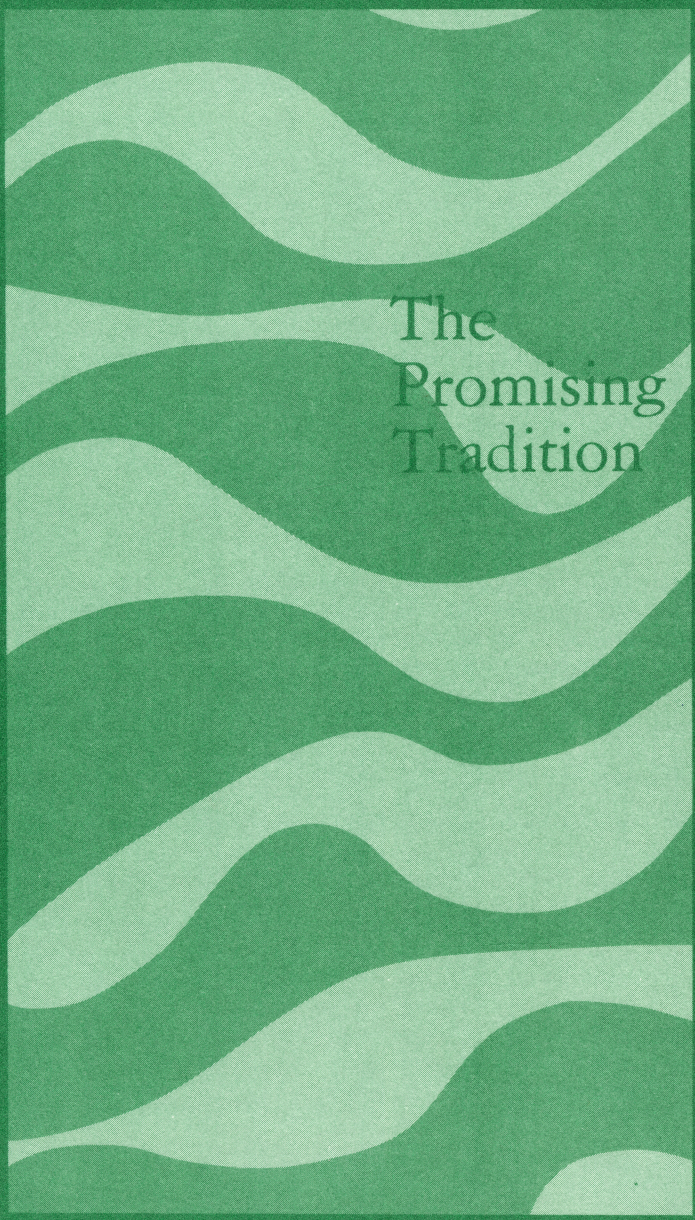
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in Theology and Mission

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Contents

The Promising Tradition:
The Next Generation 162
Ralph W. Klein

Two Kingdoms—in America? 165
James P. Wind

Christ Was Made to Be Sin—
Atonement Today 177
Paul R. Hinlicky

An Ecumenical Horizon for
"Canon Within a Canon"? 185
Patrick R. Keifert

The Parish as Confessing Community 194
Gary M. Simpson

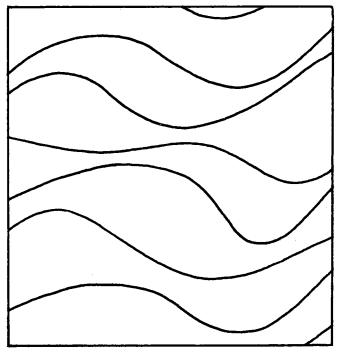
Don't Confuse Athanasius—Or God 200
Robert W. Bertram

Book Reviews 204

Briefly Noted 219

Hospitality
Roger W. Fjeld Inside Back Cover

Drawings by Mark Kloess



Preaching Helps 223
Series A:
Second Sunday after Pentecost—
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

The Promising Tradition: The Next Generation

Great teachers have the ability to unlock the treasures hidden in their students. The same kind of ability characterizes the good pastor or the good parent. Our "children" are God's opinion that the tradition is to go on. Happy the teacher, pastor, or parent blessed with promising "children"; happier still the teacher, pastor, or parent who can keep out of their way.

In the last issue of *Currents,* seven colleagues interpreted the theological career of Robert W. Bertram and related it to issues like liberation theology, the city, law and gospel, and ecumenical dialogue. Four more colleagues continue that enterprise in this issue. Each of them is young, each is a graduate of Christ Seminary—Seminex, each has gone on to a doctorate in theology, and each has been profoundly taught by Robert Bertram. These few write for many. They demonstrate that the Promising Tradition, for which our honoree has served as cheerleader, is alive and quite well. His faith will have children!

James P. Wind finds that Luther rendered Christ necessary for the existence of God's new realm of grace and for works of love in the old realm of law. But this refreshing insight on the two kingdoms has often deteriorated into an avoidance of the neighbor and a retreat into the private sphere. Even supposedly "modern" women and men enshrine their most cherished beliefs in private spheres and resist contaminating them with public contact. Two kingdoms theology has become a two kingdoms syndrome. The cure: Those graced by their encounter with a suffering and accepting Lord are sent back into the world by the gospel to love and serve. No institution in our time is better situated to correlate public and private life than the congregation. Everyday it has the chance to reorganize a bit more of life around the forgiveness of sins—through acts of love.

Paul R. Hinlicky reminds us that the doctrine of the atonement is the church's attempt to understand the divine reason why mere faith in Jesus Christ makes a person right with God. Christ stood with us and for us; God's judgment on us is also his justification of us. Jesus did not merely bear our punishment; he bore our sin. In Christ's death for us, the Triune God overcame his own judgment—not through abolishing it by fiat, but by surpassing it through self-sacrifice. Faith trusts in the omnipotence of the God of love. Our escape from judgment is very good news; even better is the news about the company of the one with whom we have met judgment. Jesus died *with* us so that our dying might belong to him, and *for* us so that we might never die the death of hell. In Jesus' death God decided to become God in a new way.

Patrick R. Keifert argues that ecumenical dialogue at its best resembles more a company of strangers in public conversation than an exchange of intimacies. In today's pluralistic situation we need models for interpreting Scripture that will transcend the limits exhibited by the monist (who only wants to change others), the eclectic (who wants change but only on the basis of personal, pragmatic purposes), and the relativist (who makes "toleration" the greatest good and avoids conflict wherever possible). As critical pluralists we expect to change others through our conversation and to be changed by the conversation ourselves; we welcome critical conflict. A person holding to a canon within the canon interprets the whole of Scripture from a unique individual point of view, but he or she also expects public audit by the whole church. When our canon within the canon is so laid open for public scrutiny, it can be a truly ecumenical stance.

Gary M. Simpson develops one of Robert Bertram's main theses: there are times for confessing, when individuals and groups attest, often against the established authorities, to the sufficiency of the one Gospel-and-Sacraments as the source of our ongoing life together. The author sees the ecclesial dimension of faith formation as a key component in a parish's preparation for its time on the witness stand. Drawing on Pannenberg and Fowler, Simpson believes that ecclesial solidarity, effected by faith, will place Middle Class Christians more in touch with the pervasive underside of life. The sociologist Jürgen Habermas has shown that communities mature as they gain better understanding of other communities, including especially the most strange, alien, or even hostile. When its own time for radical confession is over, a parish can retain its character as a

confessing community by retaining solidarity with confessing movements of previous times and/or contemporary confessing communities in other locations. Through solidarity with the confessing tradition of other times and other places, a parish becomes a matrix for developing a faith that is at all times, if necessary, confessable.

Some months ago **Robert W. Bertram** gave me an old sermon for Trinity Sunday, which forms an ideal conclusion to all these words from the next generation. He urges us not to confuse the persons of the Trinity. The persons are indeed different from one another, and that they are different makes all the difference in our life. Without the Spirit's recreating, we could not regain the Father's spit and image or the Son's cruciform and Eastered image, through which we come to resemble God, our Parent and our Sister/Brother. Without that Spirit we would only go on looking more and more like ourselves. With a twinkle in his eye and a lilt in his voice, Bob repeats the old Trinitarian slogans: God was not made nor created, God is like a dependent child, and God as Spirit shares life with the faithful. Aren't you glad for this, he asks, even if you don't know why?

In God's unfathomable love he started the promising tradition through Abraham and Sarah, included us in that tradition through Jesus the Christ, and still gives us teachers and their followers who echo the promises, repeat them, and reapply them in each generation.

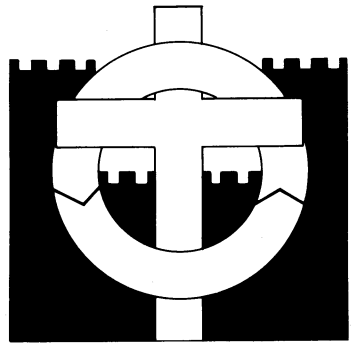
Aren't you glad for all this, even if you don't know why God should be so generous? Aren't you glad for Robert W. Bertram?

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Two Kingdoms—in America?

