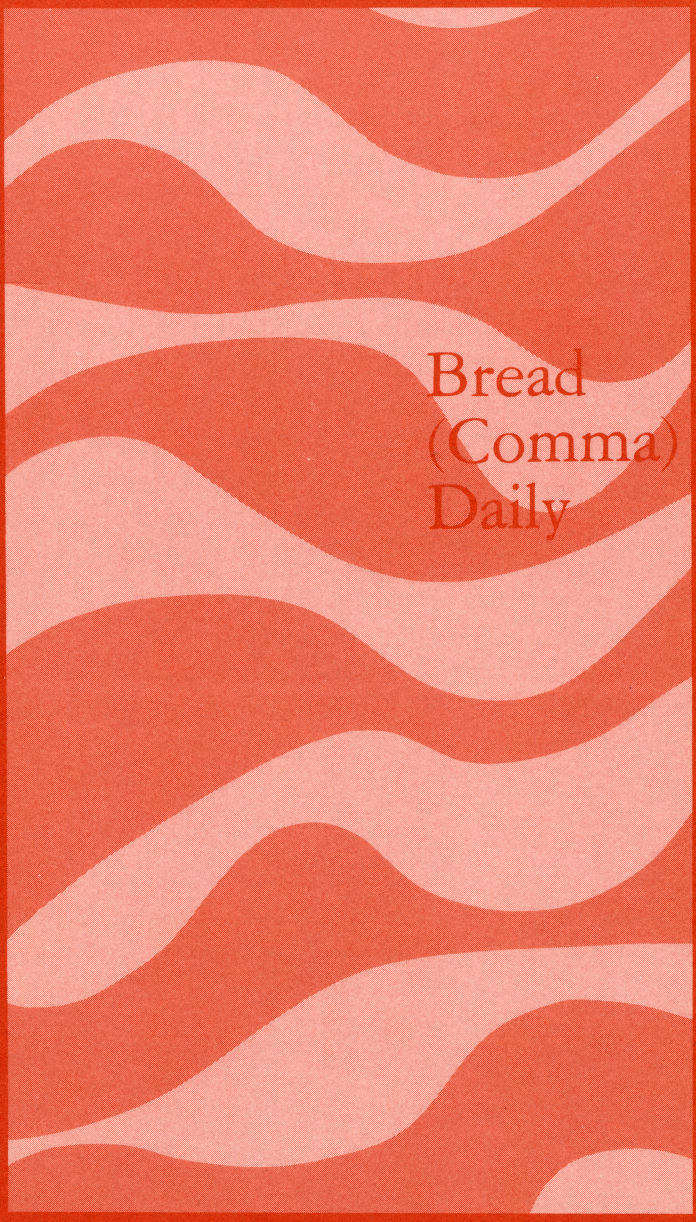
August 1987 Volume 14 Number 4



CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

Currents

in Theology and Mission

Published by

Christ Seminary—Seminex

in cooperation with

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

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CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION (ISSN: 0098-2113) is published bimonthly, February, April, June, August, October, December by Christ Seminary—Seminex, a non-profit organization, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Annual subscription rate: $13.50 in the U.S. and Canada ($15.50 overseas). Two-year rate: $25.00 in the U.S. and Canada ($29.00 overseas). Three-year rate: $36.00 in the U.S. and Canada ($42.00 overseas). Second Class Postage Paid at Chicago, IL and at other mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A.

CURRENTS is indexed in *Elenchus, IZBW, NTA, OTA, Religion Index I* (formerly *IRPL*), *Religious and Theological Abstracts,* and *Theologische Literaturzeitung.*

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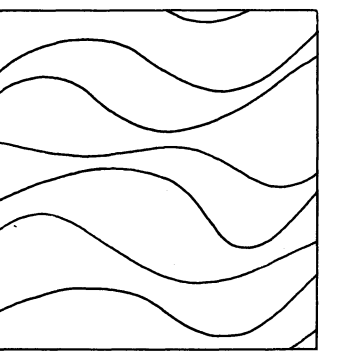
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Bread (Comma) Daily

There are many kinds of bread—wheat, rye, pumpernickel, sourdough, and all the rest. In American slang, "bread" means money; in the Bible "heavenly bread" refers to the manna in the wilderness while "bread of life" is an alternate designation for the Christ. In the Catechism "bread" designates everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body. The petition for "daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer may originally have had an eschatological ring. Mention daily bread in America's ghettos or on the streets of Bombay, however, and your audience will think only of the staff of life, of basic nourishment for an aching stomach, and of the calories that spell the difference between life and death.

Larry Rasmussen helps us to think aright about hunger: Hunger is rooted in debilitating poverty. Since justice is due the malnourished and starving, all of us need to make the eradication of hunger our number one agenda item. Abolishing hunger will result from the pull of a compelling moral vision and the push of the intolerable and painful facts. Each of us is connected to the lives of the hungry; each of us has a part—great or small—of the answer to the petition for daily bread. The problem is daunting, but not overwhelming: we are, dear friends, faced with insurmountable opportunities.

Ross Goodman suggests that Christ's presence in the Eucharist strengthens and motivates Christians to act in behalf of the hungry. To be in communion with Christ is also to be in communion with those in need. The Lord's Supper, in fact, is a blueprint for human behavior: We receive from the Lord and we share with one another around his table. The Eucharist helps us to look beyond our shrunken horizons and increase our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. At the Holy Supper we are assured of God's promise of life and called to be his promise to a hungry world. This essay is winner of the **Arthur Carl Piepkorn** prize, awarded each year by Christ Seminary—Seminex to a senior or graduate student at one of the Lutheran seminaries in North America.

Is there a Lutheran pacifism? Yes, says **Paul Kuenning,** and bases his proposal on pietistic traditions of the 19th century. Lutheranism has usually relied on the Two Kingdoms model in ethical discussions, often leading to pessimism in regard to earthly existence or confining of the Sermon on the Mount to the private sphere. Before the Civil War, however, a number of Lutheran pietists opposed slavery and tried to abolish war. A modern "practical pacifism" would oppose war and nuclear weapons, but participate actively in politics and government. It is a real tragedy that Christians, united in their desire for peace, often waste their energies in vain arguments over which group advocates the most practical, the most responsible, or the most Christian strategy. Lutheran Pietism, best exemplified by S. S. Schmucker and the Franckean Synod, offers a clear theological basis for the development of a practical pacifism.

At the time of the Reformation Erasmus and Luther held opposite opinions about veneration of the saints. **Endel Kallas** wants to reclaim, with Luther, the saints for the evangelical church. The saints are worthy of devotion because they, with their vices and virtues, provide new comfort and strength for the faithful in time and in history. Saints in the Bible sinned and believed; they knew all the ups and downs that we all experience in human life. The calendar in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* provides about seven saints a month for our consideration. Saints, of course, are not only those pious Christians who are dead and canonized by the church; they include all the baptized who struggle to live out their vocation today. To call oneself a saint is no presumption, but an act of gratitude and a confession of God's blessing.

Robert C. Fulton finds that we all at times become "builders" who reject the sick, the handicapped, the poor, and others who do not serve our purposes. Psalm 118 reminds us that God is the rehabilitator of all such rejected stones—and even of the "builders" who reject stones. We are now free from rejection and from the need to reject others. As rehabilitated rejects we recount the deeds of the Lord and reenact these deeds as we help others to sing God's new song.

David H. Miley has a spirited response to Duane Mehl's discussion of Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick* (*Currents,* February, 1987, 5–12). He notes how Updike uses Barthian theology to attack humanity's attempts to save itself.

Saints, who are rehabilitated rejects, unable to save themselves, seek the peace of the whole world, a peace marked by the absence of conflict and the presence of wholeness and fullness for all of God's children. Because the lack of daily bread is so severe, Christians hunger for Eucharistic bread so that they might be the agents of God's promise to feed a hungry world. That, in a paragraph, is what this issue is all about.

For the hungry, the gravest issue today is noted in every "Our Father." For them it is filed, simply and uncomfortably, as:

Bread, daily.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

The Persistence of Hunger

Larry Rasmussen
Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics
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In 1974 delegates from every region of the planet gathered in Rome for the World Food Conference. The head of the United States' delegation, then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, included this observation in his address:

> The profound promise of our era is that for the first time we may have the technical capacity to free mankind from the scourge of hunger. Therefore, today we must proclaim a bold objective—that within a decade no child will go to bed hungry, that no family will fear for the next day's bread, and that no human being's future and capacities will be stunted by malnutrition.



That decade has now come and gone. We still have the hoped-for technical capacity to eradicate hunger. Yet millions of children go to bed hungry. Indeed, the sum total of suffering from hunger and malnutrition may well today exceed what it did in 1974. Why? Why the persistence of hunger? What lets this scourge live on?

Any survey of the human reality of hunger quickly uncovers political, scientific, demographic, ecological, and economic dimensions. And beneath those surfaces reside dimensions of moral commitment and character, and of human will and imagination, indeed of religious conviction and response.

There are local manifestations of hunger, and an awful global reach as well. Hunger is both problem and symptom, both tragedy and a result of human choice, a manifestation of both fickle nature and corrupt society. Hunger is obviously and most importantly a matter of the body, but it also has institutional and far-reaching systemic reality. (Indeed, the great new fact about hunger is that it is endemically systemic rather than an episodic matter of weather.) Hunger is awesomely physical. But food and eating and drinking, and the living and dying bundled up with them, have always been profoundly spiritual and social as well.

We can be forgiven if we shrink from facing the complexity of hunger, and grasp for solutions that don't ask for real changes in our own lives. But that would be to ignore hunger's reality and, indeed, to abandon the hungry. So we must try to wrap our minds around hunger, overwhelming as it is.

In ethics we say there are three elements required for adequately addressing a social problem such as hunger. I will use these three elements to organize reflections on hunger's persistence. Otherwise I fear our grasp of the situation will be not unlike Edna St. Vincent Millay's testimony.

> Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour
> Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
> Of facts . . . they lie unquestioned, uncombined.

We can combine and question by realizing that any credible stand on a major human issue such as hunger, and the implementation of that stand, entails at least these three elements.

There is *conceptual adequacy,* the way in which the issue-at-hand is approached, analyzed, and deliberated. *How* we think about hunger, or how we do *not* think about it, is critical to our response.

Social prerequisites must be in place, or created. Thinking well is in vain if there are deficient institutional forms and policies for enacting decisions or, indeed, for making them in the first place. Even if our ethical stands are conceptually sound, without the "earthen vessels" of systems, institutions, and policies, our stands on hunger would be too short-lived to matter much.

The *moral character* of people is the third element. Sound investigation of hunger issues and accessible forums for public action are impotent if the kinds of people who will venture morally sensitive actions on weighty matters are not present, or their numbers are too few. To adapt an idea from physics: a kind of critical mass of moral character and conviction is necessary if an issue as deep and wide as hunger is to be effectively addressed. Without sufficient moral commitment, nothing will happen.

Conceptualizing the Problem

The Factual Realities of Hunger. Details are no doubt important, but the broad outlines and the most basic and intractable of the brute facts are clear and known. For example, Oxfam reminds us:

—More than one billion people in the world are chronically undernourished. Between 700 and 800 million people live on incomes insufficient to secure the basic necessities of life.

—15 to 20 million people die each year of hunger-related causes, including diseases brought on by lowered resistance due to malnutrition. Three out of every four of these are children. Over 40 percent of all deaths in poor countries occur among children under five years old.

> We must try to wrap our minds around hunger.

—At least 100,000 children in Asia and Africa go blind each year from vitamin A deficiency caused by inadequate diet. More than 500 million people in poor countries suffer from chronic anemia due to inadequate diet.

—In wealthy countries, 12 to 15 out of every 1,000 newborn infants die before their first birthday. In poor countries, 100 out of every 1,000 newborns die before their first birthday.

—One out of every four human beings has no access to safe drinking water. In the 40 lowest income countries, fewer than 30 percent of the people have access to safe drinking water.

—In Britain, there is one doctor for every 880 people. Nigeria has one doctor for every 44,620 people, while Ethiopia has one doctor for every 73,000 people.

—In 83 countries of the world, 3 percent of the landowners control almost 80 percent of the land.

—Less than 60 percent of the world's cultivable land is currently under cultivation. Less than 20 percent of the potentially cultivable land in Africa and Asia is under cultivation. Most of that land is controlled by large landowners or is open country.

—The price of one military tank could provide classrooms for 30,000 students, or improved storage facilities for 100,000 tons of rice.

—What the world spends in half a day on military purposes could finance the entire malaria eradication program of the World Health Organization.

—In the wealthy countries, 20 percent to 25 percent of the average family's income is spent on food. In most poor countries, the average rural poor family must spend as much as 75 percent to 80 percent of its income on food.

—Every day, the world produces two pounds of grain for every man, woman, and child on earth. That is enough to provide everyone 3,000 calories a day, well above the recommended daily minimum of 2,300 calories.

—The rich countries, including the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and Australia, consume 70 percent of the world's food grains. Most of that is used to feed beef and dairy cattle.

This is only part of the "meteoric shower of facts" on hunger that fall to earth as a truly acid rain. Let me simplify them immensely, and at the same time say *why* the facts about hunger make it such an intractable reality.

Facts alone never tell us how to respond.

From the facts given you may have noted that weather was not included. It could be, it should be. There are terrible crop failures, especially in East Africa, where famine has stalked the land like the grim reaper. But adding a weather report won't fundamentally alter the major conclusion consistently drawn since the World Food Conference a decade ago: The basic cause of world hunger is poverty, and the basic cause of poverty is human. Bluntly stated, the persistence of hunger is the persistence of poverty; the solution to poverty will simultaneously be the solution to hunger. Moore and Lappe, in *Food First!*, have told us the truth: Hunger per se is not as fated or circumstantial as we thought. Enough food is produced virtually everywhere to sustain the people of that region.

The Moral Vision. The facts alone never tell us how to respond. The facts always interact with moral norms and deep convictions and commitments. That interaction sets the direction of response. Without compelling moral norms and commitments, facts will simply lie dumb, unquestioned and uncombined.

It bears remembering that for Jews, the people of the Passover Seder, the central ritual act is the sharing of food. It bears remembering that for Christians, the people of the Lord's Table, the central ritual act is also the sharing of food. And it bears remembering that for both Jews and Christians, the liturgical sharing is done with a hope for all creation and a commitment to the breaking of bread in abundance for and with all.

Four Core Concepts

Creation, the first key concept, for all its fecund diversity, is one—human and nonhuman together, organic and inorganic, natural, social and cultural, ancestors, contemporaries and posterity, the whole ball of atoms.

This unity of creation is important so that you will understand the sense of *neighbor*, the second concept. All are neighbors. Jesus voices the radical reach of this when he construes the enemy as neighbor and instructs his followers to treat all neighbors with a regard equal to the regard they accord themselves and their closest compatriots. Near and far, friend and foe, present and future creatures, all are neighbors. In H. Richard Niebuhr's phrase, the neighbor is "all that participates in being."

Justice is the third key notion. While the vision of creation is that of harmonious,

abundant, secure life together, the actual experience of the world is creation broken, laced with deep discord, stirred by profound need and want—that meteoric shower of brute facts on hunger, for example. Fissures of suffering, pain, and violation rend nature, psyche, and society. Our ancestors in the faith knew this. From it emerged their notion of justice. Biblically, justice is the rendering, amid limited resources and the conditions of brokenness, of whatever is required for the fullest possible flourishing of creation.

Community is the last term to introduce. In the most basic sense, the primary unit of reality is the whole creation of God! But that's rather awesome in its reach, and our experience of it, as a totality, is more mystical and religious than it is everyday and ordinary. Our most common community experience is of partial community only. And that is the point. Some neighbors are always outside of the range of our mercy and the reach of our resources. Reigning policies, institutions, benefits, and privileges always exclude some and include others. Some are sated while others starve.

Let's see the stark reality, and the normative vision, in the round. Creation is one, though diseased, corrupted, awry, a friend to terror. All are neighbors, with something like an equal claim to the requisites for life in their niches of creation; yet the requisites for life for millions of neighbors go unmet. Justice is securing those requisites for nature and society. Where does justice begin? Wherever community is flawed. And community is flawed wherever some are left out, marginalized, cut off from life's bounty and love's ways, excluded from all those pilgrimages that will end at the Messianic banquet. When community is whole, creation is cured. Then God's hopes are realized and there is rejoicing in heaven.

In sum: 1) thinking about hunger means an unflinching honesty about the reality of hunger. Basically it is suffering rooted in debilitating poverty, which kills cells and souls alike. It is the lot of almost unimaginable numbers of our neighbors. 2) Sound thinking about hunger is also responding to this massive blotch on creation with a certain mind-set and set of convictions and commitments. Those are centered in a planetary vision of inseparable kinship with all creatures, great and small. The malnourished and starving are our co-siblings in creation. Justice is their due, and life together (community) is the goal for us all.

Yet empirical analysis and a moral vision are insufficient, though they are certainly vital and necessary. We must talk now of social requisites.

Social Requisites for Addressing Hunger

In this scheme of the three elements of a credible response to hunger, social requisites refer to the systems, institutions, and policies needed for addressing hunger satisfactorily in a working strategy to fight hunger. But the topic is the persistence of hunger and, in that connection, we must see how existing systems, institutions, and policies stand in the way of coming to grips with the issue of hunger or get in the way of fighting poverty.

We have asserted that poverty is the *basic* cause of hunger. But poverty is itself not a

single thing or a simple thing and is not generated by only one kind of economic arrangement. Nor is poverty the *only* cause of hunger, even though it is basic. Other causes include:

—The continuation of historically unprecedented population growth.

—Resource abuse, inadequate land and water care.

—The complexity and political difficulty of agrarian reform.

—The colonial legacy of dependency, often continued as neo-colonialist international trade relationships.

—Low status for agricultural development and other aspects of rural development, in contrast with priority given to urban, industrial development.

—The military budget as a strain and drain on national resources, for non-productive ends.

—The force of traditions which impede new methods and technologies that might aid agricultural production and conservation.

—The inequality of wealth and income distribution, which skews markets to overconsumption in some quarters and poverty in others, both within nations and among them.

—Geographical and climatic factors.

—Political and economic oppression that brakes reform and sometimes drives people from the land into refugee status.

—Educational materials and systems that fail to understand hunger, or to communicate it effectively when it is understood.

—Inadequate food reserves for bridging times when hunger is temporary and circumstantial.

—Foreign aid that has exacerbated problems rather than solved them and that has been targeted to the less needy rather than the more needy.

—The moral apathy of affluence.

—The relative lack of institutions, international, national, and local, which amplify the voice of the poor and hungry and advocate on their behalf.

Any of these is itself a major topic. Together they are rather overwhelming, if not to the intellect, certainly to any planning and action for alternative social arrangements. And this list is only partial. Yet it makes clear that both the causes and solutions to hunger are multiple and heavily institutional.

Moral Character

Understanding the complexity of hunger and the corollary complexity of solutions to it will not avail if no one is moved to respond. Even the presence of a moral vision will accomplish nothing if persons are not present who are ready to act upon that vision.

Our lives are bundled together.

Let me pass along Langdon Gilkey's experience and reflections. In 1943 he and 1,500 other foreigners were confined by the Japanese in Northern China. The Japanese con-

trolled the borders of the camp but left them to decide among themselves how to organize their own mini-society. Gilkey says the most important contributions to this society-in-the-making in the first months were practical skills, technical genius, and administrative cunning. People with know-how and people who were creative problem-solvers were the VIPs. Gilkey, a budding theologian, decided that religious and philosophical reflection as well as moral inquiry were interesting but not essential to society. Society needed a pragmatic spirit and technological skills. That would suffice.

Gilkey was himself soon given an important practical task. He was placed in charge of housing. From that he learned something else, as he noted in his journal:

> Gradually, however, as I encountered more and more unexpected problems in my work in housing, I began to realize that [my] confident attitude toward things simply did not fit the realities of camp life. It was not that our material crises seemed any less urgent, or that our minds were any less capable of dealing with them. Rather, new sorts of problems kept arising that improved know-how could not resolve. For over and over what we can only call "moral" or "spiritual" difficulties continually cropped up. Crises occurred that involved not a breakdown of techniques, but a breakdown in character, showing the need for more moral integrity and self-sacrifice. . . . On a critical level equal to an outbreak of dysentery or a stoppage of our bread supply, moral breakdowns were so serious that they threatened the very existence of our community. It became increasingly evident to me that unless these inward crises could be resolved, the entire microcosmic civilization which we had so painstakingly established to feed and care for us would not live much longer. I began to see that without moral health, a community is as helpless and lost as it is without material supplies and services.

"The entire microcosmic civilization which we had so painstakingly established *to feed and care for us* would not live much longer . . . without moral health." That can be stated in positive terms.

Abolishing most hunger requires sound analysis and hard thinking. Wrong action often follows from wrong understanding. Abolishing most hunger will result from the pull of a compelling moral vision as well as the push of intolerable facts. Changing hundreds of institutional and policy patterns, large and small, is clearly necessary. So is the slow, sometimes sudden, transformation of moral character, the steady nurture of moral health among us all.

All of this carries two important conclusions.

1) There is no one whose life is not connected to the lives of the hungry. It has long been a meaningful religious sentiment to say we are "members one of another," indeed members of the same body. But in our time it is *factually* true as well, and with undeniable force. It is true for better and for worse. Our lives are bundled together.

2) This being the case, there is no one, young or old, educated or not, of whatever race, sex, or creed, and gifted with whatever natural or acquired skills and "know-how," who does not have *some* piece of *some* part of the ached-for *answer* to the petition for *daily bread.* As Pogo observed, "We are, dear friends, faced with insurmountable opportunities."

The Lord's Supper and Human Hunger

Ross Goodman
Graduate Student
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

In his essay "The One Eucharist for the One World,"[1] Arthur Carl Piepkorn develops a Christology in which the Eucharist prepares and motivates us for service to the world. He describes the Eucharist as a unique channel through which

> we receive the strength that we need in order to convert merely making a living into a Christian vocation. Here . . . God gives us the encouragement that we need in order to look beyond the

This essay is the winner of the fourth annual Arthur Carl Piepkorn prize, awarded by Christ Seminary—Seminex. The essay competition and its prize were established in memory of Arthur Carl Piepkorn, a deceased colleague of the Christ Seminary—Seminex faculty, in order to build on his theological and ecumenical contributions to the church. The competition is open to senior students at Lutheran seminaries and to Lutheran graduate students of theology.

[1]Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist for the One World," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43 (1972):94–108.

> shrunken horizons into which we perennially slip. Here the eating of our Lord's body and the drinking of his blood are a part of our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. . . . The power of the Eucharist to strengthen and fortify 20th-century Christians for their witness has not diminished.[2]

The creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America represents an expanding horizon for the church. Such an expansion must be accompanied by a greater mission of bringing to the world the Gospel of Jesus Christ spoken and enacted in Word and Sacrament.

Perhaps the most significant way for the new church to expand its present mission to the world is for more of its individual members to make it their own. Piepkorn's essay offers many possibilities through its emphasis on the deep interrelatedness of the Eucharist and mission. This essay will focus primarily on how the presence of Christ in the Liturgy of Holy Communion can strengthen and motivate Christians to act in behalf of the hungry.

The crisis of world hunger is becoming increasingly urgent. The millions who starve are the world's poorest and most powerless people; they need the church's advocacy and help. Jesus' continual identification, in word and deed, with the poor and oppressed throughout his earthly ministry is a directive for the Christian mission to the poor. If the church is to continue its mission of bringing the Gospel of Word and Sacrament to the world, it must consider more seriously the enormously complex problems of world hunger and what can be done for hungry human beings.

Daily Bread and the Body of Christ

Maintaining the connection between our daily use of bread and our sacramental use of it has been problematical almost since the time Jesus instituted the Supper at a full meal. The separation of the community meal from the sacramental celebration began already in the second century. Today many create a division between the spiritual and the material world so that the "spiritual" use of sacramental bread belongs to one realm while our daily use of bread belongs to another. Consequently, our own reception of the bread of life has become separated from our sharing bread for life. Such is the problem and struggle of getting our Sunday world and our Monday world together so that the bread we receive at the Lord's table deeply relates to the bread we break and share all week. As Hans-Georg Link has put it:

> Our ecumenical task today is to liberate these two separate parts—the liturgical and sacramental use of bread and the ethical and diaconal use of bread—from their heretical divorce and to unite them again in the light of renewed reflection on the original event on which the eucharist rests and was originally celebrated.[3]

We cannot speak of the personal encounter with Christ in Holy Communion without also speaking about the public mission to which he calls us.

