of true desire to be a faithful follower and the sneaking suspicion that before the day is out we will not be following anything except our own leads. The texts for this Sunday, especially the Old Testament story of Jonah and the Gospel calling of the disciples, are a classic portrayal of unwilling and eager disciples. Read together, the passages present the dilemmas which Bonhoeffer would later ponder in his book *The Cost of Discipleship.*

We are called out, as Epiphany reminds us, out of our isolation to baptism, from baptism to ministry and wholehearted involvement with God's people. But what happens? The story of Jonah shows that the soldiers of the Lord are often found in absentia. Despite a mission from God, those called often run in the opposite direction. There is a perverse attitude which Jonah expresses by his behavior, someone who would cut off his nose to spite his face. And yet, the inexorable attitude of God's will and love overwhelm Jonah and the Ninevites are saved.

Harold Munro speaks humorously of the humanity which tries to set itself against' God's loving will in this symbolic poem, "The Rebellious Vine."

> One day, the vine
> That clomb on God's own house
> Cried, I will not *grow.*
> And, I will *not* grow.
> And, I *will* not grow.
> And, *I* will not grow.
> So God leaned out his head
> And said:
>
> You need *not.* Then the vine
> Fluttered its leaves and cried to all the winds,
> "Oh have I not permission from the Lord?
> And may I not begin to cease to grow?"
> But that wise God had pondered on the vine
> Before he made it.
> And, all the while it labored not to grow,
> It grew, it grew
>
> And all the time God knew.

The disciples Jesus called, as described in the Gospel, present an opposite picture, but even as we hear their positive response to Jesus, we see the shadow of later betrayals. "Jesus? Never knew him." The summons of Epiphany is met with denial and human sin effectively destroys the impetus to action. Says D. T. Niles, "Sin is refusing to meet God in exactly the places where he wishes to meet us."

Epiphany calls us out, out of ourselves and self-centeredness to the places where we may hear God's voice to a meeting of hearts and wills. SKH

PROPHETIC VOICE

Jesus' call to discipleship is not an invitation to say "yes" to some abstract theological insight or even to some concrete doctrinal statement. His call is a call to action, an invitation to participate in the God-movement (kingship of God). Jesus' mission was played out on the background of a land where peasants were oppressed by aristocratic priestly families in cahoots with the Roman occupation. (See Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus,* 1985.) In that context of oppression and

collaboration Jesus not only proclaimed the God-Movement "is close at hand," but went about "curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people." To spiritualize the sayings of Jesus and put them in a "get right with God" context denies the fundamental praxis of justice in which the Scriptures are rooted. DP

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany January 31, 1988

Psalm 1
Deuteronomy 18:15–20
1 Corinthians 8:1–13
Mark 1:21–28

"Strengthen us"

A FIRST READING OF THE TEXTS

Deuteronomy 18:15–20. A wonderful view of what prophecy is all about. Other nations followed "abominable practices" in the effort to make contact with God: burning sons or daughters as offerings in the hope of closing the gap between the worshiper and the god; practicing divination, soothsaying, augury, and sorcery; using charms and visiting mediums, wizards and necromancers. But God gives prophets. The contrast with the pagan nations is only part of the story however.

At Mount Sinai (Horeb) the people stood face to face with God (Deut 5:1–5; Exodus 19), and the mountain was wrapped in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the whole mountain shook, and the voice of God was thunder. The people purified themselves and their garments for two days before standing before God on the third day, and even then, whoever touched the mountain had to die. A terrible moment.

And Moses says that the people asked that God not talk with them face to face but that God tone it down and make it safer for them by giving his words to Moses or to a prophet who would take the risks of conversation with God and would then convey God's word to the people. God agreed with the prayer of the people, promising to raise up a prophet after Moses and entrust his words to that prophet, but woe to the people if they should neglect his words.

Obviously they could not mistake the fact that they were dealing with God when they stood at the mountain and it was wrapped in smoke and fire with thunder and lightning, but when God instead of so confronting them agreed to speak through prophets, then God was running the risk that people would not recognize the voice as God's own.

Mark 1:21–28. Jesus came with words and deeds, as prophet and more than a prophet. He acts and he speaks with the full authority of God and yet God has so veiled himself in Jesus that it is possible for people to make a dreadful mistake and regard Jesus as not representing God at all.