James P. Wind
Director of Research and Publications
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Editor of Second Opinion
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At the end of the nineteenth century, when William Rainey Harper designed his new university on the south side of Chicago, many cherished assumptions about higher education were fading away. A new organization of knowledge was emerging in America, and university builders like Harper were its leading advocates. Other writers have acknowledged Harper's invention of the quarter system, his separation of the first two years of college education from the last two, his attempt to build an "educational trust" patterned on the new model of the American corporation, and even his chilling proposal for another graduate degree beyond the Ph.D. But few



have paid attention to his decision to build The University of Chicago upon a biblical blueprint. It comes as a surprise to learn that the institution often perceived to be one of the leading purveyors of modernity and its secular version of reality, was originally an expression of a style of evangelical Christianity. Yet, if one digs into the particularity of Harper's story in the 1890s, one finds that he believed that the modern university was called to serve as the prophet, priest, and sage for democracy.

A dynamo who accomplished more before breakfast than many do in a month or two, Harper was first and foremost a biblical scholar, a specialist in the Hebrew Scriptures. As a leader of an emergent generation of biblical scholars who welcomed and championed the insights—if not all the assumptions—of European biblical criticism, Harper led a "Bible study movement" which involved thousands of students across the nation. Thus his employment of the three classic Old Testament "offices" as key elements in the job description of the nation's chief educational institutions was anything but casual.[1]

Harper, a seminary graduate, and for many years a seminary professor, was a Baptist in good standing with his tradition—very good standing indeed if his selection to build the Baptists' university in Chicago is kept in mind! While some of his colleagues may have questioned his understanding of the creation account or the Deluge, no one seemed to be bothered by his replacement of "king" in the old typology with "sage." Yet his turn away from the king as a functional role model for his age could have been supported by volumes of explanation. The "sage," the wise individual who struggled over the great problems which faced a given people and its age, seemed far more appropriate to Harper's context than any king could. Democratic peoples—and for Harper there was little doubt that such were the advance guard of a new age—needed educated problem solvers. The last thing they needed was an outdated authority figure who would respond to situations with force rather than reason.

Democratic peoples needed educated problem solvers.

My beginning with the story of a Baptist who became a pioneer and molder of higher education in America cannot help but strike readers of this journal as an odd choice for an article assessing the fit between Lutheran two kingdom theology and modern America. After all, Harper is one of "theirs" (the evangelical progressive mainline of the turn of the century), not "ours" (Lutherans who entered the mainline at about the time it lost its hegemony). His solutions to the late nineteenth century set of problems which gave shape to our present context are now out of date; in the light of later twentieth century ex-

[1]Harper's career, both as biblical scholar and as university president, is the subject of James P. Wind's, *The Bible and The University: The Messianic Vision of William Rainey Harper* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, in press). For discussion of his application of the Old Testament "offices" to the modern university, see especially 124–131.

perience they seem quite naive. The fact that his liberal reading of the Scriptures and of his own time allowed for little distance between God's ultimate purposes and the achievements of his generation (he virtually merged the two kingdoms into one) seems to pile on additional evidence of a poor selection.

But even if all of the above is true—and I believe it is—there still may be some good reasons for beginning with Harper. One could, for example, do so as an ecumenical nod in the direction of mainline Protestantism. As a confessing movement within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, the followers of Martin Luther ought to be conversing with all sorts of believers—even the dead, the mistakenly naive, and the optimistic builders of cities of God on modern soil. But beyond this ecumenical warrant is another one—a historical and social one. For better and for worse, William Rainey Harper stands as a "representative figure" for the constellation of factors, dynamics, tensions, and experiences which came to make up the primary environment in which twentieth-century Lutherans and all the other varieties of American believers live out their convictions. A small town boy who made very good, Harper came to be an exemplar of the new urban style of life which was transforming his nation. Like so many of his countrymen and women, Harper was forced to come to terms with pluralism of beliefs and with the new ways of thinking necessitated by the discoveries of classic moderns like Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Julius Wellhausen. He clung to the biblical tradition with one hand as he reached out for modernity's gifts with the other. His daily life was paradigmatic of the new professional way of life which became the norm for his contemporaries and for us. His pocket-sized "red books" with their long lists of meetings to attend, things to do, and appointments to keep find their analogues in all the calendar rituals of our day. The pressures he felt to keep up with the knowledge explosion have their echoes in our experience. Though killed by cancer at the young age of 49, Harper was also an expert about new modern forms of suffering, whether that be the suffering occasioned by new forms of medical therapy or that which accompanied the bureaucratic re-organization of life. And although some might have viewed his position atop his university as quite similar to the medieval monarch, Harper breathed the popular air of democracy which assumed that success was available to all who worked for it, that merit and energy counted more than heredity, that an educated people could collectively make better choices than any single ruler—no matter how gifted. To such an individual, situated as he was in the midst of a society that was becoming increasingly compartmentalized, convinced as he was that all humans when given the means (higher education) were capable of achieving the higher life, the idea of a static kingdom was an anachronism, certain to clog the fluid stream of modern progress with all the debris of an inferior age. As a representative figure, Harper exemplifies an emergent American mindset which is much more comfortable with the specialized sage than the all-encompassing ruler.

The Two Kingdoms—Theology or Syndrome?

When Martin Luther first articulated his distinction between the realm of the Law and

that of the Gospel, the notion of kingdoms was a very lively one. After all, his was an era filled with emperors, princes, kings, dukes and the like. And the church, much to his dissatisfaction, had all the trappings of a worldly kingdom, including palaces, courtly life, armies, and treasuries. Further, as scholars like Brian Tierney make clear, his decision to posit two rival kingdoms stood in a long tradition of such thinking. Jesus' fundamental reduction of the human loyalties question to the categories of Caesar's or God's (Luke 20:25) and his bequeathal of the keys to the kingdom of heaven to Peter (Matt 16:19) set in motion an ongoing and still unsettled debate about the relationship of Christians to the world around them. When the emperor Constantine invented "Christendom" in the fourth century, that debate took on new significance as the sharp line between pagan empire and Christian movement blurred. When Ambrose, bishop of Milan, excommunicated the emperor Theodosius in 390, and more importantly, when Theodosius finally chose public penance in Ambrose's cathedral over a more overtly political solution (such as the use of force against his opponent), a corner was turned in church-state relationships which had consequences for more than a millennium. Soon Ambrose's pupil, Augustine, was writing at length about the two cities, God's and the World's.[2]

Thus when Luther set forth his opinion on the relation between church and political power in the sixteenth century, he was stepping into a long argument in which there was an established tradition of drawing a line between the church as one type of institution and the state as another. He was also stepping into an argument in which his German ancestors had played a major role. One thinks, for example, of the classic confrontation between Pope Gregory VII and King Henry IV. Gregory's excommunication and deposition of Henry in 1076 came after the king had defied the pope by supporting a rival slate of candidates for ecclesiastical offices in his German territories. Henry went so far as to call his own church council which denounced Gregory as a usurper of the papacy, accusing him of immorality, perjury, and gross abuses of papal authority. The result was the famous wintry encounter at Canossa, with a barefoot Henry standing outside the pope's castle as a penitent. Gregory, after allowing Henry to cool his heels for three days in the fresh air of the Italian Alps, forgave this royal sinner and lifted his ban of excommunication (without restoring his kingship). A forgiven but unforgiving Henry promptly began to build a political alliance which eventually elected its own counterpope (Clement III) and laid siege to Rome. Thus Luther was not the first German to attempt to bring a pope to his knees. Henry was not the first or the last to attempt to use political means to shape the church life of Germany.

What was new in Luther's attempt to distinguish between God's realm and the world's was the breadth of his vision and the depth of his concern. Others had drawn an institutional line between two entrenched and very visible entities, the empires of the kings and the bishops. The swords of each could be seen and felt by all. But Luther turned inward to the church at the same time

[2]Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050–1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), 8–10.

that he turned outward to the nobility of his land for help. Take for example his tract "Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed" (1523), which functions in some ways as a *locus classicus* for his early thought on this subject. There readers can watch Luther draw a line: "Here we must divide the children of Adam and all mankind into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world." Or, "God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the un-Christian and wicked so that—no thanks to them—they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace."[3] This latter realm included all who were not "real Christians," not just the politically powerful. Thus Luther's gaze extended further than the papal theorists' who kept their eyes on the political leaders and tended to take the common folk for granted.

What was new was the breadth of his vision and the depth of his concern.

At the same time he looked beyond the categories of the medieval church and sought to discern the citizens of Christ's realm on the basis of a certain interiority. "If all the world were composed of real Christians, that is, true believers, there would be no need for or benefits from prince, king, lord, sword, or law. They would serve no purpose, since Christians have in their heart the Holy Spirit, who both teaches and makes them to do injustice to no one, to love everyone, and to suffer injustice and even death willingly and cheerfully at the hands of everyone." Although not as skeptical about the number of such "true believers" as he came to be in later years, Luther admitted they were "few and far between." To those who might hope that one day the world would be filled with Christians who could govern in an evangelical style, he prophesied: "This you will never accomplish; for the world and the masses are and always will be un-Christian, even if they are all baptized and Christian in name." Given that somber expectation he called upon Christians to live in the realm of the world, restrained and governed as it is by God's judging and ordering law, in such a way that the neighbor was always loved. In Christ's kingdom there was no need for force or law, but in the other realm where "Christians are always a minority" Luther advised his readers that "you are under obligation to serve and assist the sword by whatever means you can, with body, goods, honor, and soul. For it is something which you do not need, but which is very beneficial and essential for the whole world and for your neighbor."[4]

Luther went on to develop his understanding of the two kingdoms in a variety of

[3]Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed, 1523," in Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Selected Writings of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 278, 281.