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[2]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 105–6.

[3]Hans-Georg Link, "The Bread of Life," *World Encounter* Special World Hunger Issue, The Division of World Mission and Ecumenism of the LCA, Philadelphia, 1986, p. 44.

The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

In order to foster individual "ownership" of the Christian mission to feed hungry people we need look no further than our weekly celebration of the Eucharist. The Lord's Supper may be interpreted so that its personal and ethical dimensions are strongly and vitally related.

Certainly the most important and profound dimension of the Eucharist is that Christ makes himself present to us through the bread and wine. Articles VII and VIII of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord[4] affirm both Luther's *spacial* emphasis on the real presence of Christ in and under the elements, and Melanchthon's *temporal* emphasis on Christ's presence with us in the event of the Supper. In addition, these articles make the necessary room for affirming the profound mystery of God's presence in the ordinary elements of bread and wine. The real presence of Christ in the Supper points us toward our mission.

Focusing primarily on the presence of Christ's human nature in the Lord's Supper, Piepkorn seeks to relate those who celebrate the Eucharist to those suffering in need around the world. The incarnation of Christ, as recorded in the gospels and as made real in the sacrament, links Jesus with all of humankind.

> In assuming our common humanity He united Himself with all of humanity so that in fact there are no limits to the identification of the Christ of the Eucharist with the one world of human beings. He is linked inseparably with every person. . . .[5]

Moreover, Piepkorn asserts that the Christ present in the Eucharist is the human being who "determines what authentic humanity is, from the first human being to the last."[6] Jesus' authenticity was expressed through his self-giving, self-sacrificing love for the world.

Encountering the presence of Christ in his Supper unites us with humanity so that we might become more human, more authentic. What this means then is that through the Lord's Supper we commune not only with those around the table of our own local congregation but also with those around the world whose tables and cupboards are bare. The writer of 1 John asks us plainly and pointedly: "If any one has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need, yet refuses mercy to that person, how does God's love abide in him or her?" The point that has been made from this text is that to be in communion with Christ is to also be in communion with those in need.[7] As Larry Rasmussen has said:

> There is no one whose life is not connected to the lives of the hungry. It has long been a meaningful religious sentiment to say we are "members one of another" of the family of God, indeed members of the same body. But in our

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[4]See the compilation by Piepkorn on "What the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church Have to Say about Worship and the Sacraments" reprinted in *The Bride of Christ,* Pentecost 1981 (Vol. 5, No. 3):2–35 and especially 22–33 as they relate to the Sacrament of the Altar.

[5]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 96.

[6]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 97.

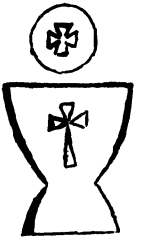
[7]Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, *God's Food, the Relationship between Holy Communion and World Hunger.* Produced for the LCA World Hunger Appeal by the Division for Parish Services, Philadelphia. Ramshaw-Schmidt uses this text to make such a point.

> time it is factually true as well, and with undeniable force. It is true for better and for worse. Our lives are bundled together.[8]

As Christ makes us one with him and thus one with humanity we are drawn more closely and more profoundly into the suffering of those who hunger in a broken world.

Christ the Creator

Piepkorn identifies the underlying theme of Christ the creator in the Lord's Supper. This is particularly appropriate for the Christian mission of extending ourselves to the needs of the hungry. The Christ who gives himself for us, making us one body with him, is the One "through whom all things were made, for whom all things were made, and in whom all things hang together."[9] Christ is the goal toward which creation is moving. At least two significant points can be drawn from this insight.



The first is that of trust. To believe that Christ is the creator and sustainer of the world is to believe that he will not fail in bringing his creation to completion. Despite war, poverty, hunger, and the ultimate threat of nuclear annihilation we must continue to trust and believe, perhaps blindly at times, that God is in control and will ultimately make sense of the world's terrifying absurdities. Without this basic trust in a good end, our mission would all too often seem to be in vain.

Secondly, to recognize Christ as the creator of all things is to begin to understand that he not only brings salvation, but also that he provides the very basis for life: the sun, the sea, the land and all the things we take from them. The trust that Christ freely makes himself present to us through bread and wine serves as a continuous reminder that indeed all that we have comes from him. In his Large Catechism, Luther interpreted the daily bread we pray for in the Lord's Prayer to stand for all the things required to satisfy our needs.

> To put it briefly, this petition [for daily bread] includes everything that belongs to our entire life in this world. . . . Now, our life requires not only food and clothing and other necessities for our body, but also peace and concord in our daily business and in associations of every description. . . . in short, everything that pertains to the regulation of our domestic and our civil or political affairs. For where these two relations are interfered with and prevented from functioning properly, there the necessities of life are also interfered with, and life itself cannot be maintained for any length of time.[10]

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[8]Larry Rasmussen, "The Persistence of Hunger," *World Encounter,* p. 9. A revised version of this article is reprinted in this issue of *Currents.*

[9]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 99.

[10]Martin Luther, "Large Catechism" (1529) from *The Book of Concord,* ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 430.

Here we begin to see how everything, including peace and concord, comes from Christ who freely gives himself to us in his Holy Supper. To recognize that all that we have is a trust from God can free us to share what we have with those for whom the avenues and structures of receiving have broken down.

With Christ as creator of all things and the one who binds us to humanity, we would do well to reconsider what our relative affluence and abundance of goods mean in a hungry world. If the church is to strengthen its identification with the poor and hungry of the world it must do more than simply and "safely" give money and grants. If the poor are to be delivered from hunger and poverty, renouncing part of our own affluence is one step toward the goal of making the Christian mission to the world more our own.

Christ's Concern for the World

Our encounter with Christ in his Supper not only binds us to humanity but also to his concerns for it. The Lord's Supper is in some ways a blueprint for human behavior: we receive from the Lord and share around his table. But one look around us and around the world tells us that a few have received far more than they need and many go without the basic necessities for lack of sharing. This imbalance may be understood up to a certain point, but underneath it there is the profound mystery of sin which leads us to forget who made us and who feeds us. Jesus came into this world and lived among the poor and hungry, feeding them, healing them and proclaiming to them that God's Kingdom was at hand. Jesus' earthly ministry to the poor and hungry powerfully demonstrated God's concern for their plight.

Most of us lack the kind of power needed to break the structures that create and maintain the evils of poverty and hunger. However, Piepkorn is quick to note that

> we cannot allow our relative impotence to paralyze such activity on behalf of the positive goals we can muster. Everyone who eats the body and drinks the blood of Christ . . . can, according to his vocation and influence and resources, conscientiously seek to redeem the area of his own influence for the Christ whose advent into the world had as its aim the destruction of the works of the adversary.[11]

Eucharist can be a symbolic map for the participants' lives.

Indeed Christ continues to be at work in his world. His presence in the life of the church through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a sign of God's care for us and a calling to be a sign of his care to those who are without food and without hope.

There are many arenas in which individuals can have influence and world hunger is one for which all can do something. We can

[11]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 102.

seek out those in our local communities who are suffering from hunger. We can be involved with the government to change the injustices which create and cause hunger. We can also share our personal resources with agencies which work both at the immediate and the systemic levels. All who receive the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ are enabled in some small or large way to aid those who hunger. The Lord's Supper calls us, then, to imitate Christ in our concern for the poor and oppressed of the world.

We are assured that none of our efforts will be in vain, for we know that the simple elements of the Supper symbolize God's renewal of creation.

> What our Lord thus takes is not merely the work of God's creation but the work of human hands and the application of human skills and knowledge. The bread and the wine of the Eucharist stand as it were as symbols of the whole sweep of human activity. . . .[12]

The action and meaning of the Eucharist direct us to be the agents of God's renewal of creation.

The Eucharist as Preparation for Service to the World

Piepkorn notes that the Lord's Supper helps us to "look beyond our shrunken horizons"[13] and increase our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Our sacrifice is our response to hearing and, indeed, eating of God's sacramental promise. It is offered in gratitude and with a commitment to translate faith into love and action in the world outside the sanctuary. Luther said of the sacrament:

> Here your heart must go out in love and learn that it is a sacrament of love. As love and support are given you, you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in his holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing. You must fight, work, pray, and—if you can do no more—have heartfelt sympathy.[14]

In exploring why hunger persists in the world, Rasmussen asserts that aside from working toward correct understandings and conceptualizations of this enormous problem, perhaps the most crucial element of the fight against hunger and poverty is the moral character of people to act. All the resources and strategies are worthless without sufficient moral character. Rasmussen believes that "a kind of critical mass of moral character and conviction is necessary if an issue as deep and wide as hunger is to be effectively addressed."[15] Our celebration of the Eucharist provides the time and place for moral character to be sustained and strengthened so that we might have the conviction to act, even boldly at times. In the Eucharist we are

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[12]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 103.

[13]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 105.

[14]Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* American Edition, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, vol. 35, "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods" (1519) (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 54.

[15]Rasmussen, "The Persistence of Hunger," 4.

given the strength to "convert merely making a living into a Christian vocation."[16] The action and meaning of the liturgy, especially when it is given the kind of full and broad interpretation which Piepkorn develops, can and should direct our individual actions toward a greater and more active concern for the poor and hungry. Piepkorn links eucharistic renewal and social ministry:

> It is not an accident that eucharistic renewal and a renewal of the church's awareness of her servant role in the world outside the walls of her buildings have always tended to go hand in hand, and that liturgy and a sense of awareness of the Christian responsibility for society have so often accompanied one another.[17]

Robert Hovda speaks of the need to "open up the symbols." By this he means the symbols and gestures in the liturgy have become static and shriveled to the point that the breaking of the bread is now the "crisp and tidy crackle of the wafer" and the baptismal bath has become a mere "trickle of water across the head."[18] Paying more careful attention to the meaning of the symbols and gestures of the liturgy, and opening them up so that the Eucharistic bread is one real loaf and the wine shared from one cup, may serve to draw worshipers' attention from the written page of the worship book to a fuller and more visual invitation to conform their own lives to the shape and action of the Lord's Supper. The celebration of the Eucharist can be a kind of symbolic map for the participants' lives, allowing each to find a place on the map and the freedom to travel in the direction of Christian service to the world.

Peipkorn opens up the meaning of the Eucharist toward a call to service when he states that "The power of the Eucharist to strengthen and fortify 20th-century Christians for their witness has not diminished."[19] Indeed it has not, and all those who gather around the Lord's Table are assured of God's promises of life and called to be his promise to a hungry world.

> There is no one, young or old, educated or not, simple or sophisticated, contemplative or aggressive, of whatever race, sex or creed, and gifted with whatever natural or acquired skills and "know-how," who does not have some piece of some part of the ached-for answer to the petition for daily bread.[20]

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[16]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 105.
[17]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 105.
[18]Robert Hovda, *Strong, Loving and Wise* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1976), 73–74.
[19]Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist," 106.
[20]Rasmussen, "The Persistence of Hunger," 9.

Lutheran Pacifism

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Is the title of this article a contradiction in terms? Is there such a thing as a "*Lutheran* Pacifism"? The near unanimous answer to this question from Lutheran Church bodies, leaders, and theologians, has been a categorical "no." Recent statements of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.[1] and the Lutheran Church in America,[2] while honoring the right of the individual to take a pacifist stance as a matter of conscience, considered pacifism outside the theological traditions of Lutheranism. The study documents prepared for the 1984 meeting of the Lutheran World Federation in Budapest[3] expressed agreement with that assessment. Only the American Lutheran Church deviated in any significant degree from this consensus. Its most recent statement on the subject of peace referred to pacifism as a valid historic Christian tradition.[4] However there was no attempt to justify pacifism by an appeal to a specifically "Lutheran" ethic.

For the most part Lutheran Church leaders and theologians not only fail to discover a pacifist motif within their heritage, but explicitly deny that it exists. Thus the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in America, in an address to some members of the U.S. Congress, stated that "the Lutheran Church has never been a pacifist Church," on the basis of "essential theological principles."[5] The Lutheran theologian Trutz Rendtorff is sharply critical of pacifism, and contends that the only real Lutheran tradition is that found within the context of a Two Kingdom construct.[6] The dismissal of pacifism is typical of the approach to the subject taken by the majority of contemporary Lutheran commentators.

In this regard Lutherans have isolated themselves from a fast growing segment of Christendom. The American Catholic Bish-

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[1]"The Witness of U.S. Lutherans on Peace, War, and Conscience," Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., Division of Theological Studies, New York, 1974, p. 3.

[2]"Peace and Politics," statement adopted by the 1984 convention of the Lutheran Church in America, published by the Division of Missions in North America, New York, pp. 9–10.

[3]See *Peace—What Can We Do?,* documents published by the Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, 1984.

[4]"Mandate for Peacemaking," adopted by the 1982 General Convention of the American Lutheran Church exhibit F, in booklet *Church Council—Convention Action,* 1982, p. 1011.

[5]James R. Crumley, Bishop, Lutheran Church in America, quoted in *The Lutheran* 21 (December 1983):23.

[6]Trutz Rendtorff, "Principles and Perspectives for the Ethics of Peace Today," in *Peace—What Can We Do?,* 30–33; also, "The Task of Lutheran Theology in the Efforts for Peace" in *Contemporary Social Issues,* published by the L.C.A. Division for Mission in North America, New York, 1983, pp. 4–7.

ops, in their Pastoral Letter, admitted that the qualitatively new problems posed by the alarming acceleration of the nuclear arms race has brought into question the adequacy of "just-war" doctrines, which from the fourth century until the 1950s had remained the only officially sanctioned Catholic approach. The Bishops turned to pacifism as a legitimate alternative response to the peculiar issues of modern war and of the arms race. What is true of Catholicism is also true of many Protestant denominations. Christendom's traditional approach to the question of war is being challenged today as never before by the increasing sophistication and murderous destructive power of nuclear weapons.

Trust in God sets one free to serve the neighbor.

Recent studies by physicians and scientists have added their solemn authority to the commonly held conviction that even a "limited" nuclear exchange could result in a catastrophic devastation of the entire earth and the possible extinction of all human life. These developments have immeasurably heightened the already grave concerns about the ethical validity and the practical feasibility of the whole strategy of nuclear deterrence and war itself. Lutherans have not remained impervious to this growing awareness. Many of them have been driven toward pragmatic positions approaching the pacifism of the historic peace churches.

It is time for the Lutheran Church to acknowledge that its traditions are not limited to an ethical analysis based upon Two Kingdom concepts and/or "just war" ideas. It is the thesis of this paper that historic Lutheranism, particularly in its Pietist traditions, contains a moral theology conducive to the development of pacifism. It will be argued that this theology needs to be revitalized and reformulated into a type of pacifism which can provide an acceptable alternative approach for Lutheran Christians as they face the critical issues of war and peace in a nuclear world.

Why Lutherans Reject Pacifism

Lutheranism's rejection of pacifism has stemmed from the near total reliance of its ethical theology on the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, along with a closely related dependence upon an eschatology deeply pessimistic in regard to earthly existence. These two factors have limited and negated the practical implications of Martin Luther's otherwise dynamic ethical insights. Luther taught what was later summarized in the Lutheran Confessional books, that "faith is bound to bring forth good fruits" and that a faith which fails to do so is "false and not true." Trust in God sets one free to serve the neighbor's real needs. It was this powerful and creative concept of "faith active in love" (Gal 5:6) that constitutes the great Reformer's most positive contribution to Christian social ethics. Early in his career Luther

indicated that he might apply these insights to a vigorous call for social and political reform. However, Luther later tempered this tendency by lines of distinction which he drew between the secular and spiritual realms of existence. This theological formulation, much later designated as the Two Kingdom doctrine, states that God is at work in both the "realm" of the spiritual and the secular and equally in control of both, but in different ways. On the one hand is personal existence; the individual believer is to live by the spirit of Christ and his teachings. On the other hand, there is life in society where reason rules and God's law constrains evil, by brute force where necessary. This complicated construct confined the absolute ethics of the Sermon on the Mount to the private sphere of human existence. It also substantiated and bolstered the divine validity of secular authority, referred to in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2. Luther was naturally interested in protecting his reformation of the church and biblical doctrine from both the challenge of Rome on the right, and the radical reformers on the left; and this formulation served his purposes well. But in so doing he weighted his political ethic heavily on the side of a conservative obedience to the "powers that be."

His reaction to the Peasants' Revolt of 1525 is the classic example of his willingness to separate "secular" from "Christian" concerns and to condone extremes of military violence so long as they were carried out under the "divine authority" of the recognized rulers. There can be little question that Luther reworked and utilized Augustine's just war theories in developing his own views on war and peace. For instance he declared that if a war is unjust, Christians had no duty to participate, even if commanded to do so by secular authority. Some have interpreted this to mean that Luther held strong anti-war convictions. That viewpoint, however, fails to assess the actual use of just war ideas throughout history. In reality, nearly every war was considered "defensive" and "just" since each involved party determined its justice for themselves. There was no impartial tribunal to which to make effective appeal. This remains a primary deficiency of the just war theory, and one reason that many theologians, including Lutherans, consider it "irrelevant," "useless,"[7] or "no longer applicable."[8] Along with other "just war advocates," Luther was content to allow the secular authorities to judge whether a war was just; and he noted specifically that if individuals could not determine whether a prince was in the right or not, they may obey without peril to their souls. While Augustine had maintained that even a "just war" could only be waged with a "sorrowful love," Luther approached the fervor of the crusades when he asserted that in such a war it is "a Christian act of love confidently to kill, rob and pillage the enemy."[9]

A Pessimistic Eschatology

Luther's views on war and peace were far less influenced by just war ideas than by Two Kingdom concepts. The overall effect of these intricate theological distinctions was to place

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[7]Paul L. Brndjar, "Peace and War," published by the L.C.A. Division for Mission in North America, New York, 1982, p. 7.

[8]Carl F. von Weizaecker, "Presentation on Peace," Lutheran World Federation Seventh Assembly at Budapest, 1984, p. 7.

[9]Martin Luther, "Secular Authority," *Works of Martin Luther,* vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1930), 269.

a negative connotation upon human and secular realities. The importance of activity in the worldly kingdom was never denied, but considered as secondary. This de-emphasis of the secular was exacerbated by an eschatology which viewed history with pessimism. Luther firmly believed that the last day was close at hand. He hoped, in fact, he would live to see it. He was certain that the close of history was far too near for any serious attempt at fundamental social or political change. This does not mean, of course, that he rejected all social reform. He believed God wanted Christians to do what they could in the short time that remained to improve society through acts of love for the neighbor. Justice and peace were desirable, although unrealizable goals. But his eschatology contributed to skepticism about the possibility and the importance of improving society through ethical activity.

In this regard, the reiteration by Lutheran theologians that the Two Kingdom doctrine does not create a dualism but only a "necessary distinction" is largely semantic. What is important is that the Two Kingdom construct places the priority of value on the "spiritual" over the "secular" realm in such a way that it denies to political activity any ultimate significance. William Lazareth has made this crystal clear:

> Nothing the world does—even that part of the world which recognizes and confesses its true Lord—will prepare the way or contribute to the construction of God's Kingdom. . . . There is no organic unity or causal continuity between Christian social action and the Kingdom of God. . . .[10]

Two Kingdoms theology rests upon a radical division of the individual person into a private and public being. Since the Christian lives and acts in both realms interchangeably and simultaneously, the effect is to split up the person of the believer in an artificial and unrealistic manner. The resulting "bifocaled Lutheran vision of peace"[11] with its careful distinctions between the "peacemaking" of Christians in the church and the "peacekeeping" of citizens in the world is at its best simply confusing, and, at its worst, a dangerous distortion of God's peace in the personal and the political context. The American Lutheran Church was right to confess on behalf of all Lutherans that we have

> Unbiblically limited the parameters of peacemaking to peace between God and humanity . . . in primary relationships . . . and have not made essential to our theology the tasks of peacemaking among nations. . . .[12]

A major reason for this limitation lies historically in Lutheranism's dependence for its ethical analysis upon the Two Kingdom doctrine, along with its related pessimistic eschatological perspective.

Lutheran Pietism

While a conservative confessionalism has characterized the Lutheran approach in America for over a century, a very different

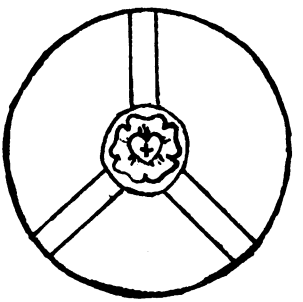
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[10]William Lazareth, "Christian Faith and Culture," *Life in Community—Christian Social Responsibility,* vol. 3, ed. Harold C. Letts, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 72.

[11]Cf. Paul G. Johnson's perceptive article, "The Bifocaled Lutheran Vision of Peace," *The Christian Century* 100 (1983):1178–82.

[12]American Lutheran Church, "Mandate for Peacemaking," p. 1010.

heritage held ascendancy for a century and a half previous to the Civil War. That tradition was German Lutheran Pietism. Pietism arose within the Lutheran Church in Germany toward the latter part of the seventeenth century, as a response to an Orthodoxy whose creedal concerns had almost totally eclipsed its ethical ones. Led by Philip Spener (1635–1705), and August H. Francke (1663–1727), Pietism's genius lay in revitalizing Luther's original insights into the meaning of sanctification, as "faith active in love." The



oft repeated criticism that Lutheran Pietism was an ascetical type of world denial which retreated into a private and self-centered spirituality, is grossly inaccurate when applied to the Pietism fostered by Spener and Francke. Classical Lutheran Pietism emphasized a personal, but not a privatized religion. Its concern for societal problems, even those of a political nature, was advanced for its day. As a result Pietism spawned an unprecedented ethical activism within Lutheranism and prepared the way for an expanding concept of social justice which bore rich fruit in its American antebellum manifestation.

Another reason for its surprising ethical activism lay in a quiet rejection of Two Kingdom distinctions. Lutheran Pietism advocated a form of post-millennial eschatology which looked forward to a gradual improvement of earthly conditions and a partial realization of God's Kingdom on earth. Spener viewed the millennium as a future event, and saw in the promise of its coming "a hope for better times."[13] He carefully averted any affirmation of "utopianism," and he acknowledged that sin, suffering, and death would not be fully expelled from the millennial reign.[14] He insisted that the injunctions of Jesus and St. Paul to strive after perfection were to be taken with absolute seriousness, but he conceded that their actual attainment in this world was impossible. Perfection was ascribed not to performance but to intent. Spener's optimistic eschatology provided strong motivation for Pietism's ethical activism. It contained the theological impetus which led nineteenth century American Lutheran Pietists to oppose human slavery and other forms of institutional injustice, to strongly advocate the abolition of war, and to establish international organizations designed to maintain world peace.

Schmucker and the Franckeans

For over three decades, from the early 1820s to the outbreak of the Civil War, Samuel S. Schmucker (1794–1893) was the acknowledged leader of the Lutheran Pietist

[13]Cf. K. James Stein, "Philipp Jakob Spener's Hope for Better Times," *Covenant Quarterly* 37 (August 1979):2–20; also Philip Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 76.

[14]Dale Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism," Ph.D. dissertation, Garrett Theological Seminary and Northwestern University, 1962, p. 277

constituency in North America. Schmucker's ethical theology was explicitly drawn within the context of German Lutheran Pietism. His millennial convictions consisted of a commitment to zealous missionary activity coupled with a similar dedication to moral reform. He proclaimed that a primary responsibility of the Christian pulpit was to relate the whole word of God to "political no less than private life."[15] At a time when it was highly unpopular, he was an outspoken advocate of the abolitionist cause. This advocacy contributed to his loss of leadership and the consequent demise of the Pietism he promulgated.[16] Schmucker's ethical theology resulted in fervent anti-war convictions that approached pacifism; and this in a time when the philosophy of "manifest destiny," with its slogan "my country right or wrong,"

Moral reforms would hasten the millennium.

fanned the fires of the war spirit within a young and expanding nation. Schmucker was the only major Lutheran leader in this country to oppose the war with Mexico. He accused the United States government of having invaded Mexico, and condemned all aggressive wars as "possessing the essential features of robbery and murder by the individual, whilst their enormity is aggravated by the stupendous scale of their execution."[17] Schmucker was convinced that the evil of war was not confined to the actual conflict itself, but lay also in wasteful expenditures for military preparations which robbed the poor of needed support:

> Immense standing armies . . . produce nothing toward the support of life and thus must be supported by the labors of others as fully as paupers in the poorhouses . . . This falls hard on the people.[18]

During the same antebellum period, a small group of Lutheran churches in upstate New York, held views consistent with Schmucker's theology. They were one of the few corporate bodies of Lutherans in this country in which almost the entire membership had roots that were deep in German Lutheran Pietism. This fact was attested by the name they chose at their organization in 1837, the Franckean Evangelic Lutheran Synod. The Franckeans were the only Lutheran body in the United States to take an early, vigorous, and consistent stand on behalf of the abolition of slavery. As with Schmucker, the Franckeans were animated by a hope that the realization of moral reforms would hasten the dawning of the millennium. War was a particular case in point. An 1838 synodical resolution flatly declared that the "millennial

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[15]S. S. Schmucker, *The Christian Pulpit, the Rightful Guardian of Morals, in Political No Less than in Private Life* (Gettysburg, PA: H. C. Neinstedt, 1846).