At first, as Jesus begins his public career, it looks as though he will be quickly and easily successful. He marches to combat with demons and easily subdues them, continuing the program he had begun at his temptation when he overcame the assaults of Satan.

Mark has written the paragraph with great care. At the beginning and again at the end he refers to the teaching of Jesus and at the astonishment people felt at his teaching. And in the center of the paragraph he tells how Jesus cast out a demon. What Mark means to indicate by this bracketing and positioning is that the power of Jesus to defeat the evil, to make the world clean of demons, to free people from the power of Satan is present in the word of Jesus' teaching, the word that still echoes in the church, in the community of people who follow Jesus and call him Lord.

In the Christian community at Corinth powerful teaching opposed powerful teaching.

Charismatic teachers opposed one another and Paul. Paul introduced a criterion (*1 Corinthians 8:1–13*) to help people decide between true and false prophecy, true and false lifestyle. Paul exalted love (agape) over knowledge (gnosis). Love (the "wisdom" and "power" of the cross) builds up the community, because in love the community taps the very life of God. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Epiphany points out a spiritual conflict that haunts humanity: we would see Jesus, we want to know God and yet, we fear God's presence! The plea of the people of Israel, in our Old Testament text, for the diffidence of God, is acknowledged by God. Prophets are given to Israel. But it is not enough. Jesus himself is insufficient for those who mistakenly clamor for proof of God's presence. In the midst of dissatisfaction, God's people often tragically overlook the most significant revelations near them.

The thirst for the signs of God remains unabated today. Faiths based on fear and alternative gods, religions of positive thinking, are all presented as effective methods for grasping God's power and presence. Faith becomes the magical manipulation of God rather than a loving and trusting response to his epiphanies.

Interestingly, some hymns come in the form of prayers which, truthfully speaking, we find difficult to pray. One hymn names those inappropriate forms of seeking revelations and prays for the contrary to happen.

> I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
> No sudden rending of the veil of clay.
> No angel visitant, no opening skies.
> But take the dimness of my soul away
> (LBW #486).

Can we rest contentedly in God without the restless search for epiphanies which are not for us? This season and this Sunday, in particular, proclaim where we will find and have always found the pleasure of Our Lord's presence. In his Word, his Meal, his healing presence in the congregation of the faithful, we hear the assurance. The epiphanies, like the grace, *are* enough. SKH

PROPHETIC VOICE

"A teaching that is new, with authority behind it" (Mark 1:27). The church, in terms of its traditional institutional practice, like the scribal tradition of the synagogue, too often lacks the capacity for doing something new in relation to life and death situations in the world. But that is what made the mission of Jesus true and authentic; his identity and purpose were not shaped by the institutional tradition he was part of, but by the needs of the oppressed and his obedience to the call of God to make things new. DP

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 7, 1988

Psalm 147:1–13
Job 7:1–7
1 Corinthians 9:16–23
Mark 1:29–39

"Believe with joy"

A FIRST READING OF THE TEXTS

Job 7:1–7. Job had his sorrows, and his friends surrounded him with advice, as friends will. Job speaks in chapters 6 and 7, between Eliphaz and Bildad. He compares human life to the existence of a hireling working for a bare

subsistence wage and to a life of slavery: months of emptiness, nights of misery. His flesh is clothed with worms and dirt. His days run swifter than a weaver's shuttle and they come to end without hope.

The picture painted by Job is bleak, with none of the optimism and easy answers of his friends. What is this picture doing here in our congregations on Sunday morning? This is the world in which God's Son appeared with healing. The Collect: "Almighty God, you sent your only Son as the Word of life for our eyes to see and our ears to hear."

Mark 1:29–39. From doing battle in the wilderness with Satan (1:12–13), from the miracle of the call of disciples and their immediate response (1:16–20), from the synagogue where Jesus cast out a demon so that all were amazed (1:21–29), Jesus turns to the really ordinary stuff of human life: to Peter's mother-in-law, ill with a fever (1:29–31).

Mark then paints a scene (1:32–34) in which Jesus stands like a pillar of health and strength, surrounded by "all the sick and demon possessed," people sick with all kinds of diseases. And Jesus had more than advice for them!