[4]Luther, "Temporal Authority," 279, 281, 285.

contexts—and in often quite contradictory ways. One thinks of his insistence on the one hand that "rebellion is a crime that deserves neither trial nor mercy" when faced with the Peasants' Revolt of 1525 and his encouragement of the princes to carry out armed resistance against pope and emperor on the other.[5] But the important thing to notice is that he did not reify the kingdoms by making them coterminous with existing institutions. Further, by distinguishing between the "inward" and "outward" orientations of the Christian in the two kingdoms—one towards the status of the individual conscience before God and the other toward the well-being of the neighbor in the world—he managed to expose how worldly the church of his day was on the one hand and to open the daily life of all believers to the possibility of faithful action on the other. When one considers how many reforms in the church's life Luther sought from the political leaders of his day and how highly he exalted the vocations of the "non-religious" Christians who lived in the fields and towns rather than in the monasteries and cloisters, one senses that Luther's new line breached the wall that more than a millennium of tradition had built between church and state.

To those accustomed to the types of kingdoms represented by an emperor's court or a bishop's palace, however, Luther's two realms must have seemed most untidy, quite unkingdomlike. What was the reason for his sprawling worldly kingdom and his more precise Christian one? Let Gerhard Ebeling provide a clue:

> To be sure, the usual impression is that the two kingdom doctrine has to do with the problem of ethics, i.e., the behavior of the Christian in the world; it is usually called upon in discussions of the Sermon on the Mount and of the relation of church and state. Yet, however much the two kingdom doctrine has always found, and always will find, its primary application in these groups of questions, it is nevertheless inadmissibly narrowed down if we let our consideration of it be determined a priori by these two major spheres of its application. Primarily, at any rate, it is not a question of the relation of two different kinds of statute or code, or even of two different laws, but of law and gospel. That, at all events, is Luther's terminology. The gospel is constitutive for the kingdom of Christ, while the law is constitutive for the kingdom of the world; this coordination of one kingdom with gospel and the other with law is fundamental to all that follows.[6]

To put it in another more Bertramian way, Luther was reshaping conventional wisdom about the two realms in such a way as to "necessitate Christ" and his gospel.[7] Luther's move was an attempt to make the discussion about the proper relations between Christians and their world deeply theological

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[5]Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 181.

[6]Gerhard Ebeling, "The Necessity of the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," edited and condensed by David G. Truemper (mimeographed hand-out), pp. 1–2. The original essay appears in Ebeling's *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963).

[7]Robert W. Bertram, "On the Nature of Systematic Theology," in *The Promising Tradition: A Reader in Law-Gospel Reconstructionist Theology*, Edward H. Schroeder, editor (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary in Exile, 1974), 1.

rather than merely political. By relocating so much of the churchly behavior of his day into the left hand kingdom and by salvaging so much of everyday Christian behavior from the obscurity of the church's religious/secular mindset, Luther rendered Christ necessary for the existence of God's new realm of grace and for works of love in the old realm of law.

The development of the two kingdoms idea in the later stages of Luther's career or in the four and a half centuries which followed its early articulation are too complex to be taken up here. Not too long ago Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson attempted to provide a summary of the post-Luther plot.

> Post-Reformation Lutheranism frequently dissolved the original tension between Luther's two kingdoms and arrived at an ethical dualism. Seventeenth-century Lutheran orthodoxy and eighteenth-century Pietism stressed a "religion of the mind" and a "religion of the heart" which could behave one way in private and another way in public. The history of Lutheranism discloses a tendency on the part of Lutherans to be quietistic rather than revolutionary in the face of political tyranny. "Liberal" Lutherans in the nineteenth century ignored the two-kingdoms ethic altogether, and spoke only of an ethic of the self.

According to these two interpreters, "between Luther's resistance to pope and emperor and the resistance of the German 'Confessing Church' to Hitler there is a long history of degeneration." Further, American Lutherans did little better on this score than their continental counterparts. Regularly they "suppose that Lutheranism's great achievement was 'separation' of 'religion and politics.' " Instead of serving as a resource for and stimulator of service to world and neighbor, the two kingdoms metaphor has become a legitimator for avoidance of the neighbor and retreat into the private sphere.

Luther rendered Christ necessary.

Karl Barth once described this mutation of Luther's theology as "the syndrome of the two kingdoms." With that phrase Barth meant to diagnose a "structural flaw" in the private life of the modern individual. Almost inevitably, moderns became half-believers, divided selves who acted one way in private and another in public. These people were not *simul justus et peccator* types who felt the daily tension and opposition between the realm of law and that of grace in every aspect of life. Instead they were compartmentalized humans who crafted different selves—one the private believer, the other the public functionalist. Barth described such an individual as one who thinks

> He should and can live *dualistically,* in the twin kingdoms of public and private life. He lives in the knowledge of faith, but he is prepared to live this obedient faith only within certain limits. Alongside the *intellectus fidei,* he allows himself a *praxis vitae,* a conduct, which is not controlled by faith, a deportment which departs from faith by following chance or laws of its own.

> Alongside his knowledge of God's work and word, such a man allows himself a secular and trivial will which is, at all events, not bound and directed by God's. Alongside his thought, speech, and acts, which are kept in order by the object of theology, stand those which are either ordered arbitrarily or not ordered at all. In this way he exists from the very outset in a strained relationship to the Holy Spirit.

How widespread is the pathology of split-level existence?

The kinds of people who read *Currents* may also find it of interest to consider the other pathological possibility Barth identified besides the schizoid Christian. This individual, instead of dividing life between the public and private spheres, chooses the private and overindulges its theological riches. Such a person may come from a "family and environment in which theology was not only the Alpha and Omega (as the case should be) but also the substitute, which it should not be, for all the other letters of his alphabet." This theological junkie manifests a fixation akin "to the incomparable exclusiveness of a first love; and now he lives not only as a theologian in everything, but even entirely as a theologian *alone,* to the elimination of everything else." Lacking any "basic interest in the newspapers, novels, art, history, sport" this asymmetrical being "reveals that basically he has no interest in any man."[8]

Barth's diagnosis of the modern two kingdoms syndrome, although written before editors rejected manuscripts for using "noninclusive" language, reveals his fundamental misgivings about the way moderns relate their life before God to their life before the world. That he chose a "Lutheran" metaphor to name a modern pathology indicates his deep misgivings about a tradition which seemed to raise so little opposition to the blatant evil of Hitler and his followers. But that his diagnosis also fit many beyond the Lutheran pale, suggests that this syndrome extended far beyond one denomination or ethnic group.

Assessment of a Diagnosis

How representative is Barth's version of the divided human? Or to ask the question in another way, how widespread is the pathology of split-level existence? Rather than attempt a tour de force of the modern sociological, psychological, political, and theological discussions of various dimensions of this fundamental bifurcation of life, I want to bring my representative figure, Harper, briefly back into view. His seeming inappropriateness to this discussion lets him serve a useful purpose. His Baptist affiliation, his privileged access to his country's new forms of public life, his rejection of the idea of a kingdom for his cherished notion of democracy, all seem to render him an exception

[8]Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 128–30.

to the two kingdoms syndrome. After all, here was an individual who read history typologically and who saw the university he was building not only as prophet, priest and sage for his culture—but as its latest messianic hope. His liberal sense of God's presence in the new social processes of his day resisted any attempts to segregate God's purposes from the progress his age was achieving. Yet even this anti-kingdom advocate of the progressive drive of history shared in his age's syndrome. Tucked out of view, mentioned in print only on one occasion, was a conversion experience which Harper had in his early teaching days. That experience served as ground for his commitment to teach a new approach to the Scriptures, and eventually to build a new edifice of learning for America. Yet when he stepped into the public arena, that authoritative religious experience remained hidden. While Harper might have had little sympathy for two kingdoms in his modern environment, he did, unknowingly, exhibit symptoms of Barth's syndrome. Was his response to modernity a product of a degenerative Lutheran set of ideas? His biography reveals no evidence of contact with Lutheran ideas. On the contrary, the syndrome he contracted came with the democratic, pluralistic, and progressive territory of modernity.[9]

Recently Robert Bellah and his colleagues have explored the *Habits of the Heart* of Americans—especially those who live within its mainline. They concluded that the clue to the American character or identity is individualism. The complex interplay of America's pluralistic religious heritage, its fragmentative social structure, its republican (in the Enlightenment sense of the word) governmental tradition, and its often unacknowledged tradition of individualism have resulted in a culture where people relate to the world with "no wider framework" than the set of ideas they have personally assembled in their private spheres. Perhaps the most telling example advanced by Bellah *et al.* in support of their argument was that of Sheila Larson. Let the authors introduce her: "One person we interviewed has actually named her religion (she calls it her 'faith') after herself. This suggests the logical possibility of over 220 million American religions, one for each of us." Now let Sheila speak for herself. "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice."[10]

Not everyone is as contextless as Sheila Larson. Yet as Bellah and company demonstrate, even those of us who operate in more inclusive frameworks tend to do so selectively, instrumentally, individualistically. Whether one opts for the worst case and posits 220 million private universes, or chooses to consider only the smaller number of official denominations extant in America—say the National Council of Churches list of 219—America's pluralism of beliefs makes talk about two kingdoms seem hopelessly out of touch with reality. Yet the syndrome continues to claim its victims, as more and more people ensconce their most cherished beliefs in private spheres and strenuously resist contaminating them with public contact. Ironically, these Americans who, while un-

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[9]Wind, 35–7, 49.