[16]I have documented this thesis in a Ph.D. dissertation defended in May 1985 at Marquette University and entitled "American Lutheran Pietism, Activist and Abolitionist.

[17]Schmucker, *The Christian Pulpit,* 20, 31.

[18]S. S. Schmucker, Letters to his Wife, June 6, 1846, in the A. R. Wentz Memorial Library, Lutheran Theological Archives, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

day cannot come whilst wars . . . continue."[19]

The abolition of war was such a vital concern to the Franckean Pietists, that it was included among the standing resolutions of their constitution. The resolution condemned war as

> morally wrong; contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel, . . . a hindrance to the progress of the Redeemer's Kingdom, and an . . . offense against God . . . [and called for] the immediate, universal, and permanent abolition of war.[20]

As the military spirit grew more intense in the United States just prior to the Mexican war, so did the Franckeans' resistance to it. They appear to have been the only corporate body of Lutherans to publicly condemn the war with Mexico. In 1846 they denounced that war, then in progress, as "wrong, selfish, and wicked in the extreme."[21] They lamented the fact that the masses of people were deceived by ambitious leaders who "manufactured a pretense for war where no cause existed" and devised aggressive wars "under the cloak of self-defense."[22] Finally, the Franckeans held up the devastating costs of war as an argument against waging it. They noted how war left nations "groaning under an insufferable debt" and that the money expended by the U.S. in war against Mexico would have built "a college in every state in the Union . . . a schoolhouse in every district of the land, and educated all the children in the United States." They even envisioned a tax resistance movement, inquiring, "should not the people of our land, especially the tax payers, stamp war with the seal of condemnation?"[23]

In spite of this vigorous opposition to war, the Franckeans did not advocate an absolute type of pacifism. Once the Civil War began, the Franckeans, like Samuel Schmucker, gave full support to the Union cause. They considered it an act of self-defense in the struggle against the evil of human slavery. But even then, they never spoke of war as something righteous or honorable. Only the cause was just. The war itself they described as the judgment of God upon the whole nation. The year after it ended they made it clear that they were just as much opposed to war as ever. They had only reluctantly consented to defend their nation by force of arms when the one question left was whether slavery and the nation would "live or die." They called on the churches to root out all feelings of animosity and bitterness, and to give themselves to the work of peace.[24] This brief survey of the nineteenth century "peace ethic," developed by Samuel Schmucker and the Franckean Synod, demonstrates that Lutheran Pietism was clearly capable of developing a pacifist theology.

Alternatives to Two Kingdoms

Pietism is not the only expression of a Lutheran theology which has proposed an al-

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[19] *Journal,* The Franckean Synod, 1838, p. 17.

[20] "Standing Resolutions," *Constitution and Standing Ordinances of the Franckean Evangelic Lutheran Synod Revised and Adopted June, 1847,* (Norwich, NY: 1849) 55–56.

[21] *Journal,* The Franckean Synod, 1846, p. 28.

[22] *Journal,* The Franckean Synod, 1857, p. 11; 1858, p. 18.

[23] *Journal,* The Franckean Synod, 1858, p. 19.

[24] *Journal,* The Franckean Synod, 1866, pp. 24–25.

ternative to the Two Kingdom approach and a hopeful eschatology. In his *Structure of Christian Ethics,* Joseph Sittler indicated that an element which has

> crippled Christian and particularly Lutheran expositions of ethics is the practice of dividing ethics into categories of individual and social . . . [and adds that] aside from psychological and sociological facts which reveal the severe limitations, if not the actual absurdity, of such a division, it is clearly not Biblical."[25]

Philip Hefner has raised questions about the adequacy of the Two Kingdom approach. Hefner indicates how that ethical analysis always relegates the things of this earth to a place of lesser importance, and cuts them off in a too absolute manner from the realm of redemption and sanctification.[26] Carl Braaten has pointed to the causal connection between Two Kingdom doctrines and a "defective eschatology," noting how "the outside world [is] somehow excluded from the future which Christ has pioneered."[27]

T. A. Kantonen

Earlier in this century, T. A. Kantonen presented a consistent and comprehensive argument for the consideration of a more hopeful Lutheran eschatology. Kantonen believed that the condemnation of millennialism in the Confessional Books was based almost entirely upon the reformers' opposition to what they perceived as its violent, secularistic manifestation in the "enthusiasts," represented primarily by Thomas Müntzer and the Peasants' Revolt.[28] He described this rejection of the millennial hope as "arbitrary," pointing to its "strong foundation both in the prophecies of the Old Testament and in the Gospel," and its support by an imposing array of Lutheran theologians, including Spener. He maintained that its importance lay in preserving the this-sidedness of the Christian hope, and condemned as sinful the Lutheran tendency to view the possibilities of history with defeatism. Kantonen, in keeping with Lutheran Pietism, argued that Lutherans had rejected the millennial hope to their own impoverishment, and that a sound understanding of its basic meaning was not inconsistent with the Confessions. He perceived that millennialism, with its emphasis on the connection between history and eternity, could inspire the church to be the conscience of humanity.

A. D. Mattson

The case for a Lutheran theology grounded in the hope that God's Kingdom is directly related to history has never been more persuasively presented in this century than by A. D. Mattson. In his little book, *The Social Responsibility of Christians,* he stoutly maintains that,

> More of . . . the will of God can be realized . . . in the realm of history than is now prevalent. . . . There is hope

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[25]Joseph Sittler, "The Structure of Christian Ethics," *Life in Community—Christian Social Responsibility,* vol. 3. ed. Harold C. Letts, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 24–26.

[26]Philip Hefner, "Theological Reflections (1)," *Una Sancta* 24 (1967):45–50.

[27]Carl Braaten, *The Future of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) 147–49.

[28]T. A. Kantonen, *The Christian Hope,* The Knubel-Miller Lecture Series 1954, Board of Publication of the U.L.C.A. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), 66–67.

> for history and in history because God is living and active . . . in the realm of history.[29]

Mattson was careful to distinguish this theology from any form of perfectionism or triumphalism:

> The eschatological goal . . . (and) the ideals of the Kingdom . . . are always relevant to the social order. They mark the direction in which our hope is to seek realization.[30]

Sittler expanded on Mattson's theme, indicating the relevance of the absolute ethic of the Sermon on the Mount to the social perspectives of God's Kingdom on earth. He notes how

> even relative obedience . . . can only sustain itself in the light of the absolute command . . . only the absolute demand can sensitize . . . to occasions for ethical work, and energize . . . toward even relative achievements. . . .[31]

The outline of an alternative political theology has been adequately charted in the traditions of nineteenth century Lutheran Pietism and elaborated by respected and capable twentieth century Lutheran theologians. It is a theology driven by the Christ-directed prayer, "Your kingdom come on earth, as in heaven." It is a theology capable of combining in a more wholistic manner, the intricate blend of moral and religious, secular and political elements involved in the task of peacemaking in a nuclear age. It is a theology that remains within the perimeters of Lutheranism but discovers no obstacle to adopting a pacifist approach to the question of war.

Practical Pacifism

It would, of course, be difficult to find theological justification within Lutheranism for an absolute pacifism which rejects all use of force and all support for human government. On the other hand, such justification need not be limited to "nuclear pacifism." There is a pacifism which is not incompatible with the right to defend others from harm, or even oneself. Neither is it opposed to the use of police, disciplinary, or defensive nonlethal force, so long as its intention is never simply to harm or to kill. This pacifism could most cogently be called "practical" or "realistic." It is obviously opposed to war and to participation in war, and above all to the use

God is active in the realm of history.

of nuclear weapons which elevate the use of lethal force to dimensions even most nonpacifists reject. However, its practitioners could participate in politics and support the services provided by government so long as the state fulfills its divinely ordained function as a "servant for your good" (Rom 13:4). But when the demands of the state come di-

[29]A. D. Mattson, *The Social Responsibility of Christians* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960) 60.

[30]Mattson, *Social Responsibility*, 61.

[31]Joseph Sittler, *The Structure of Christian Ethics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 54–57.

rectly into conflict with those of conscience, they would be compelled to obey "God rather than people" (Acts 5:29). This pacifism is in no way opposed to the fundamental emphasis of Luther on justification by faith alone. It does not see itself as a work which lifts its adherents above those who believe differently, assures them of salvation, or builds the Kingdom of God on earth. The contemporary German theologian Margareta Grape-Lantz put it this way, "Christians, far from perfect, have still the mission to reveal some of the mysteries of the Kingdom to humankind." In words vividly reminiscent of Philip Spener, she proclaimed that Christians are called to a "perfection of intention."[32] That phrase is a working definition of the "practical pacifism" here proposed. It is a pacifism that can find adequate foundations within the context of historical Lutheran theology.

Pacifism can describe itself as an ethic of "responsibility."

How would such a pacifism manifest itself? Lutherans of this persuasion would place emphasis on one's responsibility to refuse any demand of the state to engage in acts of lethal violence against fellow human beings. The heaviest burden of soul-searching would rest upon those who choose to serve in the armed forces rather than on those who refuse. This call to self-examination would be extended especially to those employed in the manufacture and sale of weapons of war and to all who help support the tremendous costs of the research, production, and implementation of these weapons with their taxes. Individual decisions to resist these kinds of direct involvement in the violence associated with war would receive the whole-hearted support of the Lutheran pacifist community. The encouragement of all such forms of non-violent resistance to preparations for war would not be viewed so much in terms of "civil disobedience" as of a "positive obedience" to God and the Gospel.

Political Responsibility

But would such a "practical pacifism" be limited to the personal level? Does it represent, as some have argued, an abdication of political responsibility, the dumping of a difficult and inescapable burden upon the backs of others? It is common for theologians opposed to pacifism, including many Lutherans, to describe their peace ethic as "politically responsible." But the real question is not whether Christians have a responsibility to the political and social order, but exactly *what* that responsibility is. Those who most often use the term "politically responsible" assume that it is the kind of responsibility implied in their own definition of the word. This definition relies heavily upon concepts such as the divine authority of government, the priority of national self-interest,

[32]Margareta Grape-Lantz, "A Reaction to Carl Friedrich von Weizaecker's Presentation," Working Papers, Lutheran World Federation Seventh Assembly at Budapest, 1984.

and a fatalistic acceptance of human sinfulness. "Political responsibility" can just as well be defined as a prophetic approach to government, a primary commitment to the welfare of the world rather than the nation, and the determination to strive for what God has promised "can be," rather than to settle for what "is." Pacifism can thus describe itself as an ethic of "responsibility."

If the question is "Can a practical pacifism relate itself to the political arena in a realistic manner?" the answer must be an unqualified "Yes." It is not, as some wish to argue, an impossible contradiction for pacifists to modify on a political level what they refuse to compromise on a personal one. A practical pacifism could consistently choose to work within the political system in order to help effect change in the direction of its ultimate ideals. Such a Lutheran pacifism would be dedicated to the principle of working together with all who share its fundamental convictions. This ecumenical endeavor would encompass all other Christian pacifists of whatever persuasion. It would include a wholehearted support for the theological analysis as well as all practical policies advocated in the Pastoral Letter of American Catholic Bishops. It would involve closer cooperative efforts with Christians of various other traditions represented in the World Council of Churches. Lutheran pacifists could express their support for the growing numbers of sectarian groups who support the "freeze" and disarmament movements, and who oppose the development of "first strike" weapons, including weapons in space.

Neither would the peace ethic of fellow Lutherans derived from Two Kingdom or just war doctrines be approached from an adversarial position. Even among those who hold these traditions, the conviction is growing that disarmament can no longer be delayed, and the policy of deterrence no longer justified. Some even admit that the absolute renunciation of arms must be acknowledged as a possible attitude for all Christians. Practical pacifism is fundamentally opposed to strategies based on the assumption that peace can or should be pursued by escalating the production of more sophisticated weapons of destruction. At the same time it is vital that it respect the sincerity of those with whom it may drastically disagree. It is nothing less than tragic that Lutherans and Christians in general, united in their desire for peace, should waste their energies in vain arguments over which group advocates the most practical and responsible Christian strategy. In the face of the ultimate crisis which confronts all humanity, such divisions become deplorable and downright sinful. In pointing out the weaknesses of the Two Kingdom approach within Lutheranism, this article does not aim to denigrate or denounce, but simply to show that Lutherans have more than one tradition upon which to formulate their ethical decision making.

It is imperative that Christians and people of good will everywhere work together. A policy of disarmament will never become reality if small dedicated groups continue to work in isolation from one another. Its realization depends on broadly based convictions shared by groups large enough to influence political-decision-making. It was neither a pacifist nor a church leader, but a retired Vice-Admiral of the U.S. Navy, who recently affirmed that

> governments cannot, in themselves, control and reverse the arms race . . .

> (but) must be driven . . . by an increasing and ultimately an irresistable pressure of determined popular will . . . there must be immense widespread participation . . . sustained over a period of years.[33]

This necessary coalition, let us hope, will find leadership in the Christian Church throughout the world, especially from those Christians who are of a pacifist persuasion.

One particular political policy that U.S. Lutheran pacifists would be uniquely equipped to formulate and to support, is a call for "calculated unilateral steps of disarmament." At almost every step of the way America has taken the lead in the development of nuclear weaponry and remains the only nation ever to have used atomic weapons on other human beings. It is appropriate that the U.S. now take the lead in developing a detour around deterrence and toward disarmament. In summary, a "practical pacifism" can and must dedicate itself to the long and difficult political task of disarmament, and to a daily witness that will contribute toward building good will and trust among all peoples and nations of the world.

Conclusion

Today, as in the past, many Lutherans labor under the delusion that they must reject their own religious traditions in order to participate in the peace movement as pacifists. I argue that Lutherans who are convinced pacifism is an acceptable Christian response need not seek theological justification apart from their own heritage. Even Luther and the other authors of the Augsburg Confession, with their extreme reticence to challenge any established government, still stood squarely opposed to an unjust war. The inherent logic and integrity of even the most rigid Lutheran orthodoxy demands a conscientious stand against all forms of modern war. Yet the experience of history indicates that this orthodox and confessional tradition appears not to have the kind of theological strength to sustain the pacifist witness demanded by its own moral logic.

The tradition of Lutheran Pietism, best exemplified in this country by Samuel S. Schmucker and the Franckean Synod, offers the only historical example and the clearest theological basis for the development of a "practical pacifism." It provides a heritage which fully accepts Luther's dynamic ethical insights, while it rejects the rigid formulation of a Two Kingdom doctrine and substitutes for it a more wholistic approach to both human life and Scripture. In addition, it offers the heritage of an optimistic, yet "non-utopian" eschatology which envisions the Christian hope and task within the context of Scripture's promise that the Kingdom has come into our midst, and views the God-inspired building of this Kingdom as containing ultimate and eternal significance. These positive aspects of the Pietist heritage have been elaborated and expanded by a number of respected twentieth century Lutheran theologians. This heritage can provide the foundations for building an adequate and articulate Lutheran Pacifism which will enable Lutherans to join, not only in larger numbers, but with greater conviction, in the mounting crusade to abolish nuclear weapons and war itself from the face of the earth.

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[33]John Marshall Lee, Vice Admiral, USN, retired, "Abridged Remarks" in *Roads to Peace*, ed. Alvin S. Rudisill (San Leandro, CA: Vesper Society Publications, 1983).

Luther, Lutheranism, and the Saints

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Since the introduction of the *Lutheran Book of Worship,* Lutherans throughout North America have been exposed to a significant new element in their Christian devotion: the commemoration of the saints. Lutherans still have a ways to go before the commemoration of the saints becomes an integral part of our personal faith and public worship. Too often, people in the pew ask: "Pastor, why do we pay heed to the saints when our faith and worship should be directed solely to Jesus Christ or the Lord God?" Or: "Pastor, I am not a saint, and do not try to make me think otherwise." While the *Lutheran Book of Worship* may well seem almost "old" after nearly a decade of use, our American Lutheran tradition should never lose sight of how really *new* it was for us in the latter part of the 20th century to recognize the great saints in our liturgical calendar and in corporate worship.

Forerunners to the *Lutheran Book of Worship* show a lack of interest in the saints among American Lutherans. The *Service Book and Hymnal,* the mainstay for so many Lutheran congregations from 1958 through the latter 1970s, made no provision in the liturgical calendar for the saints, apart from remembrance of the apostles, the four evangelists, Stephen and the Holy Innocents.[1] If we step back further in time, we see the same neglect. The *Hymnal for Church and Home* (first printing, 1938) from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church not only omitted any reference to the saints in its liturgical calendar, but it also listed no yearly observance of All Saints' Day. The older *Common Service Book* from 1917 takes into account All Saints' Day along with days of remembrance for the apostles, evangelists, and Stephen, but nothing more.[2]

Despite recent American Lutheran tradition, we can make an argument on historical grounds for Lutherans to commemorate the saints. If we look back to Martin Luther, we discover that he wrestled with how the saints could be acknowledged among the faithful. Luther did not treat the saints lightly, though on occasion he played down their impor-

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[1]*Service Book and Hymnal* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1958), xi–xii.

[2]Cf. *Hymnal for Church and Home* (Blair, NE: Lutheran Publishing House, 1938), 144ff. *Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Board of Publications of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1917) 6–7.

tance. Ultimately, the reformer worked vigorously to define a theological position *supporting* the preservation of the saints, a stance worthy of consideration among 20th century Lutherans.

Reclaiming the Saints

In the 16th century, popular devotion to the "blessed saints" came under increasing suspicion and criticism. While the faithful throughout Europe prayed to the saints and hoped for their intercession with the Lord God, others raised signs of distress: should not the church openly and candidly address the problematic side to the veneration and invocation of the saints?

One voice figured most prominently in the criticism of popular devotion to the saints immediately before Luther and the Reformation. In his *Handbook of the Militant Christian,* Desiderius Erasmus went on public record in the year 1503 against the practice. According to Erasmus, popular veneration of the saints was so abysmal that it was comparable with the "superstition of the ancients." It was pure folly, argued Erasmus, for the faithful to pray to Saint Roch for protection against physical ailments, Saint Barbara for defense against enemies, or Saint Apollo for relief of toothaches! "Since the kind of piety does not refer either our fears or desires to Christ," Erasmus concluded, "it is hardly a Christian practice."[3] For Erasmus, veneration of the saints was nothing more than an anachronism and a throwback to primitive religion which should have been superseded with the advent of Christianity.

In the year 1514, Erasmus sharpened his criticism of popular devotion to the saints with the publication of his *Praise of Folly.* "Why," Erasmus pleaded, "should I travel further on this sea of superstition?" Erasmus expressed no sympathy or compassion whatsoever for the way the saints so dominated popular devotion in the early 16th century. However, Erasmus was also given to "imagination" and happily assumed the role of the "troublesome wise man" who exposed abuse for the sake of the reform of Christian piety. In *Praise of Folly,* he yearns for popular devotion to be reformed so that faith might be focused exclusively on Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding his sense of hope, Erasmus knew ancient Greek and Roman history well enough to recognize that popular piety had progressed very little beyond the "superstition" of more ancient times.

No less than Erasmus, Luther railed at popular reverence for the saints. In a sermon for the Day of Saint James from July 25, 1522, the reformer vented his anger at the practice of pilgrimages to pay tribute to the biblical saint James:

> We read no more about St. James in Acts 12:2 than that Herod killed him with a sword; that is all! How he ever came to Santiago de Compostela in Spain . . . we are not reliably informed. Some say that he lies in France or Toulouse; they too are not sure of the matter. Therefore, let the saints lie and do not run to their shrines; for you do not know whether St. James or a dead dog or a dead horse lies there.[4]

Luther made pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela a foil in his criticism of popular

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[3]John P. Dolon, ed. *The Essential Erasmus* (New York: New American Library, 1964) 60.

[4]*Weimar Ausgabe (WA)* 10, III, 235.

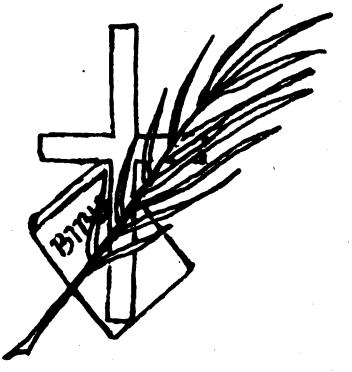
16th century devotion to the saints, but his basic thesis was bold and straightforward: "let the saints lie."

Nearly two decades later, in 1541, Luther publicly scolded Duke Henry of Braunschweig, a Catholic prince, because he allowed popular devotion to the saints to flourish within his political domain. Luther's argument against Duke Henry is reminiscent of Erasmus:

> You establish the worship of saints, canonize saints, and set aside fast and feast days in order to honor them as though they were God Himself. . . . Therefore, the church has, in this respect, become like the church of the heathen, who prayed to Jove, Juno, Venus, Diana and other human beings who had died. And as the Romans had a Pantheon in their city of Rome, you, too, have erected a pantheon in the church of all devils.[5]

Along with Erasmus, Luther perceived the veneration of the saints as little more than a tragic return to primitive religion in the tradition of Greece and Rome. However much Luther hoped Duke Henry might purge this retrogressive piety from his realm, his advice met stiff resistance in Braunschweig.

Though Luther and Erasmus thus might seem completely allied on this issue of popular devotion to the saints, they nonetheless part company over whether or not anything can be salvaged from popular devotion to the saints. According to Erasmus, veneration of the saints was nothing but an expression of human ignorance, and his disappointment was that his *Handbook* and *Praise of Folly* were not enough to move the Catholic faithful to give up their devotion. Ultimately, Erasmus found no resolution to the predicament; be placed the matter into an "either-or" framework: *either* veneration of the saints *or* belief in Jesus Christ. By this sharp dialectic, Erasmus held out no hope for the preservation of the saints in popular 16th century piety. With the affirmation of the principle of "Christ alone" against devotion to the saints, Erasmus may sound almost "Lutheran," but the consequence of his argument was devastating for any ongoing expression of reverence for the saints. Quite simply, for Erasmus, the faithful could not honor "Christ alone," and then also revere the saints.



Luther resolved the predicament very differently. He, too, fashioned an "either-or" form of argument, but his argument is quite different from that of Erasmus. According to Luther, the faithful *either* turn to a new evangelical perspective in the remembrance of the saints *or* remain within the tradition of the Papacy and Roman Catholicism. Of critical importance is the way Luther distinguished the theological principle of "Christ above" from the practical issue of whether

[5] *WA* 51, 495ff.

or not the faithful can pay tribute to or commemorate the saints. Luther found it possible to revere the saints so long as a critical difference was maintained from the tradition of Roman Catholicism. Though we customarily remember Luther and not Erasmus for espousing the "Christ alone" principle, it was never affirmed by Luther at the expense of devotion to or commemoration of the historic saints of the church.

Luther was *not* determined to drop the saints, but he was concerned that they be "reclaimed" by the evangelical church. This argument appears first in his sermons on 1 Peter from 1522. Interpreting 1 Pet 1:2 and the words "sanctified by the Spirit," Luther sets forth plainly his personal thoughts on what must finally be done about popular 16th century attitudes toward the saints. According to Luther, blame for the problems in popular devotion to the saints must be linked to the Roman papacy. The reformer argues:

> The papists have taken this name [saint] from us. They say: "we are not to be considered holy; only the saints in heaven are holy." Therefore, we [i.e. Luther and his evangelical followers] are compelled to reclaim this noble name.[6]

Luther says the papacy is responsible for misunderstandings concerning the saints, but his polemical argument against Rome also betrays readiness to search for a new framework of understanding. In other words, Luther in his exposition of 1 Pet 1:2 calls for continued devotion to the saints, but he also calls for a clean break from traditional Roman Catholic conceptions. Luther hopes for fundamental adjustment in the ways Christians expressed devotion to and reverence for the historic saints. Luther thought the saints could indeed be "reclaimed," but only after reflection on and critical redefinition of who really are the "blessed saints."