Next day, a long while before dawn, Jesus rose and went out to a lonely place to pray, to commune with God, to gather strength. and he rose from prayer, as he had come from baptism, with the sweet resolve to display the saving power of God. "Let's go on," he said to his disciples, "on to the next towns" and the next ones after those, "that I may preach" and proclaim and announce the display God's will and God's wealth "there also; for that is why I *came out.*"

"Came out" from the town? from Capernaum? from God? He is God's own coming out into the world, the world that sometimes suffers as Job described it.

He came out to heal, to cast out demons. He came out with grace and power.

He came out to confront evil and even to suffer, if that is what it takes to overcome evil.

He came out not alone but with disciples. And he still calls disciples and summons them, "Let's go out" together.

1 Corinthians 9:16–23 is one of a series of remarkable autobiographical passages in the letters of Paul. He heard the call to go out with the Gospel, to go out to Jews and Gentiles, to the near and to the far, denying himself and sensitive to their traditions, "that I might by all means save some." RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

One of the great agonies in the life of a believer comes in the confrontation with pain and suffering. Why me? Why this person I love? Why this life-threatening disease or suicide? God's people are, at some time or another, all named Job. We have sat in the ashes and experienced the nights of emptiness and no one among us has escaped the nights of misery.

Jesus' appearance as a healer is another epiphany which we are granted. He not only heals but proclaims it his purpose to create wholeness among God's beloved. The hopelessness of Job is vividly and definitively overcome in the life of Jesus.

It is significant that this aspect of the Gospel has been reaffirmed recently in the "Service of the Word for Healing." With prayer and Word, laying on of hands and anointing with oil, Jesus comes again through his people to heal and bless. It is a service which offers more than it can name to those frightened and pressured by events and problems beyond human comprehension. The service taps one of the earliest insights we had as children. It was not the burn of the iodine or the bandages that stuck in the wrong places which eventually wrought the cure, but the knowledge that the comforting arms and hug of a parent would make it better. It always did. In the presence of loving attention, we find what we seek most.

This epiphany of Christ as healer only more succinctly points to the mystery of suffering and

for all the inevitability of death. Yet, in Jesus, the Great Physican, the tragic outcome of suffering is defeated. There is in Jesus' ministry a terrible boldness, a facing off against the enemies of God. G. K. Chesterton, in the final words of his book, *Orthodoxy,* offers a striking analysis of this boldness, the last of the greatest epiphanies.

> Solemn supermen and imperial diplomatists are proud of restraining their anger. He never restrained His anger. He flung furniture down the front steps of the temple, and asked men how they expected to escape the damnation of Hell. Yet, He restrained something. I say it with reverence: there was in that shattering personality a thread that must be called shyness. There was something that He hid from all men when He went up a mountain to pray. . . . There was someone thing that was too great for God to show us when He walked upon our earth; and I have sometimes fancied that it was His mirth. SKH

PROPHETIC VOICE

Jesus did not go off seeking solitude and prayer because he lacked compassion for the sick; but neither was he an exploiter of the sick and the diseased for personal gain. He had come to preach and proclaim "the kingdom of God" as a reality that was near and within the reach of humanity. And he knew there were no short-cuts and no easy or manipulative ways to effect change in God's world. The sick and Jesus' disciples had a similar problem: they too often needed Jesus for the wrong reason. The sick were looking for cures without change, and the disciples wanted change without cures. DP

The Transfiguration of Our Lord February 14, 1988

Psalm 50:1–6
2 Kings 2:1–12a
2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2
Mark 9:2–9

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2 Kings 2:1–12a, The Ascension of Elijah. At the Jordan River, Elijah struck the water with his mantle, and the water was parted and Elijah and Elisha crossed over on dry ground (v.8). Elijah enjoyed the same power as Moses at the Red Sea, as Joshua at the Jordan. The power of God, vital and active at Israel's founding, lives on in the history of the people of God in the prophet Elijah, and not in Elijah only, but in the mantle, and in the ones upon whom Elijah will cast his mantle—Elisha and then all those who take up the prophetic calling after Elisha.

Elijah: "What shall I do for you before I depart?" Elisha: "Give me a double measure of your spirit." That is a request for the eldest son's share of the inheritance. In effect Elisha is saying, "Let me be your heir, your successor, who keeps your treasure intact."