[10]Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 220–1.

aware of Harper nonetheless share his aversion to the idea of a kingdom, end up captives within the private kingdoms they are forced to build and maintain. Instead of one or two kingdoms to deal with, the syndrome which Barth named and Sheila exemplified has given us millions.

Theology and its Syndrome

In spite of the wishes by many and the attempts by more than a few to repeal modernity, the possibility of a return to the "good old days" of kings and emperors is unlikely. Kings and queens have now become our flesh and blood cartoon figures; we keep a few around to spice up our gossip columns and trivialize our discontents. If our age has presented any distinct alternative to the pluralistic laissez faire version of modernity which Americans know, it is the totalitarian state with its cold bureaucracy, thought control, and arbitrary justice. Few of us seek that option. Most of us want to hang on to the gifts that modernity brings—its medical, technological, and scientific wonders—and especially its freedom. While many decry the fragmentation of knowledge into increasingly specialized disciplines or the assault on community by our individualistic lifestyles, few call for closing universities like Harper's or abandoning the path of careerist mobility. If we can't go back, are there any other options? There are, although none of them is as spectacular as either a cultural roll-back to the good old days or an announcement that utopia has arrived.

The more modest options suggested here demand both a disentanglement of the two kingdoms theology from its syndromic associate and an acceptance by its advocates that the two kingdoms syndrome has become one of their most pressing problems. Rather than serve as legitimator for the syndrome, two kingdoms theology can and should become a resource for overcoming it. That can happen if, following the lead of teachers like Robert Bertram, its inheritors retrieve certain key elements from their tradition. As Bertram and his students will quickly recognize, the elements which I have chosen as essential for a constructive encounter between this theology and its syndrome reflect major Bertramian concerns. What better way to acknowledge his teaching than to attempt to make use of his insights!

The way to begin this retrieval is to follow the two kingdoms' argument back to its own distinctive source. Those of us who sat in his classes cannot forget, even if we wanted to, Bertram's recurring insistence that we return to the *fons*, the source of an idea, claim, or teaching. If proper use is to be made of Luther's two kingdoms distinction then it, like any other teaching, must be made a corollary of the Reformer's cardinal teaching, the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Luther's purpose in reshaping the two realms argument was to help the church become clear about what its treasure really was. By showing how much of ecclesiastical life was really the world cloaked in priestly vestments, he sought to distinguish the life-giving promise of God from the evil-restraining realm of law. Returning to the central teaching of "God's justification of sinners who trust the Crucified" permits a reperception of modern life which exposes sin and the operation of God's law in both the private and public spheres of life. Both modern zones are unified in their stance under a law which accuses and orders

on both sides of a misleading dichotomy. Public and private life each need the word of forgiveness because each shares a fundamental fallenness. Thus the two kingdoms theology—if it is congruent with the prior distinction between law and gospel—allows for a common unifying reality to be seen in the midst of all the pluralistic universes of modernity.

The forgiven sinner has a creative role.

The primary place where the kingdom of Christ encounters the realm of law is the congregation, the assembly of believers gathered around Word and Sacrament. In each baptism conducted, each Eucharist offered, each sermon preached, sinners meet a reorienting forgiveness which turns them—for a moment—away from the kingdom or spheres which hold them captive. Graced by encounter with a suffering and accepting Lord, these forgiven ones are turned back to the world with the resources to love and serve. At least that's the ideal. Real life seems to belie that theory by keeping a high wall between religion and politics, church and state, public and private life. But in opposition to this pervasive tendency to make congregations snug havens on the private side of life, two kingdoms theology can help their pastors and members revision them as main intersections between law and gospel. Congregations can serve as correlators of public and private life. Consideration of the reluctance on the part of most congregations to breach modernity's artificial barrier reveals the seriousness of their involvement with its syndrome. The idea that congregations ought to be places where personal morality and public ethics are openly discussed and consciously brought into conversation with both the law and the gospel remains, for the most part, a theoretical nicety rather than a lively reality. Yet, if we disentangle two kingdoms theology from its syndrome, congregations can become much more than purveyors of individualized religious therapy.

For Luther everything flowed out from his one source, the "glowing core" of the gospel. One of the primary avenues by which that Gospel moved beyond the confines of individual hearts and congregational assemblies was believers' vocations. In the daily callings of Christians the realm of the world was ordered and cared for—the neighbor was loved. How close the two kingdoms could come can be glimpsed in a line from Einar Billing's classic little book, *Our Calling*. "My call is the form my life takes according as God Himself organizes it for me through His forgiving grace. Life organized around the forgiveness of sins, that is Luther's idea of the call."[11] The forgiven sinner in the midst of the changing circumstances of the world's everyday life has a creative role. Each day, as the sinner encounters again the new reality of forgiveness, a creative possibility for unprecedented service to neighbor and world is presented. The "true believer" Luther mentioned in his tract on

[11]Einar Billing, *Our Calling: A Statement of the Relationship of Christian Faith and Christian Living* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Press, 1955), 11.

"Temporal Authority" becomes a bearer of God's creative, reordering action on behalf of the world. Every day, in a very concrete locus, and with very specific actions, the citizens of the right hand kingdom have the opportunity and responsibility to—by acts of love—reorganize a bit of life around the forgiveness of sins.

But to retrieve this lively, aggressive, other-oriented, and anything but "quietistic" sense of vocation will mean a disentangling of vocation from the modern notions of profession and leisure. Any action, any encounter, on either side of the public/private divide, can be turned into love of neighbor, can be reorganized around the forgiveness of sins. How one merges into traffic, consumes the earth's resources, deals with a bothersome co-worker, or responds to an unwanted pregnancy becomes much more than a private matter. The recent effort by Bertram and Edward Schroeder to shape a "Crossings" program which reconnects daily life and the Word of God can be prototypical for reviving "vocation."

This essay could stop here—the agenda awaiting people in congregational and vocational life is already daunting enough. What is more, these dimensions of life under the cross need to be seen as the primary ones, the ones that will lead to full-orbed ministry by the total priesthood of believers to all of the world's neighbors. Yet, two kingdoms theology can, occasionally, become more obviously public than it normally appears in vocational and congregational life. As a theological interpreter of the LCMS controversy, and more recently as a student of other "confessing movements," Robert Bertram has extended the reach of the two kingdoms within the church and beyond it. There are "times for confessing" when a body of Christians is called to take the witness stand against a new form of the same problem which energized Luther—churchly confusion about its true treasure and authority. There are also times when such a group can creatively and corporately bear witness to a better way of treating the neighbor than the one chosen by a particular organization, society, or culture.

Finally, and—thank heaven!—rarely, there are those moments which completely overwhelm the public/private syndrome. One thinks here of German martyrs like Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Franz Jaggerstatter who, in the solitary and quite private act of dying, make the most powerful public witness of all. On behalf of all the citizens of Christ's realm they bear witness to all the inhabitants of the worldly kingdom of God's better loving way. Contrary to all appearances, the lonely martyr becomes a collective "we." Such public demonstrations of two kingdoms theology come precisely at those moments when a given kingdom gets completely out of hand. With unfathomable timing, these martyrdoms come to remind beleaguered believers of God's Plan B, and to revive them for creative reordering of the broken world. Far away from the gas chamber or prison cell, in the gathered congregation and the daily lives of believers, their testimony calls forth new acts of faith and love.

Christ Was Made to Be Sin—Atonement Today

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We live in an increasingly "post-Christian" society. By "post-Christian society" I mean the wane in culture of the Biblical drama of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation as the dominant interpretation of life, together with the erosion of the church as a united community and the loss of personal faith. Into the vacuum comes a resurgence of the other spiritual source of Western civilization, the heroic polytheism of the Greeks which Nietzsche admired and advocated. This post-Christian civilization can neither



believe, in Luther's terms, in the "revealed God," nor quite free itself from "God in his naked deity." God is feared—from a distance—but not loved and trusted. And lesser gods, which might stay that greater fear, are sought.