Biblical saints mirrored the human condition.

The most critical element in Luther's call for new definition of the saints was the need to conceive of them outside the heavenly realm. In his exegesis of 1 Pet 1:2, Luther expresses unhappiness with the Roman tradition according to which the saints seemingly only dwelled in heaven. The historic grounds for this tradition date from the days of the ancient church and the earliest Christian martyrs. The "blessed saints" were, quite simply, Christians whose witness to the faith endured to the point of physical death. However much the saints remained "invisible companions" with the faithful by intercessions and support from heaven, the tradition by the 16th century posed critical problems for Luther. Indeed, Luther anguished over the "blessed saints" whose heavenly elevation only seemed to accentuate the plight of the earthly human realm below and alienation from the beatific realm above. Luther took no per-

[6] *WA* 12, 262. Cf. also *Luther's Works (LW)* 30, 7.

sonal comfort from the heavenly saints. If the saints were indeed to be "reclaimed," Luther argued, it was imperative to conceive of them anew, apart from an elevated heavenly status and more within the domain of temporal human existence. Were a shift of this sort successfully carried through, Luther thought the saints could be reclaimed once again within popular Christian devotion.

The reformer's call for a radical shift in perspective enabled a greater appreciation of the saints as humans who were bound up with the ebb and flow of history. Once Luther conceptually moved the saints out of eternity, the way was opened for them to take on human proportions and, thus, to provide comfort to the faithful.[7] To Luther, the saints were worthy of devotion as *historic* "companions" with vices and virtues, failures and successes, doubt and belief, and not as perfect heavenly beings. In the effort to "reclaim" the saints, Luther thus initiated a shift of dramatic significance in the history of Christian devotion: the saints tumbled from the heavens, but at the same time they provided new comfort and strength for the faithful.

Luther only came to this new conception of the saints through careful reading and interpretation of the biblical tradition. Luther delighted in biblical saints, for they mirrored the human condition. Biblical saints sinned and believed, and their particular lives translated readily into the life experiences of the reader. In his exposition of Genesis 19, Luther notes the parallel between the saints in the text and his own condition: "Lot and Abraham could become as bad as I am. On the other hand, I can become as saintly as they were."[8] Or again, in an exegesis of Galatians 2 (1531), the reformer notes: "No (saintly) persons have ever fallen so grievously but that they might have risen again. Conversely, no saints stand so firmly but that they might fall again. If Peter fell, I, too, may fall; if he rose again, I, too, may rise again."[9] The biblical tradition helped Luther appreciate and find consolation in saints who were anything but plaster and wood. Biblical saints were exemplary, not as objects of beauty or perfection, but because they reflected so vividly the ups and downs, the highs and lows, indeed, the little resurrections and deaths that all persons experience in life.

Alongside new appreciation of biblical saints, Luther celebrated the saints within the history of the church. The reformer notes:

> Next to Holy Scripture, there is certainly no more useful book for Christendom than that of the lives of the

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[7]One might draw a suggestive comparison between Luther and Anselm on their respective treatments of the mother of our Lord, Mary. In his "Prayer to St. Mary to Obtain Love for Her and for Christ," Anselm displays no concern to view Mary in human form. Anselm relates: "Mary, thou great Mary, thou who are great among the blessed Marys, thou greatest of women . . . Make an effort, depth of my soul . . . to wonder at her loftiness, to beseech her kindness." In short, Mary for Anselm is completely a heavenly being. Cf. Eugene R. Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 201ff.

By contrast, Luther in his Magnificat commentary speaks about a Mary whose feet are firmly planted on earthly soil. The reformer comments: "Even in her own town of Nazareth, she [Mary] was not the daughter of one of the chief rulers, but a poor and plain citizen's daughter, whom none looked up to or esteemed. To her neighbors and their own daughters she was but a simple maiden, tending the cattle and doing the housework, and doubtless esteemed no more than any poor maidservant today." Cf. A. T. W. Steinhäuse, trans., *The Magnificat: Luther's Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967) 14.

[8]*WA* 24, 355.

[9]*WA* 40, 1, 196. *LW* 26, 109.

> saints, especially when unadulterated and authentic. For in these stories one is greatly pleased to find how they sincerely believed God's Word, confessed with their lips, praised it by their living, and honored and confirmed it by their suffering and dying. All this immeasurably comforts and strengthens those weak in the faith and increases the courage and confidence of those already strong far more than the teaching of Scripture alone, without any examples and stories of the saints.[10]

It may seem very strange to hear Luther back away from an unqualified affirmation of *sola scriptura*! However, Luther was never so singularly focused on the biblical tradition that he excluded appreciation of the "lives of the saints." For Luther, the saints spanned biblical *and* ecclesiastical history without any break within the flow of time. According to Luther, the saints of church history have pedagogic value, and his hope was that a greater understanding of the historically important saints might also help expose and educate people to the sacred biblical tradition.

Against ecclesiastical tradition and Roman polity, Luther affirmed that Christians everywhere may appropriate the sacred title "saint." His argument threw into question the step by step process of canonization under the authority of the Roman hierarchy. According to Roman practice, the institutional church exercises judgment over who may be declared "blessed," then "venerable," and, finally, "saintly." However, Luther undercut the foundation of ecclesiastical tradition when he claimed that sainthood rests on confession of faith and not on the institution's approval. The reformer, moreover, maintained that living Christians may not only claim for themselves the designation "saint," but may do so without the least fear of presumption. In a sermon from 1530, Luther vigorously affirmed his new stance toward sainthood:

> We are all saints, and cursed are they who do not want to call themselves saints. You are far more saintlier than your names—Hans or Kunz—indicate. However, you do owe this not to yourself, but to the will of God, who would be your Father. To call yourself a saint is, therefore, no presumption but an act of gratitude and a confession of God's blessings. . . . You still have much to learn about this matter. So do I—until I drop in my grave.[11]

Luther was aware of how strange or novel were his ideas about saints for the 16th century. That confessing Christians could claim sainthood was, for Luther, not arrogance or pride, but purely an expression of gratitude. Through personal confession and faith, Luther maintained, the Lord God fashioned saints, and this included common congregational folk more so than extraordinary individuals. To Luther, the biblical tradition opened the way for this new conception of sainthood beyond the Roman tradition. In his 1531 exegesis of Galatians 5:19, Luther made clear to his readers how his position marked a definite shift toward a new, more evangelical stance toward the saints and sainthood:

> Let us, therefore, reject the stupid and godless notion about the term "saints" according to which we imagine that the word was fitting only for the saints in heaven and for hermits and monks on

[10] *WA* 38, 313ff.
[11] *WA* 32, 91ff.

> earth who had performed certain extraordinary works. Let us now learn from Holy Scripture that all believers in Christ are saints.[12]

Luther often brought new meaning to biblical terminology, and surely no less so for the biblical category "saint."

Though the pressure was great during the 16th century to excise traditional saints from liturgical calendars, the Lutherans were never so inclined. In Wittenberg and Saxony, Lutherans after 1523 continued the celebration of mariological festivals, including the observance of the Assumption of Mary. A recent study of Lutheran liturgical calendars from 1517 to 1713 similarly reveals a continued interest among Lutherans in the saints. Commemorations of the apostles and evangelists were most popular, but *not* to the exclusion of the celebration of the saints from church history: Lawrence (August 10), Martin (November 11), Catherine of Alexandria (November 25), Margaret (July 20), John Huss (July 6), Valentine (February 14), Birgitta (February 1) and Francis of Assisi (October 4) enjoyed widespread attention.[13] At a time when their confessional divisions with Rome sharpened, Lutherans during the 16th and 17th centuries maintained a semblance of ecclesiastical unity by a willingness to remember on liturgical calendars the historic saints of the church.

Remembering the Saints

American Lutherans who adopted the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and the new calendar of saints have placed themselves in a pivotal position between the Missouri Synod and the Episcopalian church. Part of the decision *not* to use the hymnal was Missouri's unhappiness with the liturgical calendar of saints, and their new *Lutheran Worship* prefers a more narrow calendar of saints. Their listing of "minor festivals," for example, takes into account only three figures from church history: Martin Luther as "Doctor and Confessor," C. F. W. Walther as "Doctor," and, curiously, Lawrence as "Martyr." By comparison, the *Lutheran Book of Worship* on its calendar of "lesser festivals and commemorations" makes place for no less than seven individuals from church history per month! Moreover, with its introduction of thematic hymns on "saints," the selections point to greater convergence between Lutherans and Episcopalians. Indeed, our hymns on "saints" are not Lutheran, but actually Anglican in origin. "For All the Saints" (LBW #174) and "By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LBW #177) first appeared in Anglican hymn collections in the 19th century, "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones (LBW #175) in an early 20th century English hymnal. If Lutherans have begun to sing about saints, we may well thank our Episcopalian brothers and sisters whose tradition and hymnody on the saints have made definite inroads into our Lutheran faith and tradition.

Whether or not American Lutherans make saints and sainthood a more integral part of our personal devotion and liturgical tradition will be a test for the historic significance of the *Lutheran Book of Worship.* At the very least, the hymnal has already helped us appropriate Luther, who hoped that the saints would *not* be neglected or simply forgotten.

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[12] *WA* 40, II, 104. *LW* 27, 83.

[13] Cf. "Festivals and Saints' Days in Sermons from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *The Bride of Christ,* Epiphany 1985 (Vol. 9, No. 1):34–36.

Victory from Death: What Makes the Rejects Sing!

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Many Christians treasure Psalm 118 as the Easter Psalm. They see in verse 22, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," an allusion to Christ. Christians rejoice in the Rejected One being raised by God. In Christ's resurrection and victory over death they find hope, and trusting in the promise of God know that they too will defeat death. They, too, having been rejected by the builders, are rehabilitated by God and become acceptable stones.

Many of us, in pulpit and pew, knowingly nod our heads in agreement when we hear of the builders rejecting stones, especially when we know the script and its outcome. We murmur to ourselves, "Not me, Lord, I'm not a builder, especially that kind of builder." Guess again! All of us are builders. Yes, even "that kind of builder."

In his commentary upon Psalm 118 Luther said:

> Note who they are who reject this stone. They are not simple folk, but the best, that is the holiest, wisest, most learned, greatest, and noblest. These are offended. The poor, miserable sinners, the downcast, the wanderers, the despised, the little people, and the unlearned accept Him joyfully and gladly. Those others are called builders, that is, they edify, improve, and govern for the good of the people by preaching and teaching. They are not called destroyers, wreckers, or bunglers. They are builders, the most necessary, most useful and best people on earth. Were it not for them, the skies would cave in before nightfall, and land and people would be destroyed. These are the rulers of the spiritual and temporal estates, whose laws govern land and people. . . .
>
> So, then, if kings, princes, bishops, lords, saints, the wise, the prudent, the rich, and the learned persecute the Gospel, this is not surprising. Who else would do it? No one else can. If there is to be persecution, they must do it; for they are the builders. They do it *ex officio;* for they must see to it that their building has no crack, rent, or disfiguration. Therefore they cannot tolerate the Word of God or those who declare it, for such a person disfigures

> their building by causing cracks and rents in it. He is a rabble rouser who misleads the people, whom they have so beautifully edified, ordered, and organized. His way of doing things is entirely different from theirs.

We affluent Americans are among the greatest builders the world has ever known. Our accomplishments are legion, from spanning a continent with steel rails to putting men on the moon, from miniaturizing electronic chips which can hold encyclopedic information in an area the size of the head of a pin, to cloning genes, and accepting mechanical hearts as commonplace occurrences. We have established ourselves as winners. We are rugged individuals who tamed creation and put it to our own uses. We are winners, and losing for us is anathema.

As builders we value success, and reject the thought of losing. Almost everything in our culture is built upon this altar of success. Therefore, we reject losers. When we affluent Americans think of losers we envision those who have not succeeded in terms of the things that our culture enshrines: formal education, economic success, social position, prestige, health, professional status, physical attractiveness.

When most Americans think of losers they think of: criminals, the unemployed, the under-educated, the handicapped, the poor, the sick, the under-achievers, and any other category of people who do not measure up to the definition of a winner. Often whole classes of people are grouped in the loser category: illegal (and legal) aliens, refugees, homosexuals, ethnic and racial groups. A central characteristic of winners is their rejection of losers. Look at the imagery of our advertising. Print media, television and radio commercials take great pains in portraying users of specific products as winners. "Losers" are portrayed only for comic relief and contrast to entice us to become a winner by using Brand A over Brand X.

We affluent Americans proceed smugly as though our successes were the result of our own worth and merit. The failure of others, however, we see as their own fault, or if we are in a charitable mood, a defect in their genetic make-up. Tragically, this self-delusion leads us to reject those we classify as losers. Not only do we shut them out of our lives, but we box them into their loser status by foreclosing traditional avenues of escape from the loser status through accepted success channels. They just do not fit into our building agendas and plans, and we *have* to reject them.

What we winners forget is that ultimately we are all losers; we all face the certainty of death. Kings, presidents, popes, movie stars, professors, theologians, and lawyers die as surely as criminals, the mentally ill, the unemployed, or the victims of AIDS. If we do not recognize this on the basis of our own observations, the media constantly reminds us of our fragile mortal existence.

We fear the results of the very things which our successes have given us: aircraft accidents which can snuff out hundreds of lives in seconds, poisoning from our environment which we have polluted as a means to our success, death and injury in automobile accidents as we speed about in search of success, death from diseases which clog our arteries because we are too busy chasing success to prepare and eat nutritional healthy food. Next to death the thing we fear the most is that disease or injury will knock

us out of the success lane and put us in the category of losers on a rutted, rural dirt road. *We* could become one of *them*!

In the midst of our success we are losers. Why? We are losers because we are bound up in our humanness as members of a fallen creation. Like Adam and Eve we have separated ourselves from God in thought, word, and deed—and the consequence is death. In our success as builders we oppress others because of our fear of rejection by other successful builders. We are therefore oppressed by our successes and our oppression of others. The very things we use to "lord it over others" become our oppressors: status, wealth, power, prestige. Whatever threatens these threatens the core of our being because we identify with the perquisites attendant to the possession of power, status, wealth, and control. Illness and accidents threaten our control of things and people and could lead to our becoming a "loser" by taking away our economic and social security blankets. We could become rejected stones in a system which demands conformity and perfection in its stones.

Even more importantly, we suffer spiritually from our oppression of others, from rejecting stones which do not fit into our building plans. In our servitude to our success, we put ourselves at odds with the kingdom of God. We become builders rejecting stones which do not serve our purposes, and in the process work against the command to love one another. By our behavior we rule others out of our future, but at the same time we rule God out of our future.

In "programming" Psalm 118, Edward Schroeder presented the following Problem/Solution Model to illustrate this process of rejection and the solution which God has given for that problem.

Problem: The Builders Problem

Diagnosis At First Level: The builders are rejecting the stones (and that's not nice).

Second Level: The builders are rightfully rejecting the stones; but honest evaluation says: "You simply do not fit this structure/operation/system community." Thus the builders "have to" (Luther says: "must") reject. They are not free not to reject, in view of *their* building plans.

Deepest Level: Since the God of Israel "majors" in rehabbing rejects, the builders are on the wrong side from God's own operation/structure/system/community. They wind up rejected by God's own self.

Solution: God Rehabs the Rejects and How!

First Level Prognosis; Already in the Old Testament Israel's God takes the part of the rejects. And in grand style does so in the Beloved Son of the New Testament who becomes "reject himself" so that rejects shall not die but live. His cross/resurrection is central to that "not die, but live." He does, so that *they* don't. Even rejected builders are invited in for this.

Second Level: The action of God sets stones free from rejection, by offering them a future in the "new building" which is all full of rejects, with Reject #1 the cornerstone. No longer do they have to reject others.

Final Level: They sing. They recount the deeds of the Lord, and re-enact these very

deeds as they rehab the rejects of their worlds and get them singing the "new song." That work is their worship (v. 19 and 20).

Three movements in American history illustrate how builders rejected (and reject) those who do not fit into the plans of the builders. The early Methodist movement in America shows the strains of rejections by such builders. They were rejected because of the Tory loyalties of John Wesley during the American Revolution. They were rejected because they were interlopers in other Christian communities. Preachers rejected them because they were competitors. Disciples of Christ pioneer Alexander Campbell announced that if someone came to him and wanted to be saved, he would send them to a Muslim before he would let them get into the hands of a Methodist circuit rider.



Women and blacks are rejected simply because of their gender or race. In the West they are oppressed in a world defined and controlled by the white male. In other parts of the world women are oppressed in a world defined and controlled by the male, regardless of color. In every place they are victims of other controlled economies and political systems. Ironically, they are resented most when they assert their argument for equality as humans on the authority of Scripture and what it teaches about God's will for all people. Elizabeth Schuessler Fiorenza observes that male response to the feminist critique is one of denial, co-option (with intent to defuse), or outright rejection. The root cause of this, according to Fiorenza, is that the Christian Church is not identical with the kingdom of God.

In modern America blacks face rejection despite constitutional and statutory prescriptions of equality. The life of Martin Luther King, Jr., chronicles the struggle blacks have had in their quest for the recognition of their humanness. Blacks struggle in a system which denies them access to the things of success (education, jobs, housing, health care, etc.) and then blames them for their dependent status and points to their unsuccesses as justification for prejudicial stereotypes. Their cries for acceptance are met with hostility, indifference, condescension, and fear while the white, male-dominated culture continues with its building projects, glibly rejecting stones which do not meet its specifications.

Even in their own ranks black and feminist builders battle over who has *the* key to success, and energy essential to the ultimate goal is dissipated in the quest for status and control within the ranks of the oppressed themselves.

Busy protecting our perquisites we affluent Americans stumble along the road to death lamenting our fate and fearful because in our hearts we sense an ultimate rejection.

But wait! The Psalm has a strange message, the strain of a melody which is hard to

hear over the roar of our despair and hopelessness. The message is that God is the rehabilitator of all rejected stones, even builders who reject other stones. No matter that we first rejected him, and now reject his creation and creatures, he sent his Rejected One to become the cornerstone in a kingdom without rejects. In the message of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ the melody becomes clearer and the sweet melody resounds loudly in our souls so that we can sing with the psalmist:

> Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous:
> The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!
> The Lord's right hand is lifted high;
> The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!
> The Lord has chastened me severely,
> but he has not given me over to death.

We can work at not being oppressors of others.

So therein is the hope, indeed the certainty, of our victory over death: because Christ died and lives we live and that makes us rejects, even us builders, sing. We are free from rejection and in that freedom we are free not to *have* to reject others. The perquisites of the world are revealed as transitory trinkets in comparison to the eternal status we have as children of God in his Kingdom.

This freedom allows us to become more discriminating builders. As pilgrims on the way, we can be mindful of our oppression of others and our own oppressions and seek ways of seeing in others God's rehabilitation plan for all rejects. As victims of our own oppression we can, in this new freedom, work at not being oppressors of others. Above all, we can learn to recount the deeds of the Lord in rehabilitating the rejects so that we can all sing the "new song" as equal brothers and sisters. In the tent of our new found freedom we can sing anew the old song:

> The stone which the builders rejected
> has become the head of the corner.
> This is the Lord's doing;
> it is marvelous in our eyes.
> This is the day which the Lord has made;
> let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Therein lies the victory!

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Let me commend you for publishing "The Devil, You Say" by Duane Mehl (February, 1987, 5–12). It prompted me to read John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick.* But having read the novel and reread Mehl's article, I feel compelled to disagree with his interpretation and offer this rebuttal.

First I am offended by Mehl's demeaning comment, "Van Horne is . . . disposed toward counter-cultural arts: Hindemith, Schoenberg—atonal, amorphous, amoral." Schoenberg, the composer of such definitely moral works as "Moses and Aaron," "A Survivor From Warsaw," and "Kol Nidre," is not even mentioned in Updike's novel. Hindemith, whose best known work is a musical interpretation of Grünewald's religious masterpiece "The Temptation of St. Anthony," is mentioned once as an unobtainable goal. Perhaps Mehl wishes to make an analogy between music without a tonal center and life without a moral center, but Updike doesn't. He mentions Webern once; however the basic repertoire for Van Horne is Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms.

Mehl simply reads into Updike his own dislike of modern art. Thus he missed what Updike was saying about Van Horne's obsession with Pop Art. The salient feature of the Pop Art that Updike describes is that it is not what it pretends to be—Brillo boxes that aren't Brillo boxes, beer cans that aren't beer cans, plaster life forms mixed with real inanimate objects—just as the satanic Van Horne is not who he pretends to be.

Furthermore Mehl misunderstands the novel's conclusion because he is too quick to impose our Lutheran theology onto Updike's writing. Updike is a self-professed Barthian. Let Barth have his say.

In general the novel is a Barthian attack on humanity's attempt to save itself. The plot revolves about three inverted graces, Alexandra, Jane, and Sukie. After a divorce each retreats into a world of unfeeling, of sex and self-indulgence. In short, into witchcraft, what Barth would call "religion." In their search for self-fulfillment they embrace nature worship, perverted liturgy, and body therapy. All are attracted to art but lack the basic humanity to create either truth or beauty. Instead they produce witchlike offerings of fetishes, fiddling, and gossip.

The Barthian attack on "religion" culminates with Van Horne's sermon, "This is a Terrible Creation." The sermon reminds me of Annie Dillard's rejection of natural theology in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.* Van Horne's closing line, "So vote for me next time, O.K.? Amen" suggests a demonic parallel to Deuteronomy 30 where Moses challenges Israel to choose life and good over death and evil. One must make the leap of faith without the security of natural theology.

The sins of Alexandra, Jane, and Sukie are carefully delineated: unbelief, lack of compassion, promiscuity, envy, pride, blasphemy. Still Updike concentrates on the banality of evil. Their witchcraft is used mainly for trivia. The novel takes a decisive turn when a spiteful trick, a curse intended to annoy triggers a murder-suicide. The trio deny guilt in the tragedy and befriend the daughter of the victims, Jenny Gabriel. However, Jenny becomes a witch herself and supplants the trio in their relationship with Van Horne. The power of the trio wanes. They are replaced by other witches who render Brenda Paisley's sermon incoherent. At this point my interpretation differs most sharply from that of Mehl.



Upon marrying Van Horne, Jenny develops cancer. Alexandra, in her insensitivity, fails to find the lump that Jenny asks her to examine. Afterwards the trio makes an amateurish attempt to put a voodoo curse on Jenny. When Jenny's cancer is at last diagnosed, they mistakenly believe that it is their curse that has caused the malignancy. Unexpectedly they feel guilty. This is the meaning of the quotation from Nietzsche, "The 'witches' themselves did not doubt it—and yet there was no guilt."

Here we are at a crucial point where Barth and Luther disagree. In Lutheran theology law precedes gospel. The sinner recognizes his or her sin, is contrite, and receives forgiveness. In Barthian theology the reverse is true. It is only when we receive forgiveness that we are able to recognize our sinfulness. Thus the acknowledgement of guilt is already a sign of God's grace. From Barth's view, guilt can be salutary. This is the case in Updike's novel.

All three experience guilt. Alexandra first to be sure. But Jane Smart's discovery is beautifully written. While Jenny lies dying, cold Jane struggles with a Bach suite for unaccompanied cello. At first she hears only the technically demanding notes. Gradually she feels the inner meaning of the music, death. She is guilty of causing death. With this self-disclosure she retires never to play the cello again. It is through guilt that they learn to feel. It is through this feeling that they enter humankind again. They give up witchcraft, marry, and move away.

Like Mehl I would like to hear Updike proclaim the gospel overtly, yet I submit that there is more of the gospel here than Mehl admits, albeit from a theological perspective that is not our own.

Yours in Christ,
David H. Miley
Bethany Lutheran Church
Woodhull, Illinois

Book Reviews

APOSTOLIC FAITH TODAY: A HANDBOOK FOR STUDY. Edited by Hans-Georg Link. Faith and Order Paper No. 124. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986. xi and 281 pages. Paper. $11.50.