The wish will be granted, provided Elisha had the spiritual eyes to see the realities surrounding Elijah, the power to see him as he goes to heaven. A chariot of heavenly fire and horses of fire separated the two prophets, and Elijah ascended into heaven by a whirlwind, a divine storm. And Elisha saw it and knew it and confessed it. And so Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah.

Mark 9:2–9. Moses and Elijah and Jesus. The ancient pair in deep conversation with Jesus. The last page of the Pentateuch, the final

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page of the "Five Books of Moses," describes the end of Moses in mysterious fashion. It says that Moses was 120 years old and yet his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated. And when he died in the presence of God, God and no human buried him. And when the children of Israel came seeking the body of their fallen leader, they could not find it. And the legend grew in Israel from that time on that Moses had not died at all but that he had been taken up by God as Elijah had been.

Moses and Elijah, great ancient leaders, alive with God. Alive with God and ready to reappear on behalf of the people of God. The Messiah, God's agent for establishing the kingdom of God, would be like Moses, like Elijah, would speak and act with the wisdom and the power of Moses and Elijah.

Why do they have their conversation just here in Mark's Gospel? What is it all about? Is it Moses = Law, and Elijah = Prophets? So that Jesus = fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets? In a sense, but only in a sense.

The meeting occurs right after Caesarea Philippi where Jesus laid two heavy messages on his disciples: 1) He himself goes the way of the cross, and 2) every disciple is called to bear his or her cross on the way to life. That hard message comes across as bad news, a downer, unwelcome, a word of death. But it fulfills in some sense the whole of Scripture and the whole longing of the people of Israel and the whole history of humanity and the cosmos, yearning for life and heading for life. The goal, the *telos,* the target is life, real life with God and with one another. Moses and Elijah are spokesmen for life with God and under God, life in obedience to God and in trust in God, life that says "yes" to God and "no" to all the idols that promise life but can never deliver.

The presence of Moses and Elijah is assurance that the God of life blesses Jesus and the words of Jesus, blesses the way of the cross. The way of Jesus and of discipleship is not a way of death but a way of triumph, of resurrection, of new creation. That's why Transfiguration stands on the border between Epiphany and Lent.

Paul in *2 Corinthians 3:12–4:2* contemplates the glory of Moses and the far greater glory of Jesus. In Transfiguration and Resurrection we see and behold the splendor of Jesus and it is no "fading splendor." What we see was always his possession: Jesus Christ is "the likeness of God" (2 Cor. 4:4), and God who in the beginning said, "Let there be light!" has now "shone in our hearts to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).

His glory is powerful and transfigures all who see and know it, conforming us more and more to his own likeness. RHS

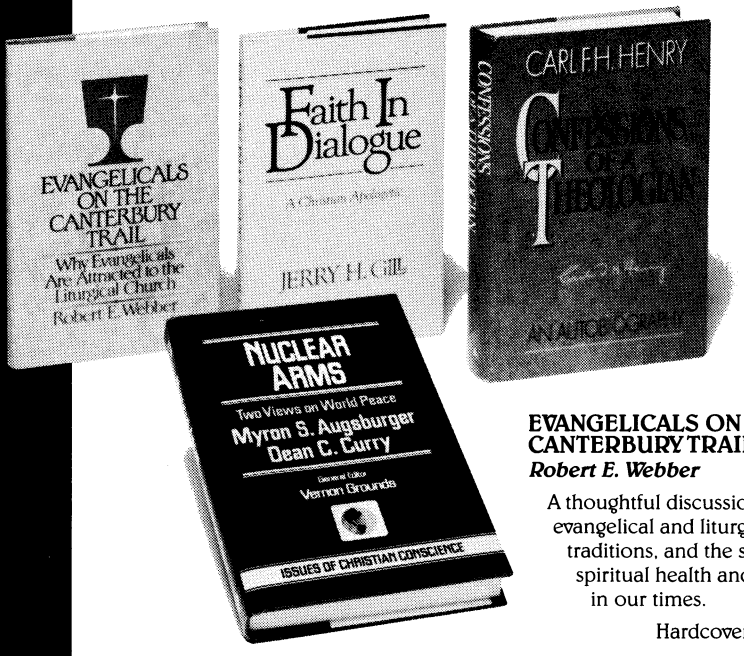
PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

There is something amusing about Peter's reaction to the event called the transfiguration, for his managerial instincts are awakened by the occurrence. With true entrepreneurial insight he reassures Jesus, "Master! it is well we are here. Let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But the event passes and the disciples see no one "but Jesus only." The marvelous affirmation of God for his beloved Son dazzles the disciples as they suddenly see the dominant figures of their heritage. But then it is over. Just Jesus.