Our times, I think, will witness that battle of the gods Nietzsche predicted, between Dionysius and the Crucified, between the will to power and the power to will the will of God (Mark 14:36).[1] For many people in our culture, God is the problem. The consideration that God (that is, the biblical Lord) might have a problem with us is unknown. Thus my purpose in this essay is to ask how the biblical Lord comes to be loved and trusted; where do we get the power to will the will of God? If Melanchthon was right when he wrote in the Apology, "Justification is reconciliation for Christ's sake,"[2] the answer will be: through the atoning death of Christ on the cross.

Christ identified with us in our Godforsakenness.

The doctrine of the atonement is the church's attempt to understand the divine reason why mere faith in Jesus Christ makes a person right with God (Gal 2:21). Justification by faith alone and the atoning death of Christ are correlative doctrines in a twofold sense. First, the preaching and sacramental actions of justification lose the critical feature of God's inbreaking judgment of the world (John 3:17–19) when the reference to the cross of Jesus is obscured. As Gerhard Forde has urged, the result is the loss of atonement as an "actual event":

> The cross is not in the first instance a revelation of the love or mercy of God. It is rather the climactic manifestation of God's wrath against sin, God's attack against a humanity that will believe neither in God nor in God's creation. It is the expression of God's jealousy against a world that will not have this God as a God of mercy. The cross makes it plain that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."[3]

Second, the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel is, in Robert Bertram's words, Christ's "own, immanent, historical bearing of . . . sins—'as much Christ's own as if he himself had committed them' [Luther]."[4] The faithfulness of Jesus Christ to his Father as well as to sinners at the cross, his defeat of the powers that divide Creator and creature there, the revelation of a " 'sinful' divine love" (Bertram) that surpasses a

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[1] I have argued this case in "The Human Predicament in Emergent Post-Modernity," *dialog* 23 (1984):167–73.

[2] "The Apology of the Augsburg Confession" in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 129.

[3] Gerhard O. Forde, "The Work of Christ" in *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 90.

[4] Cf. Robert W. Bertram, "How Our Sins Were Christ's: A Study in Luther's Galatians (1531)" in *The Promising Tradition: A Reader in Law–Gospel Reconstructionist Theology*, 2nd edition (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary in Exile, 1974), 7–21.

holy wrath—all this is comprehended in "the Word of the Cross" of which justification "apart from the works of the law" is the theological elaboration. Hence Forde writes:

> Atonement occurs when God gives himself in such fashion as to create a people pleasing to God, a people no longer under law or wrath, a people who live and trust God. When God succeeds in that, God is "satisfied. . . ." The question is whether God can actually give himself in such a way as to save us. For God is not the problem, we are. Can God actually deliver us from wrath, save us from sin and embittered hostility and bring something new?[5]

To proclaim Christ is to preach that he has identified with us and for us in our God-forsakenness; but that means that all who in turn identify with Jesus and his cross are just in God's sight, "apart from the works of the law."

Is Justification the Issue for Us?

What is at issue in the cross and resurrection of Christ is not the justification of God but the justification of the human being. In the history of the church, this radical focus upon sin and grace has always been a most difficult and controverted point.

In America the lines of battle were drawn when Jonathan Edwards published his essay, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry," and the shape of battle was defined by the rebellion of Edward's grandchildren in mainstream liberal Protestantism, whose "God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross" (H. R. Niebuhr). Hence the church in America is sorely split between the children of Anselm (the "satisfaction theory") and the children of Abelard (the "moral-influence theory"). Unsurprisingly, one finds "mainstream" liberal Protestant theology preoccupied with the question of theodicy (God the Problem!). Dorothee Sölle's popular "Critique of Christian Masochism" stated it baldly: "There is . . . no way to combine omnipotence with love."[6]

Despite the grave difficulties of the "satisfaction theory" of the atonement, the children of Anselm are right about one thing: there is no way to combine this denial with a faith that is recognizably biblical, a point from which Sölle's "post-theistic" theology does not shrink. It is not difficult, on one level, to correct Sölle's construal of biblical faith in the Lord as "masochism" (a tired case, in any event, once brilliantly argued by Feuerbach). Eberhard Jüngel's *God as the Mystery of the World* is a sustained and comprehensive response to post-Christian atheism drawn from Luther's "theology of the Cross." Jüngel agues that the omnipotence of the biblical God is that of his very being (as the doctrine of the Trinity insists), the omnipotence of his love. Jüngel summarizes:

> God has then identified himself with the Jesus who made himself sin for us as our substitute. We have recognized this identification of divine life with the dead Jesus as the event of divine love. . . . God has interposed himself

[5]Forde, "The Work of Christ," 50–1.

[6]Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 25.

> in the midst of fatal God-forsakenness in order to create a new relationship with God.[7]

If one conceives of God's all-powerfulness, according to his self-revelation, God's power is not to be thought of as his immunity from change, but as his freedom to become one with that which is other than himself for the sake of that other. God's power is the freedom of his love, as Karl Barth taught us. At-one-ment or reconciliation is the very key to the riddle of God's power. Because Christian faith is faith in this God's victory, and comprehends all the past and future, it is necessarily deemed omnipotence (in the sense of 1 Cor 15:24–28).

It follows from this line of thought that the wrath of God is nothing less than the wrath of his love, which must be, as Tillich once wrote, "against what is against love." Likewise, the gospel of this God is not a mere disclosure that God is love, but that his love has been poured out upon those not so lovely, that he has found the way to be gracious to his enemies (Rom 5:10) in Jesus Christ. Thus the "all-powerfulness" of the biblical Lord is not, in and of itself, the clue to his will which is revealed in the weakness of Christ crucified, nor to the meaning of his sovereignty over a rebellious and dying world.

Bonhoeffer grasped this when in prison he insisted that the devil too must serve God's purpose, just as the earliest Christians saw in the death and resurrection of Christ the revelation of the reign of God. In Christ's death, the God of love has compelled even his own worst enemies, sin, death, and devil, to serve his saving purpose. Therein lies the rub, however: Luther remarked that apart from Christ, God is indistinguishable from the devil. While Luther's discussion of the *deus absconditus* in *The Bondage of the Will* has drawn sharp criticism from Barth and Jüngel for speculatively positing a "God behind God" in his self-revelation, Luther's insight is vindicated by this very criticism. Precisely because God is as he has revealed himself in Christ, the wrath of his love against sin is not the caprice of a Zeus, but the compelling demand of the Creator upon his lost creature. That this self-same God of love now finds the way to surpass wrath with mercy is the mystery which the doctrine of the atonement seeks to trace.

Thus our dark experience of God's sovereignty in human history cannot fairly be invoked to call into question faith in this God, at least so far as the reign of God is revealed and faith is understood biblically as an actual change in the world, the conversion of a person from one lord to another. One stands right with the God of love, or one does not. Precisely because this God of love now, in the Gospel, lays claim to a person's allegiance in inescapable omnipotence, there can be no neutrality. If we are dealing with the biblical Lord, the name of this encounter is justification. Should this be the issue for us? Certainly, if the *sola scriptura* stands, the issue for us too is how a person can be right with the God of love.

The Judgment of the Cross

As Ernst Käsemann has reminded us, for Paul the gospel of the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ bears with it the sover-

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[7]Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1983), 367.

eign claim of God upon his rebellious creation. "A doctrine of justification which avoids the concept of judgment loses its character as proclamation of the lordship of God," writes Käsemann, in commenting on Romans 1:18–3:20, "and loses therewith the only basis of the humanization of mankind."[8]

For Käsemann "God the Problem" is not a conceptual riddle, awaiting theological clarification. God can be justified only by God, by the actual fulfillment of his own promises. In the interim, the problem of God is the "dark stretch of history between promise and fulfillment," (Von Rad) in which the humanity and inhumanity of humankind are continually decided. In such a world, the just live by faith, for ". . . man in his historical reality constantly assaults God's omnipotence, because in flight or aggression he tries to escape his own creatureliness."[9] The real alternative to "justification" is to leave the world blind to its idolatries and to create a secularized church which neither hears nor confesses the judgment of God.

God's power is the freedom of his love.

Thus, according to Käsemann, justification is a demand to set aside the question of theodicy (Rom 3:4–5) in order to focus faith on the "righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel." The awakening to the need for Christ *converts* the person from one who contests to one who confesses the judgment of God. By the mercy of God which has surpassed his judgment, one becomes reconciled to God in his judgment. Conversion to the Christian faith in God entails the human being's knowledge of himself or herself as a creature in rebellion.

Whatever else atonement means, it does not mean an exemption from the judgment of God. Rather, in Christ's atoning death the judgment of God on us is fully executed. Christ stands in our place, not in place of us; he stands in solidarity with us before God, that the sinner may die with him. The very best of news is not about the judgment we escape, but about the company of the one with whom we meet it. It is no accident in this regard that Luther himself never felt the tension between "forensic" and "transformationist" accounts of justification, since for him the true people of God are precisely those "who bring the judgment of the cross to bear upon themselves."[10] Or, as Melanchthon put it in the Apology, "As long as we flee God's judgment and are angry at him, we are not righteous before him."[11] Christ can only die "for us" to the extent that he dies "with us." "What is not assumed," the Cappadocians held, "is not healed."