For those looking for a resource for studying responses to creeds through the ecumenical movement, this is it! The first sixty pages are devoted to historic creeds, including Apostles', Nicene, "Athanasian," Luther's Small Catechism, Augsburg Confession, 39 Articles, Heidelberg Catechism, Trent, and the Confession of Dositheus. If you are interested in the early material, John Knox continues to print John Leith's revised *Creeds of the Churches,* which contains much more than this volume.

The bulk of this book is given over to the major writings of the Faith and Order conferences and Assemblies of WCC, plus numerous attendant documents such as Barmen, Church of South India, Orthodox statements, and the Leuenberg Agreement (Lutheran/Reformed consensus). Section IV contains the Lima document and several studies on the ecumenical nature of the Nicene Creed. The appendix is a study guide.

The whole volume is introduced by a brief history of WCC specifically in regard to doctrinal study and the entry of various churches into the 20th century movement, written by the editor. We are grateful especially to the Evangelische Landeskirche Württemberg for underwriting the costs.

This book is meant as a companion volume to the BEM document and serves well in that capacity. The prayer which begins the book (from Nairobi, 1975) invites us to study "that we may with one voice and one heart, glorify and sing praise to the majesty of your Holy Name, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Amen.

Jay C. Rochelle
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JOHN CALVIN INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, 1536 EDITION. Translated and annotated by Ford Lewis Battles. Volume One of the *Bibliotheca Calviniana.* Grand Rapids: H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and Eerdmans, 1986. lix and 396 pages. Cloth. $25.00.

In a time of Lutheran/Reformed dialogue, certainly some pastors will want to go to the source of Reformed teaching for the sake of ecumenism. This book is expensive but worth the price. The introduction is compendious; the endnotes are extremely resourceful, complete, and demonstrate a lifetime of research on Calvin by Battles. Four Appendices give insight into the development of Calvin's spirituality and theology in the four years prior to the first edition of the *Institutes.* Since most previous editions have been translations of the 1559 (and last) *Institutes,* here the reader has the opportunity to read the young Calvin. The text is shorter, of course, and the insights seem sharper because of it. Battles claims that the opening pages of the *Institutes* are, in fact, Calvin's theology in a nutshell. Here we see the distinctive slant of this reformer, bent on the twofold problem which occupied his life: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of humanity, and the ways of their relationships one with another through faith and obedience.

Here is Calvin writing "with brilliance and passion," and clearly building on the work of both Erasmus and Luther. The structure of the *Institutes* owes much to the two catechisms of Luther; the biblical insights owe much to the Greek scholarship of Erasmus.

The H. Henry Meeter Center is located at Calvin College and the series *Bibliotheca Calviniana* will include new translations of Calvin from French and Latin plus continental scholarship on Calvin in translation.

For pastors and laypersons in dialogue with Reformed brothers and sisters, this volume is heartily commended; for those wishing to enter into dialogue it will be extremely useful.

Jay C. Rochelle

EPHESIANS. By Walter F. Taylor Jr. **COLOSSIANS.** By John H. P. Reumann. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985. 176 pages. Paper. $8.95.

This is another volume in the well-received series of commentaries published by Augsburg. The commentaries contain a brief introduction to the specific writing under discussion and a commentary based on the RSV without printing the full text. For these two epistles, the question of authorship is of importance and is discussed very well by the authors. Both come to the conclusion that it is not probable that Paul wrote Ephesians or Colossians. Taylor argues that pseudonymity was not "bad" or deceitful but was an accepted practice of the day. According to him, Ephesians was a congratulatory communication written in letter format to Gentile Christians in Asia Minor. The author wrote in the name of Paul in order to establish a relationship between the apostle to the Gentiles and his spiritual heirs. He reminds them of their blessings and responsibilities, especially in light of the growing separation between Gentile and Jewish Christians and of the Gnostic threats.

Reumann expresses his preference for a follower of Paul, perhaps Timothy himself, as the author of Colossians. But then, Reumann usually writes as if Paul himself were the author. Just two pages after expressing his preference, he says, "The purposes Paul [*sic*] had in writing Colossians are, in any case, clear." In the commentary also, he usually refers to Paul as author and even puts it in Paul's time and situation. This is somewhat disconcerting and incongruous. The commentaries themselves are without great surprises but explain the epistles very well. The outlines at the beginning of each letter are especially helpful. The expression "early catholic" (Taylor p. 16) probably should be avoided as not very clear or helpful. In Reumann's commentary the use of parentheses to add further references and notes is annoying, perhaps especially for laypeople for whom these commentaries are intended. These inclusions and his style make some paragraphs tortuous for readers (e.g., p. 162).

Wilhelm C. Linss
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REVELATION. A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY. By L. van Hartingsveld. Tr. by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. viii and 103 pages. Paper. $6.95.

This commentary begins a new series of commentaries, called **Text and Interpretation.** The intention is to provide the reader with clear and concise explanations of every book of the Bible.

The late van Hartingsveld succeeds very well in giving the reader an overview of the book of Revelation. The approach is sound, not making claims for identification of all the figures of the book. The approach is very thoroughly that of the preterist school, seeing the main relevance of the book in the first century C.E., perhaps even so much so that the lasting significance of the book is hidden. Everything is closely con-

nected with the Roman Empire and its relationship to the early Christian church.

The author sees the book of Revelation rooted in the Old Testament; this is a strength of the commentary. A nice parallel between Rev 1:9–20 and Dan 10:2–20 is drawn on p. 14. The astrological background of the book is pointed out very strongly, perhaps in an exaggerated manner (e.g., the 24 elders are based on the twelve signs of the zodiac, plus the seven planets, plus five other constellations, p. 26). The value of numbers is stressed sufficiently although some explanations are strange (e.g., 666 as the number of the Beast, p. 56). In the Conclusion, some specific problems are discussed in a pleasing way: the judgment aspect, the plan of God, the Millennium. Some unclarities remain here and there.

Although for a full study of the Book of Revelation, more is needed than this commentary, it is remarkable how much is interpreted in this short book. It can also be recommended for lay persons.

Wilhelm C. Linss

THE ART OF BIBLICAL POETRY. By Robert Alter. New York: Basic Books, 1985. xii and 228 pages. Cloth. $17.95.

We all know that large parts of the Old Testament are written in poetry, and most of us learned in seminary about synonymous and antithetic parallelism and about the vagaries of meter. But did we take seriously the Hebrew Bible as poetry? And what indeed would that mean?

Alter, a professor of comparative literature, burst on the biblical scene a few years back with *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* a literary study of the prose traditions in the Bible. Important as that book was, his analysis of poetry offers revolutionary promise for all students of the Bible.

It's not just that the lines of Hebrew poetry are parallel. Rather, the second often heightens or focuses the thought of the first, and there is dynamic interplay between the lines. Note how the second line in the following citation from Job 30:10 is parallel, but also more extreme:

> They despised me, drew away from me,
> and from my face they did not hold back
> their spittle.

Or consider Deut 32:13:

> He (God) suckled them (Israel) with honey
> from a rock
> And with oil from the flinty stone.

The miraculous character of God's sustenance becomes beautifully clear in the second line—flinty stone is not just a ballast variant as traditional analysis would have it.

But it is not only with individual lines that Alter achieves new insights, for much of the book is devoted to analysis of major biblical compositions from a poetic perspective: Job, Psalms, prophecy, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs. His discussion of the divine speeches in Job shows that they present an "imposing vision of a harmonious order to which violence is nevertheless intrinsic and where destruction is part of creation." Through God's poetry (the accounts of the hippopotamus and crocodile) Job sees the welter of contradictions and dizzying variety in the world and recognizes that creation can be sensed but not encompassed by the mind; there are limits to his moral imagination.

Poetry, as Alter says, makes a crucial difference. He finds intricate substantive links between the poetic vehicle and the religious vision of the poets themselves. What is truly remarkable about this wonderful book is that you don't need to know a word of Hebrew to understand the discussion fully.

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GENESIS 12–36. By Claus Westermann. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985. 604 pages. Cloth. $29.95.

GENESIS 37–50. By Claus Westermann. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 269 pages. Cloth. $21.95.

OBADIAH AND JONAH. By Hans Walter Wolff. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 191 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

THEOLOGY OF THE PSALMS. By Hans-Joachim Kraus. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 231 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

These four books have much in common: they are written by three great German postwar exegetes now in or near retirement; they were all originally a part of the Biblischer Kommentar series, even though the Kraus volume is not a commentary; they are four feathers in the cap of Augsburg.

Westermann's three volume commentary appeared in fascicles in Germany from 1966–1982, but its more than 1500 pages have appeared in English over a short three year period. *Genesis 12–36* treats the accounts of the patriarchs and matriarchs, beginning with more than 120 pages devoted to introductory questions. For each pericope the author supplies massive bibliography, a new translation, with text-critical and philological notes, a verse by verse commentary, and a section, "Purpose and Thrust," which proposes a theological understanding of the pericope.

Family relationships (parents to children in the stories of Abraham and Sarah, children to each other in the stories of Jacob and Esau, several members of the family to each other in the story of Joseph) are really stressed in this commentary, and theological observations are often made with sensitive, fresh categories:

> The vertical succession of generations is based on blessing; horizontal communal life is based on peace. . . . God's action in the life of the family is simply taken for granted so that normally there is no need to speak of him. . . . One speaks of God only when it is necessary, otherwise not at all.

Genesis 37–50 consists of the Joseph story *and* the conclusion of the Jacob story, with the former now seen as an unbroken unity, without gaps, by one author, who wrote in the time of David and Solomon, but who was not the Yahwist. The Jacob story tells how the ancestral family came to Egypt; the Joseph story points to the creator who is concerned for all his creatures and sent Joseph in order that many people should be kept alive (Gen 45:5; 50:20).

Wolff's commentaries on Obadiah and Jonah continue his long record of careful, detailed exegesis and his passion for the significance of the biblical text today. He sees Obadiah as a cultic prophet, who reapplied older prophecies about Edom to the dispirited 6th century community, assuring them that God's judgment upon their enemies would be forthcoming. Jonah is, in Wolff's view, a selfish Israelite who begrudged God's mercy to everyone else. The final scene in Jonah shows that "church people," when they are bad, are worse, more divided, more undependable, and inhuman than ordinary people. But it also shows how their Master liberates them. One might add, of course, that the picture of God's fathomless mercy in Jonah offers a splendid canonical context for the troubling book of Obadiah.

Kraus made his mark in Old Testament studies early in life, publishing a major two volume commentary on the Psalms in the Biblischer Kommentar and numerous other works on worship in Israel, the kingship of God, and the history of exegesis. In the second half of his career he became a professor of Reformed theology, a systematician, at the University of Göttingen. The present "theology" sums up his earlier work on Psalms and whets our appetite for the English translation of that commentary, which Augsburg promises in the near future.

The book under review treats the God of Israel, the people of God, the sanctuary and its worship, the king, the enemy powers, the individual in the presence of God, and the use of Psalms in the New Testament. Much of what he says in the first five sections is good enough, but it covers old ground and often deals with issues that were lively debates in Europe in the 50s but that seem dated now. Section six deals with the role of the poor, the faith of the righteous, and the great problems of life (a prolonged look at Psalm 73). The final section studies how Psalms 2, 22, 69, 110, and 118 are quoted and interpreted in the New Testament.

Augsburg honors an outstanding generation of Old Testament scholars by bringing their works into English in such splendid dress; they honor us, too, by giving us the finest available English commentaries on Genesis, Obadiah, and Jonah.

Ralph W. Klein

AIDS, PERSONAL STORIES IN PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE. By Earl E. Shelp, Ronald H. Sunderland, and Peter W. A. Mansell, M.D. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986. x and 205 pages. Paper. $7.95.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a growing concern of health-care professionals both in the United States and elsewhere around the world. AIDS has also been a hot item for both print and electronic media. But to what extent has this devastating disease been an agenda item for the church?

One of the purposes of this book is to help sensitize the religious community to the needs of those most affected by this deadly disease: AIDS patients, their loved ones, and their caregivers.

Most of the book consists of true stories—stories of AIDS patients, stories of the families and lovers of those who suffer (and die) from AIDS, and stories of the health-care professionals who are committed to caring for these patients. Through these stories one is able to see not a disease but people. They are people who are very much in need of the care of the Christian community but who, often because of fear and prejudice, are deprived of the gifts and resources of the church.

Two of the authors (Shelp and Sunderland) are Research Fellows at the Institute of Religion in Houston; Mansell is Medical Director of the Institute for Immunological Disorders, the nation's first AIDS hospital, in Houston.

One chapter presents in understandable language the medical facts about AIDS and ARC (AIDS-Related Complex). Two of their conclusions are worth noting: in the routine conduct of daily life, "people with this disease need not be isolated from the public, worship, work, family, or friends," (p. 27); "Nor is there any risk with respect to the use of the common cup in eucharistic celebrations," (p. 22).

This book is a useful resource for those who seek to be better informed about AIDS and better prepared to minister to those who fall victim to this deadly virus. By its response to AIDS, the Christian community has the opportunity to demonstrate "that accepting a person with AIDS or ARC is not a matter of approving or disapproving a life-style, but of modeling for the community the church's unreserved love for one for whom Christ died," (p. 193).

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DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: A LIFE IN PICTURES. By Eberhard Bethge, Renate Bethge, and Christian Gremmels. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. 240 pages. Cloth. $34.95.

That young man on page 46, playing his guitar in the key of E, looking off into the distance, what does he see? Where will he go? What will

be the course of his life; what social forces will intervene to raise him up to be the bespectacled, cigarette-smoking, piano-playing source of laughter and theology in a time of peace and war, to know no peace but death beyond the war?

The generations pass. Most of the players are gone from the scene; many of them left under violent circumstances: Dietrich, Klaus, Rüdiger, Hans, so many others; and the teachers: Harnack, Schlatter, the Niebuhrs, Barth; the pastors and the people; and the misguided leaders; Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Reichsbischof Müller. All gone now.

New generations arise who know not of the church struggle and for whom the witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a discovery of grace and subtlety, humor and feeling in a rigorous taut form of written *martyria* which leads along a path to physical martyrdom.

To view this book is to see the scope of 20th century theology played out on what some still consider its home ground: the Germany of intellectual rigor, exhaustive research, writing which scales mountains of data and arrives at the pinnacle with prize in hand; the Germany of the end of assimilation of the Jews; the Germany of terror and firestorm and concentration camp and Zyklon-B gas; the Germany of Dachau, Buchenwald, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz: names which carry awe to the ears of the hearer. The book is so much bigger than the covers which enclose the pictures, the pamphlet and book covers, the juxtapositions of people locked in historic processes which bring them to ends that we now know as a matter of course, but which they knew as duty, loyalty, pride of homeland torn asunder by the wrath unleashed by the Third Reich.

One wonders "what if . . ." in so many instances. Henry Smith Leiper, executive secretary of the Federal Council of Churches, looks forth kindly from page 176, as if just having invited Dietrich to remain in the United States to pastor German emigrants, and having been told no. On page 181, Dietrich, cigarette held in the European style in his left hand, looks into the future in August 1939, after having said no to Leiper, no to Helmut Lehmann, no to safety. On page 199, Maria von Wedemeyer looks forward to her marriage to Dietrich, which was not to be. On p. 42 Walter, the older brother, looks winsome in his uniform in the World War but dies before reaching the age of 19; Dietrich will carry Walter's Bible as a cherished ikon for the rest of his life.

Is this an extraordinary history? Yes, of course, for these are people who lived under extraordinary circumstances. But is this also a common history? Yes, for all of us know pain and have snapshots which tell of lives unspun to a conclusion we would have wished, incidents which marked turning points, times of festivity and times of sorrow.

There are other pictures these days: Soweto, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, and still the North of Ireland. The pictures are the same, in a different way.

The cross and resurrection of Christ are embossed on each page of this *Life,* not visibly but invisibly, as it must always be in this world. "I thought I could acquire faith by trying to live a holy life, or something like it. I suppose I wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* as the end of that path. Today I can see the dangers of that book, though I still stand by what I wrote. I discovered later, and I'm still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith" (letter 21 July 1944, quoted page 202).

Bonhoeffer aficionados will buy this book as a matter of course, but it is so much more than a life of Bonhoeffer; it is theology as biography and biography as theology; it is immersion in the world rather than retreat from its constraints; it is the record of one who knew that although the Ultimate may be glimpsed, we must all live with the penultimates and, in the midst of them, find the mark of Christ.

Jay C. Rochelle

MEDITATING ON THE WORD. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Translated, arranged and with an Introduction by David Mcl. Gracie. Afterword by John Vannorsdall. Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1986. 154 pages. Paper. $6.95.

At first glance, one might pick up this book and put it down again with the mistaken thought that it is simply writings of Bonhoeffer arranged for meditative reading. In fact, that is not the case: with the exception of the writing on meditation for seminarians at Finkenwalde, which was previously translated by John Bowden (in *The Way to Freedom,* 57f.), the writings are all new translations by Fr. Gracie from the *Gesammelte Schriften.*

Since the book focuses on Bonhoeffer's writings on the Psalms, it makes a natural companion to Jim Burtness's translation of *Psalms: Prayer Book of the Bible* (Augsburg).

Included in the book are sermons and meditations on Psalms 62, 42, 50, 90, 58, 34, 19, and a forty-six page section on Psalm 119, which Bethge claimed was of chief theological import to Bonhoeffer's development at the end of the 1930s. In his thoughts on this Psalm, we see a Bonhoeffer influenced, perhaps, by Barth and surely by the neo-orthodox movement as a whole, whereby he could claim that the Law is to be loved because it contains a form of Gospel; it frees us from our self-made plans and conflicts.

These meditations are for a time when the balance between social action and evangelical piety is in danger of being lost—which is to say, they are for always.

Jay C. Rochelle

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART. By Karl Barth. Foreword by John Updike. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986. 60 pages. Paper. $3.95.

Karl Barth had two portraits behind his desk in Basel, hung at the same height: Calvin and Mozart—his spiritual directors.

This book contains four little portraits of Mozart by Barth, given as addresses at various times and in various places, usually in concert with the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Mozart's birth.

So often Karl Barth is perceived by Americans as the austere mentor of neo-orthodoxy, one who held by the interpretation of the Word and denied the categories of natural revelation. His little book *The Humanity of God* is thus perceived as a sort of soft and whispering final comment on the divine rupture of the curtain separating people from God, a note of gentleness from the champion of the wholly Other.

These little essays sing of that breach, too, in a different way. Here we learn that Barth, when and if granted entry to the heavenly council, would bypass Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin and go directly to Mozart in an attempt to understand where Mozart's work came from. Bach and Handel came at life and imposed structure; Mozart was content to put life down on his charts, raw and chaotic and full of darkness but always resolved into light.

Updike's introduction is brief but deep, and ends on this note: "Those who have not felt the difficulty of living have no need of Barthian theology; but then perhaps they also have no ear for music."

Jay C. Rochelle

I WRITE WHAT I LIKE. By Steve Biko. Ed. by Aelred Stubbs, C. R. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. 216 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Pointed. Cutting. Confronting. No one word is able to fully encompass the power of Biko's *I Write What I Like.*

Many people know the name Biko because of the way he died—in police custody. This book enables the reader to come to understand and appreciate him as a person. Without question, this book needs to be on the "must read" list for anyone interested in what has been happening in both South Africa, and in the liberation movements throughout the Third World.

It is important for North American Christians to understand why people from Third World nations have negative feelings toward much of Christianity. Because of this need, this review focuses attention solely on Biko's essay, "We Blacks."

In "We Blacks," Biko writes in no uncertain terms that the white missionary preached a white God, and a message which was irrelevant to the struggling masses. Coming from Western European and North American countries, missionaries brought with them their understandings of scripture and doctrine, seemingly oblivious to how culturally encrusted their understandings were and are. With the tendency to look on many African attitudes as "primitive," without value and dignity, and upon many African practices as "pagan" and superstitious, the white missionary often imposed on the black African a "white man's" religion. Because of this, Biko argues, many blacks are leaving the church. The white God does not seem to know, appreciate, or understand the black person or the black person's ways. Thus, Biko writes, "Obviously the only path open for us now is to redefine the message in the Bible and make it relevant to the struggling masses. The Bible must not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely instituted. It must preach that it is a sin to allow oneself to be oppressed. The Bible must continually be shown to have something to say to the black man to keep him going in his long journey towards realisation of the self."

This same point is made by other Third World writers. But, will the Western church hear? Will it hear the challenge that worship forms and doctrines, together with understandings and interpretations of Scripture, are always culturally and contextually related? As people who are raised and educated in one culture, we need to be aware of this reality and not equate our culture, or subculture, with one divinely ordained.

Phillip Baker, ALC Missionary to Nigeria
Theological College of Northern Nigeria
Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria

THE ORPHEAN PASSAGES. By Walter Wangerin, Jr. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. 303 pages. Cloth. $16.95.

This book by an award-winning pastor/author is subtitled "The Drama of Faith." Using the framework of the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Wangerin interweaves the struggles of faith and ministry. Through Wangerin's sensitive style, the reader becomes involved in the inner-city ministry of Pastor Orpheus and observes the drama that unfolds.

As I began this book I wondered "how much of the author's inner city ministry was in the anecdotes and events of Pastor Orpheus' ministry?" These detached observations quickly turned to a more meditative and thoughtful quest, "where am I in this journey and where are the people whose lives are touched in the course of my ministry?"

The six sections of the book treat the themes of language, death and mourning, supplication, faith, guilt, and resurrection. For each section Wangerin recalls a passage from the classical myth. As the myth unfolds, Wangerin turns from the struggle of the ancient one to the contemporary struggle, seeking to make faith and the almighty object of faith real in the lives of Pastor Orpheus' parishioners and neighbors. In his unique story-telling style

the author shares the struggles in the lives of his characters.

Somewhere in the process of observing others, Pastor Orpheus begins to undergo awareness of his own journey, his own drama of faith. The same unfolding happens to the reader. This, for me, is the strength of the book. The reader's self-analysis of ministry, of faith, of relationship to God begins almost without knowing it. It's as if one is no longer reading about another's drama, but reviewing one's own drama.

Wangerin's style is easy to read and the book hard to put down. His insights into faith and one's relationship to God are sensitive and dynamic. His comments on the function of words are helpful.

The book is another "must" for Wangerin's friends and fans. Even more so for anyone interested in a solid look at the drama of faith and how it unfolds.

Kenneth M. Ruppar
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Fort Rucker, Alabama

JUDAISM IN THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY. By Jacob Neusner. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. 112 pages. Paper. $5.95.

Neusner is a phenomenon. He has published over 200 books and countless articles. And he is controversial. Because he works so rapidly and publishes so prolifically, he has laid himself open to charges of carelessness and inaccuracy. Furthermore, some of his rabbinic colleagues speak of him as a secularizer of a sacred tradition. He does not work in the traditional context: not in Yeshiva but in the university (Brown). And he does not work with traditional rabbinic methods but with the tools of source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism, as he attempts to interpret Mishnah, Targumim, Midrash, and the Talmuds.

If there are those who view his labors with jaundiced eye, others heap praises upon him for opening up to them the foundation documents of Judaism and for interpreting to them the dynamics of Jewish life in the first century of the common era, when apostles and rabbis were shaping the religious societies which became Judaism and Christianity.

Four of the five chapters of the present work were published previously (in *First Century Judaism in Crisis* and in *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*). The book is designed to introduce students to the Jewish context of first century Christianity: 1. The world of Jerusalem and temple, government and the economy, social classes and the role of women. 2. Sage, priest, and Messiah (soldier) as representative figures in Judaism. 3. The Pharisees. 4. The Quest for the Historical Hillel, as a parallel to the Quest for the Historical Jesus. 5. The Destruction of the Temple and the Renaissance of Torah.

Neusner is conscious of his role as an interpreter, a bridge builder, in a time of unique opportunity, when, he feels, "the old bitterness (between Christians and Jews) is gone and a new sense of shared humility before God flourishes" (p. 61).

This little book may have its weaknesses. (For example, the finds of Avigad in the Jewish quarter, published in *Discovering Jerusalem,* contradict Neusner's claim that "archaeologists have not turned up . . . rich pottery, furnishings . . . dating from the first century.") But it is exceedingly useful for Christian students to read an account of the first century written by a Jewish scholar. This sketch of the Jewish world of that axial period fills a need, and I am glad to have it and to recommend it.