On this feast day, the many epiphanies that have been reflected in the season's readings—God as healer, sender, faithful, caller—are all resolved again into the figure of Jesus. There is both glory and impending tragedy. Easter morning and bitter cross meet in this day. Old and new are held in perfect balance with the equipoise of a ballet dancer on points. With the disciples we, too, wonder, "What next??"

It strains all credulity that *this* Jesus is the Son of God. What did the disciples do about this Jesus? Their responses were varied. What do we do with him? The day of the Transfiguration makes us ask that question anew. And by doing so, we join all in history, who have been faced with the person of Jesus. Muttered one pagan

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no time ago
or else a life
walking in the dark
i met christ

jesus) my heart
flopped over
and lay still
while he passed (as

close as i'm to you
yes closer
made of nothing
except loneliness

(e.e. cummings)

Transfiguration Day says we have been blessed with the epiphany of God in our lives, and his Name is Jesus. SKH

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A Song Worth Singing

John H. Tietjen
President, Christ Seminary—Seminex

This article is my swan song in *Currents'* series of articles by seminary presidents. On December 31 of this year I lay down the responsibility that has been mine as seminary president for eighteen years.

Over the years I have learned much about theological education. In the early years, at Concordia Seminary, we couldn't do much. As seminary students reminded me, it's not easy to drain the swamp when you are up to your elbows in alligators. In the later years we were able to do much that is right in the creative community of faculty, students, staff, and constituency that was Christ Seminary—Seminex.

But there is so much that still needs to be done in theological education. What song would I sing if I were to continue as a seminary president? As my swan song here are seven concerns that I think need priority attention at Lutheran seminaries in the years ahead.

1) *The seminary must be a worshipping community.* That means more than conducting chapel services. A seminary is the church at school. Just as worship is the heart of the church's life, so it must be at a seminary. Isn't that how it is now? Not when only a minority of students and faculty are present for worship! What happens in classroom, library, and study—in the curriculum and out of it—must find expression in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.

2) *Sermons are for preaching the gospel.* In general, the quality of preaching has improved, I think, since I started out in pastoral ministry. Sermons today are more interesting, but telling stories is not enough. Sermons today are more biblical, but preaching the content of Bible texts is not enough. The tragedy is that many people think they are preaching the gospel when they are not. Seminaries need to teach preaching that empowers for faith and life through the gospel and that never fails to ground the good news in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sermons have no other purpose than the proclamation of the gospel.

3) *Lutheranism is a living confession. The Book of Concord,* especially its Augsburg Confession, is not just the product of history, a memento of the Lutheran tradition. It tells us what Lutheran means: confession that we are justified by faith is essential for the integrity of the gospel. Seminary students need to be immersed in the Lutheran confessional writings so that they can help the people they serve understand that they are the people of God with a special evangelical witness to make in the body of Christ.

4) *Ministry is learned by doing.* Doesn't everyone agree? Of course! But what we do

shows that we think people learn how to do ministry in the classroom or library or study. The research data tells us that the year of internship is the most significant of all seminary years for learning how to do ministry. We need to act on the implications of the data by providing a much closer interrelation between theology and praxis.

5) *Ministry is the work of all the baptized people of God.* A quiet revolution has been going on in the church as the people have discovered that ministry is their vocation through baptism. At seminary we have been talking a good game about pastors as enablers of the people of God. It is time for us to get serious about the role of pastors in empowering people for the ministry of daily life.

6) *Pastors are peers in need of one another.* We still have too many Lone Rangers and prima donnas in pastoral ministry. We breed the species in the competitive environment of the educational system. But pastors are peers with particular gifts for the common good. A seminary must be the breeding ground for collegiality rather than competition.

7) *Seminaries must be flexible in living up to standards.* As Jesus reminded us, God made the sabbath for us, not us for the sabbath. Standards we need, but we don't need rigidity in living up to them. In admissions, curriculum, and approval for ordination we need to adapt our standards to the special needs of particular people.

My time for singing the song above in the halls of academe is over. But you can expect to hear me singing it in other areas. It's a song worth singing.

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