Yet how can Christ's dying with us do these things for us? How can it put the sinner to death and bring a believer to life? What needs explaining in the doctrine of the atonement is the vicarious nature of Christ's death, and its correlate, the forensic aspect of God's

[8]Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 56–7.

[9]Käsemann, *Commentary*, 43.

[10]Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. and ed. Wilhelm Pauck, The Library of Christian Classics, 15 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 120.

[11]"Apology," 131.

justifying Word: How is Christ's standing *with* us also his standing *for* us? How is God's judgment on us also his justification of us?

Clearly, for the Reformers the transformation effected by the Gospel is not moral or religious progress, but the ever-expanding rule in the believer of God's kingly claim: *faith.* Indeed, in the Apology Melanchthon again and again underscores that "faith is the very righteousness by which we are accounted righteous before God. This is not because it is a work worthy in itself, but because it receives God's promises that for Christ's sake he wishes to be propitious to believers in Christ. . . ."[12] Yet how? How does my sin become Christ's, as Luther often put it, and his righteousness mine?

How does a person come to love and trust the Lord? How has the God of love sought and found the way to be gracious to sinners? Why exactly should faith—faith alone—justify? A concern for these questions was at the center of Robert Bertram's doctoral dissertation. A chapter from it entitled, "How Our Sins Were Christ's: A Study in Luther's *Galatians* (1531)" was reprinted in *The Promising Tradition* [see the bibliography printed in the April issue of *Currents* under 1974]. There Bertram described the human predicament this way:

> To know that I am a sinner is to know . . . that I anger God. Yet if I believe that I anger God, then of course I am disbelieving that I delight God. Still . . . that is exactly the impossible thing which God demands: that we who do indeed anger him must nevertheless believe that we please him. So the more certainly a man recognizes that he is a sinner . . . the more certainly his sin is "magnified"—his sin of unbelief. Although the sinner admits his sin . . . yet he does not by that act become right and true himself.[13]

How does God interpose himself in this "fatal God-forsakenness, thereby creating a new relationship with God"?

The Righteousness of Christ

Dietrich Bonhoeffer called Christ's sinless bearing of the sin of the world the "central problem of Christology."[14] To believe in Jesus Christ, according to Bonhoeffer, is to believe in Jesus present and identifying himself with me, the sinner. This identification of Christ with us "makes possible faith in Christ" because it is the very being of Christ: "He is the one who has really bound himself in the freedom of his existence to me."[15] Jesus *is* the Risen Lord; the most important thing to be said about this man is that he is present *pro me.*

How does he really bind himself to us, such that we may bind ourselves to him? The answer, says Bonhoeffer, is not in his incarnation but in the humiliation of the Incarnate One, in his "becoming obedient, even to death on the cross." "He was made to be sin," says Paul. "Behold, the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world" declares the Baptist in the Gospel of John. "The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom for

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[12]"Apology," 119.

[13]Bertram, "How Our Sins," 12.

[14]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ The Center,* Ministers Paperback Library (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 107.

[15]Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center,* 48.

many," Mark's Jesus announces. Luke's Jesus fulfills the Scriptures in being "reckoned with transgressors." The inner coherence of the New Testament is to be found, as Bonhoeffer has seen, not in the variegated titles of honor ascribed to Jesus by the many early Christian communities. It is to be found in the "new covenanting" which Jesus himself is and does.

Christ's hideous death is really his rejection by God.

The Kingdom of the God of love is on the march. In his ministry Jesus brings God near to people who have every right to feel cut off from God. Now in his dying he stands with and for the sinners whom he has forgiven. And he stands with them before God, suffering the abandonment his Father has required of him. In sinless obedience to God he dies rejected by God, because of the sinners of the world with whom he has identified, for whose sins he has become responsible in the very act of forgiving them. Thus, "we dare not say he bore merely our punishment," wrote Bertram, "What he bore was our sin."[16] Only so could he have truly identified himself with sinners and known "in his own body" their "fatal God-forsakenness." Christ became the friend of sinners, and thus a "lawfully accursed sinner, not merely the innocent bearer of sin's punishments."[17]

If a sinful love emerges here as the victor over a holy wrath, does not a drama within God's life unfold before our eyes on Golgotha, a drama in which we have no part to play but to "watch from a distance" (Mark 15:40)? If Christ dies for us, is there not also a significant sense in which he dies his particular death without us (Rom 5:7–8), that is, within God? It is one thing to imagine that God "satisfies" his wrath on another outside of himself for the sake of his honor, as did Anselm; it is quite another thing to see God suffering his own divine wrath for the sake of his mercy.

Forde wants us to resist the temptation to drape the cross with roses and to make an ornament of that instrument of torture. "Jesus dies for us, not for God."[18] That is a salutary warning so far as it goes. Yet the terror of Christ's death (Mark 15:34) is uniquely his own; it resides not in the brute fact that he is tortured to death like so many other victims of this wicked world, but that this hideous death really is his rejection by God.

If "satisfaction" proves to be an inadequate explanation of this expiation, it is because it is not objective enough; it is because it is insufficiently trinitarian, and insufficiently "actual." But if the righteousness of Christ is indeed his work, Jesus' achievement within God's life, so that atonement is indeed an "actual event" and not a morality play, then we cannot evade the most difficult thought that the atonement which took place on Golgotha took place within God's life; that there for God occurred the "death of death and hell's destruction."

[16]Cf. Bertram, "How Our Sins," 7–21.
[17]Cf. Bertram, "How Our Sins," 7–21.
[18]Forde, "The Work of Christ," 82.

Concluding Questions

What does the cross of Jesus mean for God?

"In the resurrection of Jesus the issue is not only one of a divine action, but of the divine being itself" (Jüngel).[19] I have argued that in Christ's death for us, the Triune God overcomes his own judgment, not through abolishing it by fiat, as think the children of Abelard, nor through executing it on a substitute, as think the children of Anselm. For in either case something very important to the New Testament, and indeed for our salvation is lost from view: that we get to die with Christ. Rather, I have argued that God overcomes his judgment against us by surpassing it through self-sacrifice. Thus for Christ's sake God gets to forgive sins, to justify the ungodly, to give life to the dead—in short, to become the God of his enemies.

Must we not wonder whether these are decisions for God, decisions in which God defines his own deity? When we are thinking of Jesus' cross, must we not think of a God whose omnipotence is to choose the new, and let die the old, for himself as also for us? Since Jesus died with us so that our dying might belong to him, and for us that we might never die the death of hell, must we not think that Jesus's death is God's decision to become God in a new way, to become "all things to everyone"?

To entertain such questions is to recognize that the "anthropomorphism" of which the Bible is so full is not poet's images, twice removed from truth as Plato taught, but precise instructions in the pathos of God (Heschel). The freedom of the living God of the Bible is not his freedom from want but his freedom to want; even for himself, his own godliness is a matter of decision and action. That he promises to be our God is not the application in time of an eternal reality, but the event of his being as the God who gives (Luther: *esse deus dare*)—till at the last he gives life to the dead. Put this way, the "ante is upped" on Forde's question, "Will God succeed?" Put this way, the choice in our civilization between Dionysius and the Crucified is made shatteringly clear. One bets one's life on the "real, not imaginary" victory of the Crucified, or one does not. There is no neutrality.

Faith pleases God because it corresponds to his own decision in Christ's death and resurrection to become "all things to everyone," to be the God whose own deity is staked on the resurrection of the dead. Faith is faith in the omnipotence of the God of love. Faith pleases God just because by identifying with Jesus we enter the life of God and with him will the will of God. Atonement or reconciliation for Christ's sake is nothing less than a brand new way of being, for God as for us: God's victory, the resurrection of the dead. *Soli deo gloria!*

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[19]Jüngel, *God as the Mystery*, 364.

An Ecumenical Horizon for "Canon Within a Canon"?

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Can our interpretation of Scripture be ecumenical in our pluralistic situation and still use the Lutheran Confessions' principle of the "canon within a canon"? No, if certain prevailing conceptions of ecumenical, pluralistic, and "a canon within a canon," prevail. Yes, if they are construed differently.

Within this different construing of the ecumenical horizon, we are ecumenical in our pluralistic situation by rendering public our specific confession, not through an appeal to some supposed irrefutable uniform common human experience, but through a thick, that is, complex, in-depth description of how we believe, teach, and confess the God who is disclosed in the Scriptures. The ecumenical question is no longer an either/or question; that is, either we have a canon within a canon, or we do not. Rather, the ecumenical question becomes, "Which canon within the canon is relatively adequate?"

This construing of a "canon within the canon" within an ecumenical horizon has three major elements. First, since being ecumenical and being public are interrelated, ecumenical conversation is best understood as the interplay of strangers rather than intimates. Second, since being ecumenical and public involves the interpreter in a pluralistic situation, a model for interpreting Scripture in a pluralistic situation is needed. Third, a canon within a canon is best understood as a principle for the use of Scripture in Christian witness and an inherent part of rendering a Christian witness in a pluralistic public. Therefore, the public articulation of a canon within a canon is an indispensible part of scriptural interpretation in an ecumenical horizon.