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

Briefly Noted

A SYNOPTIC HARMONY OF SAMUEL, KINGS, AND CHRONICLES. Edited by James D. Newsome, Jr. (Baker, $16.95). This synopsis of the texts in Samuel-Kings that have parallels in Chronicles is based on the RSV (with slight adjustments to indicate where apparent differences between the two ancient histories are only due to modern translation quirks). Two indices help readers find their way about, but they will also probably need to use first-rate commentaries alongside this book if they are to understand the significance of the many dramatic differences between the two texts. RWK

BAPTISM AND CHURCH: A BELIEVERS' CHURCH VISION. Edited by Merle D. Strege. (Sagamore, $12.95). This book is a compilation of essays and responses from the 7th conference on the Believers' Church in June, 1984. In response to the Baptism-Eucharist-Ministry document of the WCC, the essays are written from the perspective of the Mennonites, the Brethren, the Southern Baptists, the Church of God (Anderson, IN), the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Churches of Christ, and the Friends. The essays by Marlin Miller (Mennonite), Dale W. Brown (Brethren), and Hugh Barbour (Friends) are particularly luminous. While the book is helpful to understand the Believers' Church position, there is not enough for this reviewer on the socio-cultural and political dimensions of the Believers' Church position and struggle. JCR

NAHUM-MALACHI. By Elizabeth Achtemeier (John Knox, $17.95). This commentary on six prophets from just before and just after the exile is part of the Interpretation series. A. strives to illumine for the church the word of God that confronts us in these books; her interpretation is homiletical and didactic and Christian, providing just enough history to set the stage but not getting lost in philological or introductory jungles. A special feature: she includes excerpts from great sermons (Jowett, Calvin, Spurgeon) on these not-so-minor prophets. RWK

LAST LETTERS OF RESISTANCE: FAREWELLS FROM THE BONHOEFFER FAMILY. Edited by Eberhard and Renate Bethge (Fortress, $7.95). These are letters to family and friends from Bonhoeffer kin (Klaus, Rüdiger Schleicher, Hans von Dohnanyi, Justus Delbrueck) toward the end of World War II, which was also toward the end of all their lives. The letters are folksy and chatty, but also contain notes of Christian hope and freedom in the midst of dark days. Brief biographical sketches precede the letters. JCR

CHRISTIANS AMONG JEWS AND GENTILES: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF KRISTER STENDAHL. Edited by G. W. E. Nickelsburg and G. W. MacRae (Fortress, $19.95). Stendahl, Professor of NT and Dean of Harvard Divinity School, returned to Sweden in 1984 to be consecrated as bishop of Stockholm. This Festschrift honors him on his sixty-fifth birthday and takes due account of Stendahl's major concerns: better dialogue between Jews and Christians; commitment to historical research into Christian origins unfettered by dogmatic restrictions; and understanding the early church as a constitutive part of a larger Jewish and Gentile world. The essayists testify to the respect given S. by world scholarship and the impressive influence of S. on American biblical scholarship. Edgar Krentz

LEXEGETE (Tischrede Software, P.O. Box 9594, North Dartmouth, MA 02747; $39.95). These sermon helps consist of two computer diskettes (compatible with Macintosh or IBM type computers) that provide first-rate exegetical comments, homiletical proposals, and even recommended hymns for each Sunday in series A. Those who order the Macintosh diskettes will even find references to the NT text in Greek script. Each study is about three pages long (single-spaced) and contains a study of the passage's context and a verse by verse exposition. Since each Sunday is provided with a separate file in a word processing program, the pastor can build up his or her exegetical notes by adding to Lexegete's base every time that Sunday in the three year cycle rolls around. The editor, David Buehler, is an ALC pastor. Be sure to indicate your brand of computer and word processor when you order. RWK

THE NEW BROWN, DRIVER, BRIGGS, GESENIUS HEBREW AND ENGLISH LEXICON (Hendrickson, $34.95). This is really the old BDB with two major modifications: the numbers referring to Strong's Concordance have also been added here, and an index in the back of the book, which lists all the Hebrew words according to the enumeration in Strong's, help the reader find the appropriate page in the lexicon proper. The latter feature will prove particularly useful to those who have never figured out the tri-literal principle of arrangement in BDB. RWK

THE ANALYTICAL HEBREW AND CHALDEE LEXICON. By Benjamin Davidson (Hendrickson, $27.95). This volume, first published in 1848, lists alphabetically every Hebrew and Aramaic word in the Old Testament *as it is inflected in the Bible.* Thus when readers find forms for which they know neither conjugation, tense, nor root, they can look up that precise form in the alphabetical listing and find a full analysis. While a few terms will seem unfamiliar at first (Preterite, paragogic heh, 1st–13th declensions of nouns), students with even a modest knowledge of Hebrew will soon be able to parse any form in the Bible. RWK

THE INTERLINER BIBLE: HEBREW, GREEK, ENGLISH. Edited by Jay P. Green, Sr. (Hendrickson, $44.95). This one volume work prints two columns of Hebrew or Greek per page along with two narrow English columns that contain a running, literal translation. Between the lines of the Hebrew and Greek texts the editor has placed the appropriate English word directly below the foreign language word. Since the word order in the original languages is often quite different from English, a reader can use both the running translation and the interlinear words to figure out what is going on in the text. Numbers by each word in Hebrew and Greek help the reader to find the appropriate entry in the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries at the rear of Strong's Concordance. RWK

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

In Tribute to George W. Hoyer

John H. Tietjen
President, Christ Seminary—Seminex

Selah! Selah! Selah! Through the creative ministry of George W. Hoyer the arcane Hebrew word from the Psalter became for the community of Christ Seminary—Seminex an acclamation to God, a holy hip-hip-hooray. It is my privilege by means of these words to lead you in sounding Selahs in tribute to none other than George W. Hoyer.

This issue of *Currents* is the final issue in which George Hoyer serves as editor of "Preaching Helps," sermon studies which from 1974 to the end of 1986 appeared as a separate publication and have now been incorporated as a regular department of this journal. George is turning his editorial blue pencil over to colleague Robert H. Smith in anticipation of retirement from seminary teaching at the end of 1987.

Distinguished is too prosaic a word to describe the distinctiveness of George's ministry. You can almost feel the energy pulsing through the historical data. After more than a decade of parish ministry he became a professor of homiletics in St. Louis and continued teaching preaching for thirty-three years, at Concordia Seminary, then at Christ Seminary—Seminex, and lastly at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. For many years before he edited "Preaching Helps" he served in a similar capacity for *Concordia Theological Monthly.*

In a different era in the life of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, George served as a valued member of the LCMS Board for Young People's Work and then on its Commission on Architecture. He was a member of the Liturgical Committee of the LCMS Commission on Worship in those halcyon days when the LCMS initiated the process that led to the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship.* From 1972 until Christ Seminary—Seminex left St. Louis in 1983 George was Dean of the Chapel, setting worship standards and policies that enabled Seminex and the AELC to become renowned as a worshiping community.

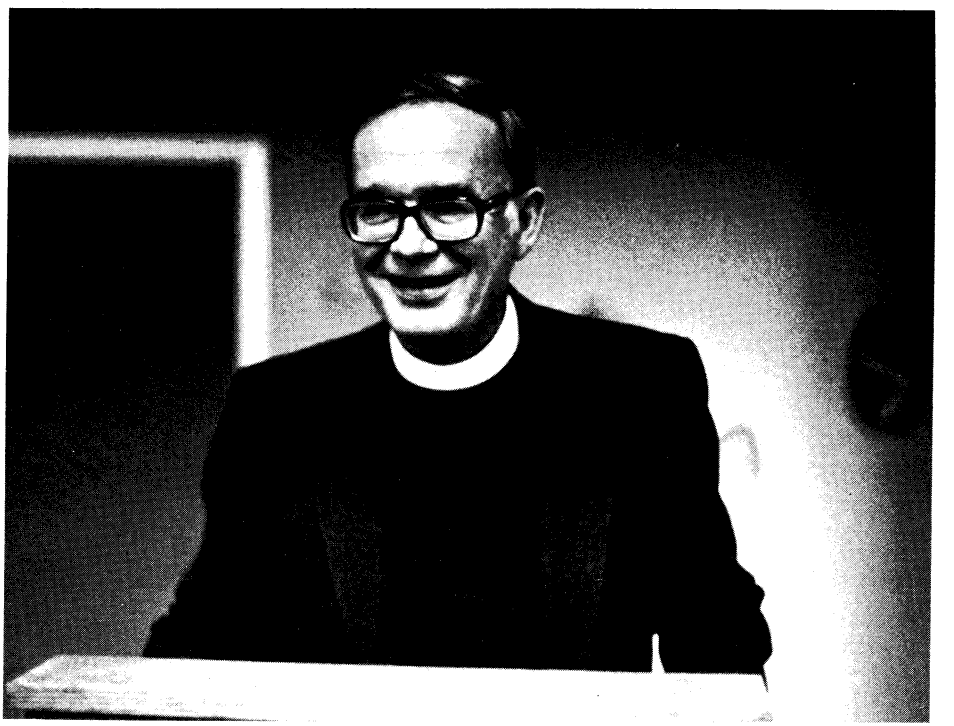
In ever so many respects George and his wife Dorothy, nee Ressmeyer, are partners in ministry. They have both invested themselves in the spiritual development of children. George drew on Dor's ministry as a teacher of children for his own work as professor, preacher, and pastor. They taught courses together, and together they wrote *Child of*

God—The Lord Be With You, published by Clayton Publishing House in 1977.

Whether it was with watermelons, paper airplanes, or balloons, George made the Gospel palpable. Long before it became a pulpit fad, George was telling stories in the service of God's good news. I remember a time at an English Synod convention when in explication of the theme "Born Again and Again and Again and Again" George immersed us in sensuality, employing all our senses—touch, taste, smell, sight, sound—so that we could experience the full meaning of baptism. In teaching homiletics, George added the dimension of unifying image to the method of goal, malady, and means, learned from Richard R. Caemmerer. His is a genuine theology of the incarnation.

But not incarnation apart from the cross. Therefore for George the Lord's Table with its gifts of body broken and blood shed "for you" had to be at the center of Christian worship. Imagery and story and illustration had to be in the service of the One who was obedient to death, yes, death on a cross. And when the time came, George and Dor Hoyer, both, were ready to walk the way of the cross, leaving behind the tradition of family and church body, sacrificing position and career and security, for the sake of the Gospel, as they joined with faculty and students in taking a seminary into exile.

Selah, indeed! It's time for us to say it in tribute to George. Three times now. First softly: selah! Now loudly: Selah! Now with full throat: SELAH!



Preaching Helps

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost—Christ the King, Series A

Focus

"The temptation to be relevant, the temptation to be spectacular, the temptation to be powerful"—do you identify our Lord's three temptations in these three interpretations made by Henri J. M. Nouwen? (His "The Wilderness Temptations of Ministry" appeared in The Virginia Seminary Journal, was reprinted in Leadership/82, and reached me via a student.) "All three are temptations to return to the ways of the world of upward mobility. All three temptations divert us from our mission to reveal Christ to the world."

All three are sharply pertinent applications of our Lord's temptations to temptations which confront us. "Spectacular" would probably be an exaggerated evaluation, but "powerful" and "relevant" would clearly be appropriate descriptions of the three as sermonic devices.

Our difficulties in avoiding these temptations in our preaching become more clear when we set their opposites up as desirable descriptions of sermons: Irrelevant, nothing special, no oomph.

It would be good if always everyone could say of our preaching, "Our pastor seems determined to be consistently in the rut of knowing nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "Our pastor week after week in proclaiming the testimony of God seems deliberately to avoid any sort of lofty words of wisdom." "Our pastor's messages never seem to be phrased in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power."

Highly irrelevant. Highly lowly. Highly powered.

Highly.

George W. Hoyer
Preaching Helps Editor

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost August 30, 1987

Psalm 85:8–13
1 Kings 19:9–18
Romans 9:1–5
Matthew 14:22–33

"Righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

We hear the song of the Gospel as this Psalm segment is chanted this day. The God who speaks peace has acted out this embrace of his people through Jesus the Christ, who came to our turf and gave us the fullness of the Father's love.

It is not surprising that this Psalm appears at different places in our lectionary. In the B cycle of lessons it is heard in the Advent season. In the C series it is an Epiphany Psalm. In the Book of Common Prayer it becomes a song of joy on Christmas morning.

On this Sunday in Pentecost, the Psalm undergirds our life of faith and mission. Elijah, Paul, Peter, and the believers of all ages find vision and strength for their task in the unfailing promise and presence of a God who gives us the richness of righteousness and peace.

The beginning verses of the Psalm set the stage. The cantor told of past blessings. "Yahweh, you were good to us! You restored the fortunes of your people, you forgave, you withdrew your wrath. But Lord, what about today's problems? Restore us again, master your resentment toward us, show us your steadfast love. You won't be angry forever, will you?" . . . There is a pause. "I am listening," says the Psalmist. "Let me hear what the Lord will speak."

Yahweh's voice is heard. He will speak peace, salvation is near at hand, steadfast love and faithfulness will meet, righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

It is interesting to note the varied translations of the timing of the kiss. The KJV states that they have kissed each other, the RSV places it into the future as they "will" be united in love, while the Jerusalem Bible has the present tense, they "now embrace." The wide-angle view of the Gospel speaks to us. God's grace has come—it is in the future—it is our present joy.

In the theophany of Elijah, the despondency of a bitterly disillusioned prophet introduces the lesson. Righteousness and peace are nowhere to be found. The people had forsaken the covenant, the phony Baal prophets had deserved the sword, the royal couple had not been converted by the show-down miracle, as great as it was. Elijah had expected a dramatic approval after Mount Carmel, but the reverse takes place. Now he lifts up his anger and his wounds, "I am the only one left and they are after me."

While earthquake, wind, and fire could have again been the vehicle of majesty for Yahweh, this was the moment for life and hope to come in a faint whisper. God's great word to us is not in overpowering phenomena but in a simple outreach of grace. Light and peace are given quietly, for the marvel is that he calls to faith and renewal. "Come not in terror as the King of Kings, but kind and good with healing in thy wings."

Elijah's view of reality also needed correction. He was neither the only "true believer," nor was his ministry now at an end. He had a tough assignment as he was to deal with Hazael and Jehu in a struggle for integrity in his land. He was also to anoint a successor, for this prophet, like all others, was expendable. As Elijah leaves the cave, a measure of peace has come to an angry man who has been restored to his mission by a God of grace.

As Paul expressed his deep ethnic concerns, he is likely thinking of some of his former associates and friends. He wrestles with the implications of the confrontation of Jesus with Judaism. He recounts the great treasures given to and through the chosen people. We, who often too coldly accept the alienation from

Israel which Paul could not embrace, need to listen again to the gifts given through the children of Abraham. The sonship and the glory, the law as well as the promises, the worship life and the patriarchs, and finally the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we study the on-going place of the ancient people of God, we need to remember an overriding truth emphasized by St. Paul. Yahweh keeps his promises. In fulfilling his pledges to the people of Israel, we see the assurance that his promises of life are valid for us. God keeps his word! Thanks be to God!

Peter fits the mold of Elijah and Paul. Stalwart men of God—exceptional leaders in faith—yet their inadequacy soon appears and their frustrations and fears overpower them.

The storm at sea and Peter's unplanned dive towards the bottom have been a favorite story for struggling churches through the centuries. We face the truth that the ELCA is also going to be unable to walk on water. Even when we seem to be keeping our head above water, the hand of God is a constant necessity. Only in his promise of grace can we move forward in mission.

Righteousness and peace are our cherished gifts for each tomorrow the Lord of the church gives us. Our lack of righteousness is too evident to deny. We live in our tensions, our worries, our floundering. In the still, small word of the Gospel we have renewal, leading us not to an idle peace, but to a confident hope, as we walk in the path of righteousness and mission into which he has led us.

Victor L. Brandt
Bishop, The English Synod Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 6, 1987

Psalm 67
Isaiah 56:1, 6–8
Romans 11:13–15, 29–32
Matthew 15:21–28

Yes, THEM Too!

Someone said, "Why don't you go to talk to the priest?"

She "wasn't a Catholic." She wasn't even a Christian. Yet she was heartsick over her troubles. What to do. . . .?

"Why don't you go to Father Al? He can help."

So she went. There was his house big as life. Others were waiting too. He must have something. "Will he help me? Can he? Here goes."

It is scary to be on unfamiliar turf, at an unknown door, vulnerable. Yet we too trust those who sent us to the help we need.

So she knocked and rang and rapped, but the door remained closed. "What could it be? I know he's home! I saw others go in as I approached." Yet he answered her not a word.

Ah yes, how closed the door did seem as Kroger Grocery pulled out. After 29 years and 9 months, Dave had no job or security. Where to go from here?

For Jim and Jean too when their high schooler died undiagnosed and without warning.

The knocking seems to stir no one, yet persistently they rap. They know help is behind the door. What he has done for others he will do for me.

Suddenly the door was cracked. It was the housekeeper, but it was a start. "May I please talk to the priest?"

"What parish you in? You're not from Our Lady's!"

"I was sent. Can father help me?"

The door was left ajar. She went down the hall and put her head into a room. "Got time for one more of 'them?' " she said, then walked away. But the door was open.

He stood before her. Was it possible, would he help? "No, I'm not a Catholic, but my friend is, and she told me you could. . . ."

"Is it fair?" he offered. "There is so much need among my own."

"Perhaps it's not," she agreed, "but I have come. Please help me."

He did too. What he had done for others he did for her.

Is the school there for the parish children *only?* Is our Pastor for *our* service alone? Am I only for the sisters and brothers of faith and politics and origin, or can my door be opened by those shouts from Detroit and Beirut, from Nicaragua, South Africa, and Ethiopia?

"Lord, why don't you open the door of your providence to these needful ones I see?"

"Why don't you?" he says to me.

It is so. There are others with acceptable offerings and sweet smelling sacrifices who knock. They too will find the door opened, requests answered.

As it is with the Lord so is it with us who share his flesh and blood, his soul and life. Here is the "clearing house" and "resource center" for the prayers of all people.

The Divine Life in us is for "them" too to live.

The Divine Healing we receive is for "them," the pristine breath of garden air again, as well.

He spent his Life to turn my world around. And so he will for others as he has done for me when open stands the door to my holy ministry.

Reflect As You Prepare

Jesus was vulnerable to the reach of that outsider. He was where she could find him. Her needs were within his hearing range. But where am I and the church with all our busyness? Is the cost of our ministry out of reach?

Jesus was open to the grasp of the outsider. He was ready to take her in and lift her up as one of his own. Yet where am I with black and white standing opposite, or Hindu, Moslem, non-believer, or Jew? Our liturgies are open but are our services too?

Jesus planted himself at the crossroads where the world could look upon him and be forgiven, touch him and be healed, hear him and take heart. He wants to be planted still today, so that his house may be called a house of prayer for all people.

James David Feckler
Priest in Teaching at
Concord Lutheran School
St. Louis, Missouri

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 13, 1987

Psalm 138
Exodus 6:2–8
Romans 11:33–36
Matthew 16:13–20

Today's Gospel tells us that some of Jesus' contemporaries believed that he was really Elijah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist brought back from the dead. The images are different today, but people still have mistaken notions and wrong impressions of Jesus.

Rank and file Americans get the idea from TV evangelists and their emphasis on dollars that Jesus is a clever and slick money-maker. Even preachers like Billy Graham have contributed to this image. When he was conducting a crusade in my hometown, I was somewhat surprised and bothered to overhear in a locker room this estimate of his campaign: "He's after the bucks." That's unfortunate. However, because so many TV preachers are overdoing their appeals for funds, all preachers, including those of us who are not on TV, are dumped

into one basket and labeled: fund raisers for Jesus, their chief!

This portrait of Jesus is unfair and wrong, but it's the only picture of Jesus some of our contemporaries carry with them.

Because TV makes such a powerful impact on our culture, we have to correct another distortion of Jesus: that he is primarily a good psychologist. Viewers get the notion that his mission has to do with pop psychology, whether we call it possibility thinking, positive thinking, or what have you. Since there's a modicum of truth in these approaches to life, their distorted image of our Savior is not easy to correct, especially when it's framed in promises of prosperity and success.

A third caricature of Jesus is the work of the militant preachers who are pressing hard toward Armageddon and the rapture. They give the impression that Jesus is a vengeful warlord who will enjoy clobbering his enemies and will really let them have it at the end of the present "dispensation," while his raptured disciples will be gloating over their victory and being spared the troubles of the great tribulation. One of these preachers was forthright when he said: "I believe Armageddon is coming . . . There are dark days coming . . . I'm not planning on going through the hell that is coming . . . My Lord, I'm happy about it . . . I don't care who it (Armageddon) bothers. I don't care who it troubles. It thrills my soul!" (Jimmy Swaggart, in a sermon broadcast from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, September 22, 1985). What a misrepresentation of the Prince of Peace!

Our task as disciples of Christ in the late 1980s is not so much to introduce Jesus to the people around us as to correct the wrong pictures of him that some church folk have helped to paint. That's the way of evangelism in our time and culture. The need of twentieth century evangelism is not for glib talkers who can outargue and out-debate those on our church prospect list until they finally surrender and join our institution. No. Since many of those outside the church have a botched-up picture of our Savior and theirs, we need to introduce them to the real Jesus! And the guideline for Americans who want to evangelize in 1987 can be found in some of Jesus' last words to his apostles: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). If we continue in that word and walk in that way, our neighbors and associates will begin to sit up and take notice, seeing that our Lord came into this world to be

not a fund-raiser par excellence,
not a pop psychologist,
not a warlord,

but to redeem us and to give his life as ransom. "Greater love has no one than this, that a person lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

How important for us to show his kind of love in our world and in so doing bear witness to the true nature of God and his incarnation, Jesus of Nazareth!

I'll never forget the words a Jewish rabbi spoke to a conference of Lutheran pastors some years ago: "When you Christians get around to showing us love for a hundred years or so, we Jews may start to believe your Jesus talk." His words kick; they sting and bite. They demonstrate how far off the mark our Christian witness has been. Through the centuries well-meaning but mistaken Christians have given the Jews and many other folk false pictures of Jesus. The prophet from Nazareth, our Savior, is not a crusading King Baldwin redux. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey

not to lord it over others but to serve them,
not to popularity and acclaim but to rejection,
not to a throne but a cross.

Today you and I are the only pictures of Jesus available to some of our acquaintances. If they see in us love in action, they may yet get rid of their caricatures of Jesus and join Peter in his confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This is the God who in today's First Lesson called himself El Shaddai and Yahweh, the God who cares for the lowly (Ps 138), the God who brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt. This is the God who, through Christ, has freed us from the bondage to sin and death and has adopted us as his own people. This is the God whose grace and wisdom are unfathomable, whose love endures forever (Ps 138). Yes, this is the God whom we love and whose image we really want to reflect, because he first loved us!

To him be glory for ever. Amen.

Bertwin L. Frey, Emeritus
Messiah Lutheran Church
Fairview Park, Ohio

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 20, 1987

Psalm 26
Jeremiah 15:15–21
Romans 12:1–8
Matthew 16:21–26

The Prayer of the Day underscores the common theme of all the lessons in the phrase "point us to the path of obedience" while at the same time pointing us to the source of needed power, both in the example of his Son and in the prayer for "strength to follow his commands." But in its few well-chosen words this prayer cannot plumb the depths nor uncover the riches of the lessons.

The psalm begins with an almost arrogant description of the exemplary way in which the author had been faithful to his calling; but if you read carefully you can hear him say several times that he is faithful to his calling because first he has found a faithful Lord.

The reading from Jeremiah deals with the fact that the prophet had been unfaithful to his call, although he blames this on his persecutors. There is an echo of the psalmist's "arrogance" also in this prayer, mixed with a poignant desire on the part of the prophet once again to be able to speak that word that he had eaten when he was first called. God invites him to repent, to return, and promises that then the prophet can once again stand before him and "utter what is priceless." Jeremiah teaches the very important lesson that there is room for failure in those who have been called by God.

Romans 12 is filled to the brim with "call" descriptions and prescriptions. Two are worth noting for use this Sunday. Paul affirms the appropriateness of gifts: those needed will always be present(ed) by the Holy Spirit. In the second place, Paul affirms the uniqueness of each gifted person. She who has a gift, let her do it in her special way.

The Gospel lesson presents us with the perfect model of the Christian's response to God's call. Not Peter, who, having been called at Caesarea Philippi, is unfaithful in a matter of days and becomes a woefully misinformed obstacle. Like Jeremiah, he needs the promised second (or 490th) chance to be faithful. The perfect model is that of our Lord. He understood the price (of complete self-denial); having felt the call, he immediately set about being faithful to it, and he encouraged others to respond in the same fashion.

Having surveyed "call theology," let us look at some of the kerygmatic potentials for this Sunday.

Goal: that we *understand* more fully what it means to be called by God; that we *appreciate* the privilege of being called, the importance of our individual call, and the fact that no one else in the whole wide world is gifted as we are for this particular call; that we develop the *skill* of more fully relating every aspect of our lives to our calling; that we practice depending more fully on our gracious God who calls and recalls; and that we accept our failings in the calm assurance that there is always room before God to fail.

Malady: The great gulf fixed in our understanding between the sacred and the secular in

our daily living; the narrow conception of the call, both in Luther's time and in our own day (those who handle holy things are called); the feelings of inadequacy that regularly lead us to say "Surely, you jest"; the reluctance, the refusal to take up our crosses and to deny ourselves; cheap grace; procrastination (the list is long and endless); and, finally, the question of unfaith.

Means: The example of our Lord, which more than a model of the godly life, is also a sacrifice for sin; the inspiring little essay of St. Paul, the example of Jeremiah, the case history of St. Francis of Assisi, who to a remarkable degree denied himself; St. Paul's confidence that his listeners truly wanted to be faithful to their calling, faithful to their Lord; the memory of faithful callees who have gone before us; the power of prayer.

Herbert T. Mayer
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South Campus
Venice, Florida

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 27, 1987

Psalm 119:33–40
Ezekiel 33:7–9
Romans 13:1–10
Matthew 18:15–20

In approaching Matthew 18:15–20 it may be helpful to review a few major themes of this gospel. Matthew wants to present Jesus in terms of righteousness and all that has been commanded (Matt 3:15). Jesus is the one who comes to give righteousness, that is, he creates a situation of "all-rightness" and calls people to live in community and accord with the situation of all-rightness (Matt 28:18–20).

However Matthew was writing to a community majoring in spiritual gifts (prophecy, tongues, etc.), but minoring in concrete acts of love. Enthusiasm for living freely in the Spirit of the Risen Lord seemed to replace concern for taking heed to the commands of the earthly Jesus. As lawlessness increased love grew cold in the church.

Matthew refocuses attention to the teachings and commands of Jesus who is still very much with us (Matt 28:20). Disciples are made by bringing them into the community of faith and then teaching them "all that I have commanded you." (Special thanks to Seminex professor Bob Smith for these general insights.)

The content of love is to be discovered in the teachings and commands of Jesus. As Schweizer says in his commentary, *The Good News according to Matthew* (John Knox Press), "Matthew takes the word of Jesus 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' literally." This thought is echoed in Romans 13:9.

Matthew 18:15–20 is an example of the shape of love given by Jesus, who alone creates the situation of all-rightness in community.

Our pericope raises the issues of loving discipline in the church. One notices immediately that the goal of our text is to bring about reconciliation, not excommunication. The whole process of mediation is done in community "where two or three are gathered." There is no credentialed elect who mete out discipline, thus echoing Matthew's distaste for titles and credentials. The difficult way of love is everyone's responsibility. In terms of preaching this raises some interesting angles of approach.

A sermon might begin by affirming that Jesus the Christ creates and sustains a situation of all-rightness in our communities mediated through Word and Sacrament. The authority and discipline of loving one another lies with all of the baptized. We learn the shape and content of love through the teaching and commands of Jesus. The way of love is not easy. It requires patience, tolerance, forbearance, and the willingness to question our operating para-

digms. The goal of loving discipline is to love our sisters and brothers back into the Body of Christ.

Because of our impatience and distrust of God's way of love we take "all-rightness" into our own hands. We create absolute paradigms based upon constitutions, bylaws, credentials, and the like, thus making the discipline of love an issue of power. *We* define what constitutes a situation of all-rightness in our communities and exclude those who fail to fit into our myopic paradigms. We call inactive members "delinquents" (Do they wear leather jackets?), make a few feeble attempts to "get them back to church," and, when this fails, we remove them from membership "according to the constitution and bylaws."

And yet one current study found that "about 70 percent of those who become inactive did so at about the same time that family related problems or crises arose" (Stephen Series—Ministering to Inactive Members).

Inactive members need ministry not removal. They need Christians willing to care for them regardless of worship attendance. They need Christians able to minister to their needs and not to their inactivity.

It is our legalism which Matthew calls "lawlessness" that makes love grow cold. We ordain the status quo as our situation of all-rightness and exclude those who might upset our idol. For instance gay and lesbian brothers and sisters continue to be ignored or benignly tolerated by the church and in many cases actively persecuted and rejected in order to keep the fellowship (and I suspect the common cup) pure.

In a time of growing hostility and fear because of AIDS, the church has a kairos opportunity to be "a model of the godly life." This may be the time to introduce to our congregations the Reconciled in Christ program offered through Lutherans Concerned, P.O. Box 10461, Fort Dearborn Station, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

Matthew challenges us to return to Jesus Christ and his teachings and commands. He asks us to align our Easter hope with the teachings of the earthly Jesus. Perhaps that is best accomplished by taking the content of our Easter hope (he is risen and because he is, our destiny and the world's is good!) and allowing it to be formed by the cross.

And the cross filled with this hope will lead us to those estranged by our lovelessness and legalism. The cross will keep us mindful to major in love by putting our spiritual gifts to work loving *everybody* back home!

Jack Schieman
Trinity Lutheran Church
Pleasanton, California

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost October 4, 1987

Psalm 103:1–13
Genesis 50:15–21
Romans 14:5–9
Matthew 18:21–35

It has always seemed to me that preaching about forgiveness ought to be a delightful, happy, gently reconciling experience for all concerned. But there's something—a number of things, actually—strangely unsettling about the "forgiven-ness" presented in these texts.

Unsettler #1: Peter poses a question, not exactly innocently: "How many times do I *have* to forgive?" That's the TEV; the emphasis is mine and, I think, rightly so. The implication seems clear, whether read in KJV, RSV, TEV, or another alphabet altogether: Peter wants to know what his forgiveness obligations are (as opposed, undoubtedly, to privileges). Is that what forgiveness is? An obligation? A "gotta do"? Sounds less than free, less than loving; more like duty.

Unsettler #2: Jesus responds in kind, acknowledging that forgiveness is an obligation

which, according to the parable, knows no limits. Forgive 490 times? Yes! Forgive a $10-million debt? Yes!! It is your obligation, Peter, because that's the way of the kingdom of heaven, and for no other reason at all. You must forgive just as you have been forgiven—and Lord knows how many times *you've* gone to the well, looking for righteousness! Keep that in mind, Peter: your Father will forgive you as often as you come looking. Who are you to think of doing less for others?

Unsettler #3: Jesus concludes his parable: "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you. . . ." Whoa, now! Is *not* forgiving an unforgivable sin? March right back to the beginning of your own parable, Jesus. Didn't you just say that the King forgives all the servant's debts? Then why not also forgive the unforgiver? Verily, unsettling. What is there about forgiveness that makes it so crucial, so deciding, so dividing?

Unsettler #4: ". . . Unless you forgive your brother (or sister) *from the heart.*" More of my emphases, but all you who believe "you can't legislate love," rise up now in common protest. You must from your heart, forgive. Without sticking out your tongue. Without crossing your fingers behind your back. Without keeping score. You must forgive from your (slightly unsettled, often reluctant, usually self-centered) heart. Do I have to? Yes! With a smile?! Yes!!

Unsettler #5: Joseph's brothers are turkeys. Still, yet, and again. Nowhere is it actually recorded that Jacob ever said to his sons, "Ask your brother Joseph to forgive you. Tell him I said so." He well might have, but no one knows. It seems to me consistent with the brothers' previous actions that they should make this up, thinking to add the credence of beloved father Jacob to their survival-need for forgiveness. And Joseph—still, yet, and again—acquiesces. He forgives them. Servant of God forever? Or sucker born for just that moment?

The unsettlers, then, add up to:
—forgiveness is commanded of Christians
—Jesus says so, and adds "unlimitedly"
—the Father agrees, because it's heaven's way of things
—no fair forgiving grudgingly—that doesn't count
—no fair judging motives of forgiveness-seekers; we have to do it anyway

Settle it, perhaps, this way: heart-to-heart. The TEV (I usually prefer the RSV, but TEV on this day is helpful) concludes the Genesis text with, "So he (Joseph) reassured them with kind words that touched their hearts." Link those touched hearts with the heart-home forgiveness required in the conclusion of the parable, and isn't that what The Faith is all about?—one freed heart freeing another!

Forgiveness is delightful! Forgiveness is happy! Forgiveness is gentle! Forgiveness is reconciling! Forgiveness is required! Answer "true" to all of the above, because forgiveness that does not come from the heart is no forgiveness at all, does nothing for the forgivee (who knows that's really going on) and even less for the forgiver (who isn't really giving-for the other). Yet our hearts are not naturally so inclined. We must be told. We must learn. We must be reminded. To forgive from the heart is a discipline that disciples of Jesus must intentionally practice over and over again, all the time well aware that so we are commanded. We *have* to forgive, because without forgiveness, there is no Christian faith. What else should we ask of Jesus? Success, perhaps. Or money. Good health. Long life. Fine family. Ask those things of yourself, of your cleverness, your education, your body, your vitamins, your doctor, your spouse, your children. But ask Jesus for forgiveness. And what else shall others ask of us, the "Little Christs"? Time, perhaps. Or money. Attention. Sandwiches. The car keys. They will ask, and they will be given, whether or not the giver is a Little Christ. But mostly, uniquely, Little Christ, give the 491st word of

forgiveness—from your heart, to the heart of another. It is heaven's way of doing things.

Susan K. Wendorf
St. Martin's Lutheran Church
Cross Plains, Wisconsin

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost October 11, 1987

Psalm 27: 1–13
Isaiah 55:6–9
Philippians 1:1–5, (6–11), 19–27
Matthew 20:1–16

There is something offensive about the grace of God, and Matthew captures it perfectly in this retelling of Jesus' story of the laborers in the vineyard. (Or is it more accurately titled the story of the generous householder?) Years of retelling have added several endings to the story, but the one which goes directly to the heart of the matter is the question in v. 15b, "Or do you begrudge my generosity?" Of course! That's precisely the problem, isn't it? The issue for us is certainly not whether or not God is gracious. How could there be any question of that for good Christians like us? The problem for us is that God is *too* gracious, indiscriminately gracious, outrageously and offensively gracious. God is generous to a fault, as the saying goes. It's simply not fair.

Matthew alone relates this story, and it seems to be directed at those within the household of faith. The context indicates that Jesus is addressing his disciples. Was there something unique about Matthew's community that this parable was meant to address? Perhaps. Matthew's gospel was probably written in the last third of the first century for a community of Christians in Syria made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Much of the gospel seems to relate to situations within the Matthean community (cf. chapter 18). A constant theme is the precedence of mercy over sacrifice (cf. 9:13, 12:7). It was a point that some in the community apparently had trouble remembering, and so Matthew repeats it, along with variations, throughout the gospel. Ironically, it is not the "sinners" who have the hardest time understanding, but those who are, at least religiously speaking, the most sophisticated, i.e. the Pharisees and the disciples (cf. 19:13ff).

As Lutherans, we take a back seat to no one when it comes to grace. We are "grace junkies," gracefully sophisticated. Yet that very sophistication may create the same sort of problem for us that befell Matthew's community, the problem of begrudging God's generosity. Is not that tight-fisted, hard-hearted, self-righteousness ever a problem for the "religious"? Ironically, it sometimes disguises itself as a commitment to justice. And is there not at least a bit of that same self-righteousness involved in the protests against ELCA's attempts to be inclusive? God's generosity is great enough to offend folks almost anywhere on the theological and political spectrum.

But the consistent witness of Scripture is that God's generosity and grace know no limits. Nor is it some novel aspect of God's nature revealed for the first time by Jesus. Those who thought so simply weren't listening very well. The lesson from Isaiah is a reminder, rich in natural, earthy images, that God is consistently and outrageously graceful. Jesus is a faithful witness to that truth revealed throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, as Matthew goes to some pains to point out.

It brings up another aspect of our tight-fistedness about grace. We think too small. Joseph Sittler reminds us that we Lutherans have a compulsive fascination with the second article. This story is not about forgiveness of sins, at least not directly. It *is* about God's generosity, and so is the Isaiah lesson. But it is a generosity that is set against the backdrop of the whole creation and it needs to be preached in a

way that does justice to the cosmic dimensions of that generosity. Writes Sittler:

> The grace of God is not simply a holy hypodermic whereby my sins are forgiven. It is the whole giftedness of life, the wonder of life. (Joseph Sittler. *Gravity and Grace.* Augsburg, 1986, page 14.)

So the problem is not grace, it is our begrudging unwillingness to acknowledge and emulate God's generosity. Fortunately, the problem is no match for the power of God's grace which can transform tight fists into open hands, melt hearts of stone, and drown us in a sea of love. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," says Yahweh. "Neither are my ways your ways." Thanks be to God!

John Rosenberg
Lutheran Campus Ministry
Portland, Oregon

Saint Luke, Evangelist
October 18, 1987

Psalm 124
Isaiah 43:8–13 or 35:5–8
2 Timothy 4:5–11
Luke 1:1–4; 24:44–53

"Living Liturgy" offers helpful suggestions for celebrating this day:

> This festival honors Saint Luke, physician, evangelist, and companion of Saint Paul. The third Gospel and Acts are attributed to Luke. A traditional symbol for Luke is the winged ox, referring to the emphasis in Luke's Gospel on the sacrificial aspects of Christ's life; the ox was a traditional sacrificial animal.
>
> Some emphasis might be given on this day to physicians and others involved in the healing arts, such as nurses and medical researchers. If the congregation includes physicians or other medical professionals, they could be invited and trained to serve as assisting ministers on this day. Prayers for doctors and other health care professionals could be included in the intercessory prayers (September, 1981).

I would add another—schedule a service of healing for this Sunday. (Lutherans will find "The Service of the Word for Healing" in *Occasional Services* a useful pattern. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, and Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, Philadelphia, 1982.)

Newborn Noah was spending his first night at home. Sue was nursing him, rocking him to sleep, when our older son, Nathan, then age three, called me into his room. He sat up in bed and said, "Daddy, my knees and my forehead hurt." I sat down on the bed, gave him a little hug and said, "Let's pray that God will make you feel better." Nathan said, "Okay." We bowed our heads, folded our hands and I said, "Dear Jesus, hear our prayer that Nathan's knees and forehead will feel better. Amen." I rubbed his knees and touched his forehead and he smiled. A few seconds went by and then he looked up at me with his big eyes and said, "Daddy, some band-aids would help, too."

Indeed, some band-aids would help. Not for medical reasons, but as a reminder, a sign, a promise, that I cared, his mother cared, and most of all, God cared. So we put a band-aid on each knee and one on his forehead.

I have no band-aids to hand out, but we will experience God's healing power as we pray, touch, and anoint. Those actions are helpful, for they are signs, reminders, and promises that God does indeed care about you and me.

We celebrate St. Luke, the physician who diagnosed a need for an orderly account of our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry. His writings, his prescription, describe a loving Lord who reached out and touched those who were hurting, a Savior who taught his disciples, people

like you and me, how to care, to touch, and to heal.

"The Service of the Word for Healing"—I'd like to take a few moments to examine that phrase. A *service* is an event, a time of worship. What is the *Word*?

We believe the Word is the scriptures; the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ; and—it is Jesus himself, the Word made flesh. The meaning of *Word* as God moving out to us in active love is included in the opening dialogue of the service:

> Give thanks to the Lord for he is good
> and his mercy endures forever.
> They cried to the Lord in their trouble
> and he delivered them from their distress.
> He sent forth his Word and healed them
> and saved them from the grave.

I looked up the word *healing* in *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* (26th edition). It defined healing as "the restoration of integrity to injured tissue."

Break that definition down into three parts; 1) restoration; 2) integrity; and 3) injured tissue.

Let's start with injured tissue. We all know what it means to be injured. Every day we experience the power of sin which breaks us, tarnishes us, and impairs us. As we go about living we bruise and get bruised. Quite often we injure the ones we love the most. We feel the effects of broken hearts, shattered dreams, and spiritual blindness. We find ourselves or our loved ones invaded with cancer, AIDS, arthritis, and other diseases which cripple and impair.

The word *tissue* can mean other things as well, but think about two of them. First it could mean a rich ornamental cloth usually of silk and interwoven with gold and silver. Think of ourselves as beautiful tapestries sewn together by the loving, gentle hands of God. As the body of Christ we are a delightful assortment of colors and designs. And yet we know all too well this lovely tapestry has been torn and ripped. It needs to be mended.

Tissue is also an aggregate of cells usually of a particular kind. Our bodily parts get damaged—eyes which do not see as clearly as once they did, legs which won't move, fingers which do not have their old flexibility, ears which no longer interpret sounds, and hearts which do not pump as strongly as they should.

It is our injured tissue, it is you and me, who need restoration, restoration of *integrity. Integrity* evokes images of soundness, wholeness, completeness—of salvation.

St. Luke was big on *integrity.* He wanted to give Theophilus the whole story, the complete news. He wanted the church to be sound enough to include females and males, Gentiles and Jews, rich and poor, slaves and free, the sick as well as the healthy. In his gospel writing we read of a Jesus who brought integrity to sinners, to the unlovable, to the broken. He made them complete.

Think of the third term—*restoration*: "the induction of a return to a previous state, a replacement of a part to a normal position." Luke tells us about the restoration of Israel . . . Elizabeth becomes pregnant, Mary is "great with child," Jesus is born and the angels announce that he is the fulfillment of God's promises. Peter's mother-in-law is healed, lepers are cleansed, the widow's son is raised, the centurion's servant is healed, and the twelve are sent out to spread the healing. Perhaps the most touching story of restoration comes at the end of the gospel. The two Emmaus disciples were devastated because the one whom they thought had come to redeem Israel had been crucified and buried, and now they couldn't even find his body. Jesus talked with them, revealed his risen self to them, and restored them. He helped them return to a previous state, a time of hopefulness. Jesus replaced their broken hearts with hearts on fire.

Like those disciples our hearts have been broken, literally and figuratively. We have pain,

grief, sorrow, and anguish, and yet our Lord has promised us healing, "restoration of integrity to injured tissue." He walks with us as we make our way to Emmaus and hears us as we sift through the memories of our lives. Jesus heals those broken relationships which have separated parents, children, spouses. The parts of our history which we seem condemned to re-run, he redirects. Hope and trust which were once strong but are strained to the breaking are restored as Jesus takes our hands and walks with us.

O Christ, the healer, we have come
To pray for health, to plead for friends,
How can we fail to be restored
When reached by love that never ends?

The love that never ends raised Jesus from the dead. Because he lives, we too shall live.

Nathan's band-aids helped him. There is more here. The healing, the praying, the touching, the anointing help too . . . and God, who is with us always. Come.

Ronald T. Glusenkamp
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Kansas City, Missouri

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
October 25, 1987

Psalm 80:7–14
Isaiah 5:1–7
Philippians 3:12–21
Matthew 21:33–43

Did Jesus set goals, make new year's resolutions, determine to improve? Is there a possibility of doing better even when one is without sin and "already perfect?" How much of the Second Lesson would Jesus have been able to use in encouraging us in being about the Father's business?

When St. Joseph first heard Jesus use those words—if they sounded in his ears the way the echo of the Authorized Version sounds in ours—what did he make of the "business?" The Father's house of business involved more than conforming to Jewish law, participating in the services and the ceremonies of the temple, and learning from the learned rabbis. We have been apprenticed to the house of business belonging to God the Father. And however long we have been at it, there is still unfinished business in our living.

One could deal with the threat in the gospel for the day as referring to the Palestine people in particular. In addition the application could be made to Gentiles in general, all those who have succeeded to the business and have been apprenticed to the house. Finally it could be applied very personally to your people. In that way the Word would have its way with us in our days. And all of the pertinence of the Lord's desire for adequate service could be phrased in terms of vines and vineyards, and fruit bearing. The Sunday is full of grapes as well as wrath.

Finally, however, the day's sermon will seek to encourage the kind of "pressing on" which the Second Lesson enjoins. And the sermon will want to release the power of the gospel, with phrases like "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own," and "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Reading the pericope as if the Lord Jesus himself were saying it might provide a magnifying lens to help us see both his example of a holy life and his sacrifice for sin.

The Lord was "tempted in all things" even though without sin. Was one of his temptations not to become overly enthusiastic about his work, not to be seen as a fanatic? "There's plenty of time"—would he have been tempted to think that? or did he have a warning early-on that the night and the three hours darkness were coming before three years were over? A preference for bread over stones, the appetite

which gave excuse for his being called a wine bibber and a glutton, the recollection of the vision of all the kingdoms of the earth and the riches thereof—did they continue as a temptation to set his mind "on earthly things?" Even Peter tried to talk him off the cross, and Peter was not the only one to weep bitterly just before it was time to put hands on the cross.

Gather your disciples around you and help them earnestly to examine whether they be "otherwise minded" rather than mature. It is the gospel today which makes clear that there is an end which is destruction: "He will put those wretches to a miserable death" . . . "the kingdom of God will be taken away."

While your disciples are gathered around you, help them hear the Lord—he who trod the wine press alone. He set his steadfast face toward Jerusalem; he pressed forward to accomplish his baptism of suffering, he, for the joy set before him, moved determinedly onward to endure the cross, despising the shame, aiming for the place at the right hand of God.

"I did not 'have it made,' not at the beginning, not as I began my ministry. I had not 'already attained.' The temptations were very real. I pressed on to make the high calling my own, because God my Father had made me his own. 'This is my beloved Son,' the voice of God said. But so many would not believe. Day after day I had to forget what lay behind—the failures where there was no faith and no mighty works possible, people preferring great possessions to the great inheritance. I resolved, I had to decide again and again to strain forward. I pressed on toward the goal of the upward call of God.

"For me the upward call was being 'lifted up.' That is what the plan of God called for. It was not my will—except that always I willed for the Father's will to be done. Raised up, on the third day . . . that, too, was in God's plan, that I would be lifted up out of the grave, the firstfruits of all who would die in faith. Finally, while those first disciples beheld, I was lifted up and a cloud hid me from eyes on earth. Then the blessing could fall on all who, though unseeing, were believing. All this was in God's plan to draw you disciples unto me.

"Join now in imitating me . . . mark those who so live as you have an example in me. Our commonwealth—it is uncommonly rich, and already we have it in common—all I will share with you, is in heaven. If you are 'otherwise minded,' God will reveal this mind which you have in me unto you.

"Press on toward the prize of your high calling. I will come again, and I will change your bodies to be like my glorified body. But even now all power is mine in heaven and on earth and all things are subject to me. Even now, therefore, just as my body was raised by the glory of the Father, so I quicken your mortal bodies to the unfinished tasks. Receive the Holy Spirit!"

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All Saints' Day
November 1, 1987

Psalm 34:1–10
Isaiah 26:1–4, 8–9, 12–13, 19–21
Revelation 21:9–11, 22–27 (22:1–5)
Matthew 5:1–12

The other night at supper, my wife and I were talking about an incident which happened on Father's Day. One of our sons joined the conversation by saying, "There's a Mother's Day, too." We nodded, "Yes, that's right." After a few seconds he asked, "When will it be Boy's Day?" Not wanting to get into a big discussion, for the food was getting colder by the minute, I quickly said, "This coming Sunday is Boy's Day, okay?" That seemed to do the trick. However, the more I thought about it and remembered what Sunday, All Saints' Day, is all about,

I needed to restate my answer. Not only is it Boy's Day, but Girl's Day, Brother's and Sister's Day, Mom's and Dad's Day, Grandma's and Grandpa's Day, Aunt's and Uncle's Day—this day belongs to each one of us.

What the church does on ALL Saints' Day is take a look at the family album and remember all those people, all those saints, past and present, in the family of God.

Now this observation doesn't always come naturally. Intern Meyers has observed, "We have relegated the saints to a pink, blue, and gold world of plaster statuary that belongs to the past; it is a hangover, a relic of the dark ages, when men were the children of fantasy's magic. We are content to place a statue of Francis of Assisi in the middle of a bird bath and then let the whole business of saints go at that."