Being Ecumenical and Public

Being ecumenical and being public belong together because, in a primal sense, being ecumenical is thinking, willing, and laboring with the world as our horizon.[1] The

[1]The etymology for ecumenical is the Greek *oikumene* which figuratively extends the sense of the word house *(oikos)* to include the world of Hellenistic civilization. Cf. *Taschenlexikon Religion und Theologie* 4 (Göttingen, 1983): 38 for the development of the usage of the word ecumenical, including in the modern Ecumenical Movement.

original councils were ecumenical because they functioned with the world as their horizon. This primal sense needs to be retrieved so that Christian ecumenism, in the words of Raimundo Panikkar, "cannot be reduced to settling Christian family feuds, as it were, or healing old wounds."[2]

Being ecumenical means we need to act publicly.

This version of being ecumenical, which has the world as its horizon, means we need to act publicly; that is, to act in a *res publica.* "A *res publica* stands in general for those bonds of association and mutual commitment which exist between people who are not joined together by ties of family or intimate association. . . ."[3] The bonds which characterize public association are the bonds of the crowd in which there are various degrees of unfamiliarity and even conflict. The question of being ecumenical is integrally tied with being public, and this implies working with strangers.[4]

Some would avoid this integration of public and ecumenical with respect to the church by understanding the church primarily through metaphors of friendship or family. And, while it is not uncommon to conceive of the church as the family of God—indeed, there is some biblical[5] warrant—or of all people as brothers and sisters, such images of the church and humanity can obscure the very real differences among the churches.[6]

The tendency to understand ecumenical conversation in the intimate language of friendship or family is neither simple nor benign. It exemplifies the morals of middle-class people in society[7] and implicitly agrees to the "field of action" which has been allotted to religion in the bourgeois milieu of a secularized society.[8] In short, religion is considered a private matter, mostly for women, children, and other intimates.[9]

Some of the dominant images of ecumenical work often use this intimate imagery and inadvertently further an imperial relationship between first world Christianity and other peoples. For example, Leonard Swidler, editor of *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* recently proposed ten commandments for interreligious dialog which can be easily understood within the intimate model

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[2]Raimundo Panikkar, "Toward an Ecumenical Ecumenism," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19 (1982):781.

[3]Richard Sennett. *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 3; hereafter, Sennett, "The Fall."

[4]See Sennett, "The Fall," 48, for a definition of stranger in relationship to public.

[5]Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 136–72.

[6]For an analysis of the power of metaphor in construing a world read Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); especially, 295 ff.

[7]Cf. Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976), 8–42.

[8]Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 134–35.

[9]Patrick Keifert, "Modern Dogma and Liturgical Renewal," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 13(1986):214–27.

for ecumenical conversation. He makes much of sincerity, trust, self-definition, and experiencing the partner's religion "from within."[10] In the following issue of the journal, a pastoral counselor develops Swidler's decalogue along the lines of the therapeutic interview![11] These individuals would not wish to support an imperial relationship; Swidler explicitly requires in his seventh commandment that "dialogue can take place only between equals." The problem is not in most of the ingredients of the decalogue but in the organizing metaphor. The metaphor of intimate conversation as the model for ecumenical conversation fosters an imperial relationship, since it abets a first world middle class conception of public conversation and the place of religion in society.

By way of contrast, my rendition of ecumenical interrelates being ecumenical with being public in a pluralistic situation, including socio-economic plurality. The church in ecumenical conversation is more a "company of strangers" in public conversation than a dialogue of intimates.[12] Such a pluralistic horizon implies a conflictive, though not combative, model of human communication, since conversation involves such pervasive systematic distortions as class, race, and sex.[13]

Models for Responding to Diversity

Being ecumenical and public demands a keen sense of diversity. There are, however, a spectrum of responses to this diversity. This spectrum begins with those who hold that, despite our differences, we really are all alike, and it ends with those who hold that, at least for the moment, our differences are so profound that there is no ground for carrying on a public conversation. Most people fit somewhere in the middle. I describe four models for responding to diversity. The first three models are used to describe what I believe are unhelpful models[14] for responding to diversity;[15] the fourth, articulating a canon within a canon, is the one I prefer.

The Monist

The monist person or group recognizes the existence of diversity in the ways in which Scripture may be interpreted, but finally denies serious consideration of the options other than its own. The monist is quite sure that the other options are wrong. Some monists may be uninterested in conversation about interpreting Scripture. They consider it a waste of time. Others take up the conver-

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[10]Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20 (1983):1–4.

[11]Robert L. Kinast, "The Dialogue Decalogue: A Pastoral Commentary," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 21 (1984):318.

[12]Parker J. Palmer, *The Company of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad, 1985).

[13]The importance of a different model of public conversation is the subject of major philosophical discussion which is directly related to our topic of hermeneutics. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Zu Gadamers 'Wahrheit und Methode,' " in Apel und Habermas *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik*, 53.

[14]In order to avoid more abstraction, I personify these models. The danger of personification is apparent. While it is true few people function exclusively in one mode in their response to diversity, these models represent viable and common ways persons actually function, at least in specific situations.

[15]Cf. Wayne C. Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Power and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) for a more extensive description of these four models.

sation at great length only to confirm their own perspective.

A monist can be an irenic, gentle conversation partner. For example, the pastoral counselor who considers all conflict regarding the interpretation of God the Father in Scripture to be a result of conflicts with parents, is a monist regarding the interpretation of Scripture, since the interpretive perspective is singular. This person does not work in a critical, pluralistic horizon. In each case, the monists have confidence in the truth of their perspective. The monist intends to change the dialogue partner, but not be changed by the conversation.

The Eclectic

The eclectic person or group recognizes diversity and is quite willing to dialogue with the various positions. Unlike the monist, the eclectic to a certain extent takes seriously the conversation partners' positions. Bits of each of the diverse options are valid, while other bits are false. "It is naive to expect any one book, any one theologian, any one mode, to be fully sound or fully mistaken. Thus we should incorporate the good and throw away the bad," argues the eclectic. The eclectic picks and chooses from the many options, incorporating those which fit the pragmatic purposes of the eclectic. The eclectic intends to change the dialogue partner and to be changed but only on the basis of personal, pragmatic purposes which tend not to be a matter of public discussion.

The Relativist

The relativist recognizes diversity but believes that public discourse regarding different interpretive options is unlikely, since each side represents values that are not subject to rational discourse. As a result of this skepticism regarding public discourse, the relativist calls together all those persons who share the same value judgments and forms a society of like-minded persons. Within this group the rules for participation may be strict or lenient, but they are set by the group which holds those value judgments. It is as if the relativist, shrugging her shoulders, says, "I know my values are no truer than any others, but what can I do? You leave me alone and I will leave you alone. Inside our groups we live by our values." The relativist finally intends on changing others and being changed only to the extent that their tolerant isolation is preserved; at all costs conflict is to be avoided. The result is a "repressive tolerance."[16]

The Critical Pluralist

The critical pluralist recognizes diversity, but believes that public discourse regarding religious affection is possible and necessary. Working from the roots of their own traditions, critical pluralists engage others from the standpoint of the others' own tradition and commitments. Tradition, understood as "the living faith of the dead," is no longer

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[16]David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossword, 1981), xi and Hans Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions: Some Theses for Clarification," in *Concilium* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd., Feb., 1986):120.

[17]For a sustained discussion of tradition understood in the manner in which I use it here, especially the notion of fruitful prejudice, compare Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (J. C. B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1965), 250–84; cf. Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 234–41.

considered the enemy of public conversation, but rather the very means of such conversation in a pluralistic situation.[17] Critical conflict, understood as healthy critical suspicions of the ways in which public discourse can be distorted, is welcomed rather than avoided.[18]

The critical pluralist expects to be changed by the conversation.

The critical pluralist expects to change others and be changed by the conversation. The conversation is understood as a public interplay of strangers where private self-consciousness is peripheral. The image of an ecumenical conversation as a company of strangers constituted through tradition and healthy critical suspicions replaces the imagery of intimacy.

This is a sketchy outline of the spectrum of possibilities. The critical pluralist model needs to be developed in relation to the others, especially the relativist. Relativism leads to individuals who are strange Dr. Jekyl, Mr. Hyde persons. They are private legalists and public anarchists. Biblical scholars, who follow this pattern, tend to divide interpretation between what the text meant and what it now means.[19] As a result, as one biblical scholar puts it, "Biblical scholarship . . . often oscillates between critical description and capricious faith calling the one 'historical' and the other 'theological.' "[20] Among theologians who fit within this model, one observes a certain private dogmatism and public skepticism. They often borrow from contemporary skeptical philosophers to argue their relativism.[21] Within their own tradition-value group, within themselves, they have a strong commitment to a very fixed set of ethical and religious beliefs and values. Publicly they make no argument for their position. At the public table they perceive their value system as private.

In contrast, critical pluralism recognizes the diversity of religious experience but assumes that it can be made public. The critical pluralist is like the monist in that the critical pluralist makes judgments regarding other religious witness. Unlike the monist, the critical pluralist chooses to make such arguments public, making arguments that are necessary and sufficient for reasonable and fair-minded people. Most importantly, the critical pluralist expects to be changed by the conversation, not on the basis of intimacy with the various conversation partners, but through the conversation itself.