Could it be that with all our talking about saints we still don't know who and what they are? I am sure most readers of this periodical have a working knowledge of the biblical data on the use of the word "saints." What follows are some ideas and images that I have collected over the years. George Orwell wrote, "No doubt alcohol, tobacco, and so forth, are things that a saint must avoid, but sainthood is something that human beings must avoid." Nathaniel Howe wrote, "The way of this world is to praise dead saints and persecute living ones." Soren Kierkegaard expressed himself on the subject, "God creates out of nothing. Wonderful, you say. Yes, to be sure; but he does what is still more wonderful, he makes saints out of sinners." Ambrose Bierce helps us focus in on the definition, "A saint is a dead sinner, revised and edited." Robert Louis Stevenson accurately describes the saints in our parishes, "The saints are the sinners who keep on going."

I like all those definitions, but I really like "the saints are the sinners who keep on going." Now that makes me ask, What do we say and do on each day and especially on Sunday which helps keep them going?

The clue comes in the prayer of the day. There are four phrases which provide ample material to preach for many Saints' Days to come. We are knit together; to follow; to know the inexpressable joys; through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is through Jesus Christ our Lord that we are made members of the kingdom of heaven. Through Holy Baptism we become connected to his death and resurrection and also to all those who bear the sign of the cross. That is a joyful message which we often need to hear and share over and over again. It sustains us as we attempt to follow our Lord in the world. Fortunately, we are "knit together" as we make our journey.

I have often thought that a great movie to show on this day would be "Back to the Future." For on this day we go back and remember the saints we have known and the saints we have read about. A member of my parish is the marketing director for the Kansas City Board of Trade. Their theme which is printed on pens, coffee cups, and T-shirts is "We Have a Past in Futures." What a great line, "a past in futures." And that is what All Saints'Day is all about. The Augsburg Confession states: "It is taught among us that saints shall be remembered so that our faith may be strengthened when we see what grace they received and how they were sustained by faith." Luther suggested that when we think about saints we can: (1) be thankful to God for them; (2) be strengthened by their faith; and (3) be imitators of them.

The imitation of the saints is difficult. The other day as I stood looking at the list of books on the bargain table at my neighborhood library, four of them caught my eye: *Rundown,* a book about baseball; *Sinners,* by Jackie Collins, sister of Joan (so she should know); and *A Would Be Saint* and *The Clowns of God* by Morris West. If you take those books and run them all together you get, *Rundown Sinners, a Would Be Saint—the Clowns of God.* That is an accurate description of our experience as saints, baptized Christians, holy ones, set apart, trying to live the faith in times which are not very holy or faithful, but receiving joy and grace from God which draws us to follow the foolish-

ness of the cross.

Today is a day for invitations. You are invited to recall the saints who have touched your lives. You are invited to join in the great Feast of Victory which is celebrated by the church on earth and the hosts of heaven. You are invited to remember once again that you are a saint, because of Jesus Christ. Last but not least, you are invited to see the saints all around us. The following is a fantastic poem by Ethel Marbach in her book, *Saints at Harvest-Time,* published by St. Anthony Press.

Come out, come out,
Wherever you are:
In bed or boat
Or under the car,
Planting a lily, braiding a rug,
Stirring up chili,
Milking a cow,
Stuffing a pillow,
Extolling a star,
Stripping a willow—come out, come out,
From near and far!

For today is the day,
The first of November,
To celebrate saints
You may not remember.
The big ones you know.
They stand quite tall
Like Francis and Vincent
And Peter and Paul,
But in their shadow
The unknowns cluster,
Loved by God
As a hot dog its mustard.

This is the day our Father has made
For Crispin and Nestor and sweet Adelaide,
And Wiltrudia and Finnian and Adalbert and Emma,
And Audrey and Priscilla and Paphnutius and Otto,
And Zachary and Flora and Isaac of Cordova,
And Winifred and Poppo and Blessed Rizzerio.
Come out, come out,
And stand in the sun!
For this is the day for all holy ones.
For saints true-tested and those not done
Who live right now, daughters and sons.

Come out, come out,
Bake cakes or trout!
Come, sit down and rest a while,
Adjust your crown and royal smile,
Curl your hair, and make a fuss—
This is the day for all of us!

We make a fuss on All Saints' Day because we are blessed and are blessings to one another. I want to tell you about three saints whom I thank God for, who have strengthened me, and whom I am going to try and imitate. The first one is a young girl in grade school. She gets teased a great deal—every recess, every day. The kids say she has "cooties." Her doctor calls it a skin disease. She hangs in there and is loving. She is blessed.

The second saint is a woman connected to an IV, which sends medicine through her body. It's a very scary time for her and yet she tells me, "It's going to be okay." She has faith and is very blessed.

The third saint is a father. A marriage in his family is rather shaky. He could say, "I told you so," but that would only add to the pain. Instead, he listens and prays for peace, for wholeness.

Today we make a fuss for all the baptized. At a pre-Baptism session for a young boy by the name of Mitchell, I told the family how he would become a clown of God on his baptism day. He will be washed in the liberating waters. His costume is the righteousness of Christ, his make-up is a cross of oil on his forehead, and his prop is the light of Christ. One of his brothers heard us talking about God-parents and asked, "Are there any God-brothers?" I said, "You bet there are! As we gather around the font and watch your little brother become a saint, all of us become God-brothers, God-

sisters, God-mothers and God-fathers. We're knit together. We're the clowns of God.

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Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost November 8, 1987

Psalm 96
Isaiah 45:1–7
1 Thessalonians 1:1–5a
Matthew 22:15–21

The Gospel's final line has often been interpreted in the interests of "a conservative throne-and-altar theology," writes Reginald Fuller, "as in Lutheran orthodoxy." The tragic consequences of that reading was reached in the Nazi era. He adds that contemporary German exegesis has shifted to the other extreme: "Only a penny for Caesar, everything else for God" (*Preaching the New Lectionary,* Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1971, '72, '73, '74, p. 263).

The Lord's statement is given in measured clauses that seem to call for Part I and Part II of a sermon. But the Psalm provides the proper division—it is not a matter of fifty-fifty at all even if the king did mount his throne anew as it was chanted in an enthronement ceremony. The throw-away clause is the penny for Caesar. Everything, really, centers in "Render to God the things that are God's."

The context in Matthew indicates that this is not a special incident added in order to include some sort of directive for civil obedience to the church. Martin Franzmann lifts out the incidents which illustrated the clash "between the will of Jerusalem and Jesus' Messianic will." The cleansing of the temple, the withering of the fig tree, the challenge to Jesus' authority, all were Messianic calls to repentance. Then the three parables—Franzmann sums them up with: "Jerusalem is the home of sons of God who will not render a son's obedience, of workers in God's vineyard who will not give God what is God's, of guests of God who will not come to God's feast" (*Follow Me,* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961, pp. 160–165).

Here is Jesus, who has come to Jerusalem to die, being given a trick question by representatives of Jerusalem who cannot conceive of a Messiah who would not be opposed to any rule by Rome. Jesus cannot accept "the Pharisees' politically cluttered conception of the Messiah." His mission is to suffer and die, and his message now is to make that clear. Send back to Caesar what Caesar has coined—it makes little difference. But—back to the issue—"Give God God's!"

"The tax money and the political question involved in the payment loom large before the eyes of the Pharisees. . . . God looms large before Jesus' eyes" (Franzmann, p. 165).

Even the Old Testament lesson, which seems picked to give credit to Cyrus as an illustration of our giving tribute to Caesar, is equally illustrative of giving God God's. Here God does make a government's acts work together for good for the people of God. It is not usual for God to force human decisions nor to manipulate events as to make inevitable certain actions God desires. When God does that, the result fits under the definition of miracle. Perhaps God pulled the emperor's strings. But, particularly for us under our form of government, give God God's—God works together for good with the people who love him, whom he has called, and

who work for the party or for the common good. When outcomes call for "good-goings," give God God's. Perhaps the second lesson's reference to "your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness and hope" includes Christian efforts to thwart evil or misguided programs of government, and efforts to work together for good with those representatives in government whom God has called to power for times like ours. His brothers "thought evil against Joseph" but God "meant it for good"—but Joseph had to use all his wits and put in long hours to make sure there was corn in Egypt for the seven years of famine. When the outcome is good, give God God's.

In praise or in politics, however, the motive will be "in our Lord Jesus Christ"—it will be because we are beloved by God, chosen by God, and reminded of that; it will be the gospel coming to our friends in the pew "not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (Second Lesson).

All that God-in-Christ did for us might be freshened in our remembrance within a review of the Lord's dealing with politicians of his day. He persuaded the fish to pay taxes for him, but even as a babe, he fled the Bethlehem draft by *that* Herod and set out for his "Canada" in Egypt. He made sure Peter put his sword into its sheath, and he refrained from calling out the twelve legions of angels—but in all this he was giving God God's. He mostly kept his mouth shut before the authorities, but his silence did not condone Pilate or Herod or Rome—he was silent to let all happen God's way. When Pilate argued with his silence: "Do you not know that I have power. . ." Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above. . ." (John 19:11). And so came about the death of Jesus, and it was used by God more marvelously than ever the life of Cyrus. And thereafter came about the rising to life again of Jesus—and it is being used again and again by you and by me whenever we give God God's.

George W. Hoyer

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost November 15, 1987

Psalm 1
Leviticus 19:1–2, 15–18
1 Thessalonians 1:5b–10
Matthew 22:34–40 (41–46)

"What the world needs now is love, sweet love. That's the only thing that there's just too little of." Jackie DeShannon. Imperial records. 1965. She sang for a generation which still believed love—then often spelled L-U-V—could make a difference in a world worn weary by bigotry, war, and greed.

By the mid-seventies our idealism was fading, our hope for the world waning, and our attitude about love more pragmatic. Stephen Stills sang it like it was, "If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with."

These days Tina Turner struts and sings with gutsy honesty the question of the fearful and self-indulgent eighties, "What's love got to do with it? What's love, but a secondhand emotion?"

What's love got to do with it, indeed. It certainly was not love, nor even a desire to learn, that brought the parade of questioners to Jesus during his last, long, darkening day of teaching in the temple. They had come to test him, to ensnare him with a word. Ridicule the Rabbi. Trap the Teacher. A game as old as education itself, played with mounting hostility that day as the chasm between the religious leaders and Jesus deepened and widened to deadly proportions.

First the chief priests and elders came, then the Pharisees and Herodians, who were followed by the Sadducees. Their questions and Jesus' responses have been our preaching texts for the last four weeks. Finally, the Pharisees return for the last round in the verbal match of wits and wills.

"Teacher," (they do not acknowledge him as their Lord) "which is the great commandment in the Law? Which of the 613 laws is the most important, most vital to the life of righteousness? Or are they of equal weight on the scales of God's justice? How can you, who broke the laws of the Sabbath, teach us about satisfying the Code of Holiness?" The trap is set.

Jesus does not fall prey to their trap. Instead, he opens all of Scripture and reveals God's deepest desire for humankind. Jesus answers, "You shall love God with a singleness of heart (Deut 6:5) and you shall love your neighbor with whole-hearted compassion (Lev 19:18). This is the two-armed embrace within which all the law and the prophets are held." As Jesus speaks, Matthew bids us see that behind and before this embrace is the God in whom all love finds its source, the God whose promises are sure and in whose presence is life.

What's love got to do with it? Everything, for without love, God's call to righteousness becomes an endless game of point-keeping and everyone who plays cannot but lose. Jesus puts an end to the games. He offers release to Pharisees of every time and place who "bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders," including their own (Matt 23:4). Emmanuel has come not to burden, but to free God's people for love.

How does Jesus spell love? With neither the sweet L-U-V of the sixties nor the self-gratifying love of later years, but with extravagant compassion toward others and radical trust in God. He calls his disciples to a righteousness which goes beyond point-keeping: "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to that one the other cheek as well" (Matt 5:39). Love not only those who love you in return, but "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). "Time after time, without end, forgive the one who sins against you" (Matt 18:22). To the rich young man who desires eternal life and who has kept the commandments, Jesus says, "Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor," and "come, follow me" (Matt 19:21). By such compassion are the scales of justice filled and tipped until God's own mercy abounds and love overflows.

Love of one's neighbor in the Great Commandment is not a secondhand emotion, but hands-on service to the little ones of the world. Thanks to this year's liturgical calendar and the makers of lectionaries, the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats immediately follows the great Commandment. Next Sunday preachers will have the opportunity to answer the Lukan question which goes unasked in Matthew, "Who is my neighbor?" The Matthean parable also speaks to other questions which this week's Gospel reading raises: How are loving God and loving my neighbor related? Can we do one and not the other? In whom is God's loving, breaking heart exegeted today?

Love of God in the Great Commandment is deeply akin to Luther's understanding of whole-hearted trust. "That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is," Luther says, "really your God." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches those who would follow not to trust in things or worldly power or position, but to trust the God who means us well. Where your riches are, there will be your heart also. Look at the birds in the air, consider the lilies. Are you not more valuable to God than these?

Finally, to love God is to entrust our future to God's own hands. In the place called Gethsemane we see a sorrowful Jesus surrounded by sleeping disciples and struggling to place his future in God's safekeeping. Three times we hear him pray, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt 26:39). The cup does not pass. The Passion is upon him. In the darkness of that final Friday, when the temple curtain is torn and the earth quakes, we see in him God's love revealed. Great David's Lord. Emmanuel. God with us.

Emmanuel-love is Good News in our times. As painful as it is to be weaned from the possessions, positions, and powers we have come to trust, a deeper security and more lasting peace

is given when we trust God with a singleness of heart. Whole-hearted compassion toward our neighbor is sweet antidote for the poison of our isolation and self-indulgence. As we learn from Jesus the life of love, the Holy Spirit creates community where barren individualism once dwelt.

We may not have the voice or the style of a Tina Turner, but we have been given the Gospel to share: God's love has everything to do with it.

Susan Briehl
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Christ the King
Last Sunday
after Pentecost
November 22, 1987

Psalm 95:1–7a
Ezekiel 34:11–16, 23–24
1 Corinthians 15:20–28
Matthew 25:31–46

Maybe Preaching Helps can offer a free bumper sticker to all who use this sermon: SOME PREACHERS DO IT DRAMATICALLY.

It helps to do it dramatically now and again, especially when the text lends itself to drama. The Gospel for this Christ the King Sunday is not one of these, though it is in the other two Series. The editor has applied big-brotherly pressure to give an example of how to do it dramatically anyhow. So, using the incident in Matthew 27 between Pilate and his wife for the dramatic frame, with some stuff from John 18, the following dialogue tries to make the point of today's Gospel. It's abbreviated. Add some feistiness and humor to the interaction.

Introduction: Christ is King, but he's not our king till we put the crown on his head and serve him, and we serve him, as the Gospel today shows us, by serving "the least." Pilate had the chance to make Christ king, but would not. We have that chance right now. Think about it. Imagine a conversation between Pilate and his wife about the time when, as Matthew records, Pilate's wife warned him against having anything to do with Jesus.

P: Woman, where's my breakfast?
W:Pontius! You're up so early! What's going on?
P: Oh, Caiaphas and his priests sent some preacher to me they want killed. They got me out of bed to deal with it.
W:Poor man. Who have they brought before you?
P: I told you. Some preacher, named Jesus.
W:Jesus! The one who goes around talking about a god who loves and forgives? The one who feeds hungry people, heals the sick, helps the poor?
P: Yeah, that one. But I hope you don't believe all that stuff.
W:On what charge?
P: That he's making himself out to be a king! Can you imagine that? All the time they're talking about this king their God is going to send them, but now when somebody says he is that king, they want him killed!
W:Have nothing to do with that righteous man! I have suffered much over him in my dreams.
P: What did you dream?
W:I saw this Jesus coming down out of the clouds of heaven; he was presented before the throne of God, and God made him king over all the world.
P: He's no king.
W:How do you know?
P: Because he's a Jew. He's a preacher. He's a nothing. I am king!
W:Big Pontius Pilate, the king of the Jews.
P: It may not be much, but it puts food on our table, even if I can't get any breakfast on my table now.
W:What does he say?
P: I asked him, "Are you king of the Jews?" And he said, "Do you believe this yourself, or is this their accusation?" Am I a Jew that he thinks I would believe that he's a king?

W:You've got such a prejudice against Jews that you're both blind and deaf. Maybe he's not trying to be your kind of king. Maybe he's trying to restore the kingship of God, trying to bring people to God, to righteousness, justice, peace.

P: They're really making a Jew out of you, aren't they?

W:But not big Pontius Pilate. The only reason you won't let him go, won't let him be king, is because you're afraid of being seen as a religious man. Big men can't be religious, can they?

P: Oh, lay off! He must be bad. His own people have handed him over to me.

W:I doubt that. He's only religious. But he's not their kind of religious. They talk about obedience to the Law. Jesus talks about God's forgiveness, a forgiveness which frees us to see ourselves for what we are, to repent, to change, to love—not merely obey.

P: Woman, I can't be bothered with such tripe!

W:Big important Pontius Pilate. The only reason you won't let him go, won't let him be king, is because you're afraid to face up to God.

P: Wouldn't you be, if you had to do what I have to do? Anyway, you're assuming there is a God.

W:Jesus says there is. A God who forgives, Pontius, forgives, redeems!

P: Jesus is a religious nut. You know what he said to me? "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight." He wants to be a king who doesn't fight. And look where it's got him. You're probably right. He thinks he's serving God!

W:Whom do you serve?

P: Whom do I serve? Caesar!

W:Oh, come off it. You don't serve Caesar. You serve yourself. And you fight, too. Not for Caesar, either. For yourself!

P: So? You may not realize it, woman, but that fighting has gotten me where I am, and it may very well lead to something a lot higher.

W:It leads only to all evil, to bloodshed, death. There are widows and orphans all over this country because you and your kind always have to fight to get what you want. You won't let him go, won't let him be king, because you're so stuck in this world's swamp of evil you can't think of anything else.

P: So all right already! Yeah, I don't want him to be king. I'm not religious. I am afraid to face God, or, rather, I don't think there's any God to face. Sure, I'm stuck in this world, it's all I've got. That's the way it is!

W:What if it isn't? Did he say anything else?

P: Yeah. I said to him, "So you are a king?" And he said, "King is your word. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth."

W:The truth? Pontius, at last somebody, maybe somebody from God, who can break through all this pretending, all this showing-off, all this fighting, all this greed, and show us the real truth!

P: What is truth? The truth is that we're all alone in this universe, and we don't get anything unless we fight for it and take it!

W:No, Pontius, no. The truth is that God is. Maybe the truth is even that God sent this Jesus to bring us back to him. The truth is there's more to life than this constant fighting and taking.

P: The truth is we can't be weak if we want to get anywhere.

W:You think he's weak? Is he cowering before you now?

P: Not yet.

W:What do you mean, not yet? What are you doing to him? Where is he now?

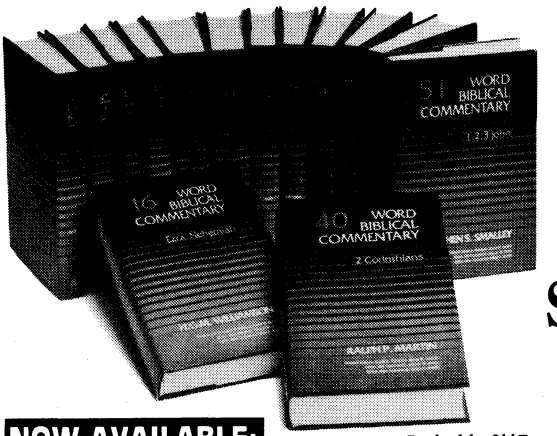
P: In the barracks, getting scourged, at my command.

W:Oh, Pontius! Why must you be so eternally bloody?

P: Because I'm not weak.

W:If I know you, you'll probably end up crucifying him. Do you think you can win over God? The truth is that he has more power than you and all your soldiers; the truth is

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that the power to love is stronger than the power to whip!

P: Those who love are simps!

W:No, Pontius! Don't you understand the nobility, the greatness in being a man like Jesus, a man of God, a man who gives?

P: You think there's greatness in giving? Rome rules the world, and rules it by taking!

W:And the world hates Rome. You are always looking over your shoulder, scared to death! What if Rome gave instead of forever taking? What if Rome served instead of forever conquering? What if any person lived that way? Then you'd have God's kingdom on earth! That's the truth!

P: The truth is that if I listened to you, or to him, we'd be poor nothings like him; we'd be in the barracks getting scourged, by the whole world!

W:But is your life good and full? You can't sleep. You've got ulcers. You drink too much. You're always angry; always fighting; trying to find some joy in life by chasing other women. But look at Jesus. There is a man who is happy! Happy with himself, happy with people you dismiss as scum, with crooked tax-collectors and harlots. He feeds the hungry and heals the sick. He plays with children, Pontius. He actually talks with women and respects them. I've never seen a man more loving than he is; nor have I ever seen a man more loved. He's afraid of nobody. Not even you. Not even of death. He is God's man, Pontius.

P: You're just not being realistic!

W:But it's the truth, Pontius. He is the truth! What are you going to do?

P: When they bring him back from the barracks, I'll take him out there. Maybe when they see all that blood they'll have pity on the man and I can let him go.

W:And if not?

P: Then I'll wash my hands of the whole thing.

W:And they'll kill him! Oh, I knew it! Pontius, washing your hands won't do any good. You'll go down in history as the one who killed the king God sent us. And he'll be king, even if you do kill him. Maybe by your killing him he will rescue the world from all its sinning and killing.

P: You're crazy, woman. Just go fix my breakfast, will you? (Exits, toward nave)

W:(Calling after him, toward the people) Please, I beg of you, let him go! Let him be king!

Richard O. Hoyer
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Ministry in a Moral Wilderness

Walter M. Stuhr
President, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Robert C. Maynard, national correspondent for the *Washington Post* during the Watergate crisis, and currently editor of Oakland's *The Tribune,* was the 1987 commencement speaker at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. Maynard is a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, the congregation of which the AELC's Bishop Will Herzfeld is pastor. The subject of his address was, "Christian Ministry in a Moral Wilderness."

Maynard challenged PLTS graduates to respond in their ministries to the failure in public morality represented by circumventions of government policies, insider stock trading, and hypocrisy in television evangelism. In acknowledging the magnitude of the challenge, he noted the significant available resources: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, just coming into existence (emphasis on *Evangelical*); the Constitution, in its bicentennial year; and the Gospel, as articulated in the New Testament, and by Augustine and Luther.

This brief summary does justice neither to Maynard's articulateness nor his eloquence. But I believe it is adequate to convey two important points—one negative, the other positive. The negative point is that those who are accountable for these moral failures quite often are persons who have their power by virtue of the consent, even the demand of those very people who populate our congregations. One must conclude then that the moral power of the Gospel, the power to transform moral character and to inform moral discernment, is ineffectively channeled through our preaching and teaching.

The positive point is that there are persons in whom the moral power of the Gospel is evident, persons of strong moral character and keen moral discernment. Maynard is a case in point, and readily acknowledges the influence of his church in shaping and maintaining his perspective on public issues. All congregations may not have a person of such public prominence as Maynard, but every congregation has members who are open to and eager for the direction and support of the Gospel's moral power.

The irony in the state of the public moral climate is that much of the moral failure is associated with persons who claim to be champions of morality. But there is a difference between moral character and moral righteousness, and between moral discernment and moral certainty. Moral character strives for what is right or good but recognizes and admits its shortfalls; moral righteousness may recognize shortfalls, but can-

not admit them. Moral discernment allows for tentative conclusions as to right and wrong; moral certainty demands absolute answers. Part of the teaching and preaching task is making clear these important distinctions. And, of course, it is also a dimension, perhaps the most feasible one, of our being "exemplars" of Christian behavior as well.

* * *

An afternote: George Hoyer has been an exceptional "exemplar" of preaching over the course of a long career. We have experienced this gift first hand over the past four years at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. The readers of *Preaching Helps* have profited by his skilled editorship and his own helpful expositions of the text. Since this issue of *Currents* contains the last *Preaching Helps* section which George will edit, I take this occasion to say to him in behalf of all of us—"Thank you!" And "Welcome!" to the new editor, Robert Smith, another of the Christ Seminary—Seminex faculty deployed to PLTS.

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