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[18]Jürgen Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1979).

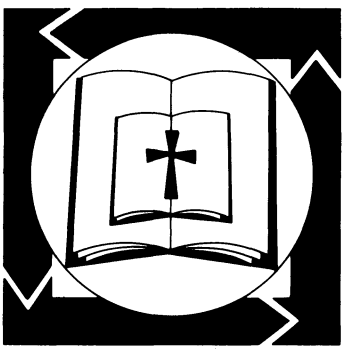
[19]Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," in *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* 1 (Nashville: Abingdon):418–32.

[20]Martin J. Buss, *Encounter with the Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 33.

[21]Cf. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1984); hereafter, Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine;* Cf. Patrick Keifert, "Labor Room or Morgue: The Power and Limits of Pluralism and Christology," in *Word and World* 5 (1985), 78–88.

Canon Within a Canon

The first two parts of this construing of an ecumenical horizon for a "canon within a canon" are complete. Such an ecumenical horizon is pluralistic and public. As a public conversation it is among strangers and, while dependent upon tradition, critical of both tradition and novelty as potential distortions of the conversation. The interpretation of Scripture within this public and pluralistic setting is best accomplished by a critical pluralist strategy. The critical pluralist strategy begins by thorough description of how we believe, teach, and confess the God who is disclosed in the Scriptures. This description works out of tradition with a full set of healthy, critical suspicions and expects that this tradition will look significantly different as a result of the conversation.



The third part of the construing remains; namely, a description of "a canon within a canon." The argument is fairly simple: Any attempt to interpret Scripture according to this critical pluralist strategy will reveal a canon within a canon. Canon within a canon is not one portion of Scripture over another or an ahistorical idea which norms the text. Rather, it is specifically the set of uses to which a particular interpretation puts the text and the principles of interpretation which this interpretation reveals. Every interpretation reveals such principles of use and interpretation. As a result, the ecumenical question becomes one of the relatively adequate canon within a canon. A brief description of what in principle a canon within a canon should and should not be follows.

Since the task of critical pluralists is to render public their witness to the faith, they are committed to raising the question of truth in at least two important senses. Is the witness I give truly Christian and is it true?[22] Theological hermeneutics becomes an essential component of judging whether the witness is truly Christian, its "Christian aptness." In order to make this judgment, theological hermeneutics clarifies the canon, or rule of Christian witness. This canon is Scripture.

Here it is crucial to distinguish the function of Scripture as canon and its function as source of Christian witness. Placing the focus solely on the canonical function of Scripture downplays, even denies, the historical character of these texts. Though at its worst this leads to prooftexting, it does not warrant forsaking the canonical function. Attending only to the function of Scripture as the source of Christian witness, on the other hand, leaves us with an incomprehensible collection of data about the text of Scripture. As Charles Woods puts it, "The result of this confusion

[22]In the following analysis I am indebted to the work of Charles M. Wood, *the Formation of Christian Understanding* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1981), 82–120; hereafter, Wood, *Formation.*

of source and norm may range from the uncritical enforcement of random scriptural texts as normative, to the serious erosion of any clear idea as to how Scripture might function to authorize Christian witness at all."[23] The key is to balance these two functions of source and norm with one another.[24]

Function and Canonical Status

In considering canon within a canon, however, the canonical function is central. The canonization of Christian Scriptures is not so much exalting them to some metaphysically higher status, but more the actual practice of using them as the norm of the Christian witness. The canonical status does not depend upon the intention of their authors or even the intention of those who originally gathered them together or who spent time developing lists of canonical texts. Rather, canonical status depends precisely on their functioning in the community.

Since canonical status is tied to the function of these texts, the question becomes to what purposes do they actually and should they actually serve. Any answer to that question is what I take to be that interpretation's canon within the canon.

Since the idea of a canon within a canon is an elastic notion, it is important to note which senses of the notion are excluded by defining it in this manner. It has meant to some that a particular text or group of texts or a particular theme or affirmation of Scripture is taken as central, warranting exclusion of others. Thus at one time or another, the notion of the canon within a canon legitimated the setting of the New Testament against the Old, the synoptics against John, the Pauline letters against the Catholic and Pastoral Epistles, etc.[25] While significant theological differences exist between the testaments and various parts of the New Testament witness, the canon within a canon does not warrant either one portion of Scripture being excluded by another, or some supposedly "ahistorical" idea replacing the particulars of the biblical narrative.

The whole of the narrative must be construed in the use of the canon, not just part. Therefore, the use of Scripture as canon will deploy various methods of biblical interpretation so as to understand the text as a whole.[26] This is not to reject the importance of the various stages of oral and textual development. However, it does mean that historical critical methods, which tend to dissect the text when understanding the text as a historical source, function differently when understanding the text canonically. They are no less reasonable or critical; they are, however, deployed to a different purpose.[27] In the canonical use of Scripture they are deployed so as to understand the whole text complete with its full range of referentiality.

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[23]Wood, *Formation,* 85.

[24]In this regard, Gerhard Ebeling's " *'Sola Scriptura'* and Tradition," in *The Word of God and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 102–147, remains a significant contribution to this discussion.

[25]Krister Stendahl, "One Canon is Enough," in *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 62f.

[26]Patrick R. Keifert, "Mind Reader and Maestro: Models for Understanding Biblical Interpreters," *Word and World* 1 (1980/81):153–68.

[27]Patrick R. Keifert, "Interpretive Paradigms: A Proposal Concerning New Testament Christology," *Semeia* 30 (1985):203–14.

In principle, the focus in canonical use of Scripture is on the plain sense of Scripture *(sensus literalis)*. Such use presumes that the purpose of conversation is a commonly held interpretation of the text.[28] The goal is what Clifford Geertz calls a "thick description" of the biblical witness. It is, first, a description of the details which make up the whole. Second, it is description from the participant's point of view.[29] The interpreter recognizes that any description that the interpreter makes "from the participant's point of view," will be the interpreter's version. The focus for this method of interpretation is to understand the text as a whole taking seriously, rather than explaining away, its details and point of view. In short, the text is understood as a whole: the whole truth and nothing but the whole's truth.

What uses are appropriate for Scripture?

But, as Ernst Käsemann has pointed out, it is one thing to say that all of Scripture should be heard, but it is something else to say that one can or should preach it all.[30] All of Scripture should be taken into account when determining how the critical pluralist bears witness in the public place. But the canon itself raises serious questions as to the propriety of "preaching" some of its constituent parts, that is, of commending and explicating them as sources or standards of authentic Christian witness. So while the whole of Scripture must be construed in its canonical use, not all of it will be used in the same manner or force in the ultimate Christian witness.

Appropriate use is the question addressed by "canon within a canon." What uses are appropriate for Scripture? What is Scripture authorized to do and what can it authorize? The Lutheran Confessors took these questions as critical. They regularly balanced the principle of *sola scriptura* with those of *solus Christus, sola fide,* and *sola gratia,* not as external principles imported into the text but as their interpretation of the Scripture's central witness. This interpretation neither excludes one portion of Scripture nor creates ahistorical ideas as criteria. It does provide explicit criteria for the canonical use of the Scripture in the church. Especially in the American setting, where the Protestant tendency is to exalt Scripture to "the status of absolute norm," it is important to contribute the Lutheran refusal to fixate on canon. It is Jesus Christ, not Scripture, who is *norma normans sed non normata* for he is the appropriate end and content to any canonical use of Scripture.

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[28]Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology,* 65–70, where he accurately critiques Wood's and Kelsey's functional reductionism precisely on the issue of the plain sense of Scripture. He is dependent here on Hans W. Frei, "Theology and the Interpretation of Narrative: Some Hermeneutical Considerations," paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, New York, December, 1982.

[29]Clifford Geertz, *the Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 13–27.

[30]Ernst Käsemann, "Kritische Analyse," in *Das Neue Testament als Kanon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1970), 366.

The Confessors' Public Commitment

This version of the principle of canon within a canon within an ecumenical horizon places the interpretation of the Lutheran Confessions in a different light. They are not canon law or its functional Lutheran equivalent. Their varied and occasional character within their complex social, economic, political, and theological context, functions as a superb example of how Christians, under extremely hazardous and systematically distorted circumstances, make their public witness. These confessors' commitment to a public, ecumenical horizon is as important as the particular way they put their witness. As Robert Bertram so eloquently put it in an address before the 1968 Assembly of the World Council of Churches:

> In my own immediate tradition, to cite but one example, over four centuries ago our confessors challenged their posterity to what could have been the boldest sort of ecumenical dialog. It could still be that. In full view of the empire of their day, they invoked on their confession not only the verdict of "God" and of His "Christ" but of "all nations" as well, "of all pious people" (Apology, Preface 17, 19; Art. XXVIII, 27; Art. IV, 398). In effect, they were opening their books to public audit by the whole church.[31]

In this sense, the Lutheran Confessions commit their posterity to a public and ecumenical Christian witness. Their witness under their circumstances criticizes today's privatization and individualization of the Christian religion in major portions of Christianity and urges us not to accept these boundaries.

Once we accept this public commitment in our pluralistic setting, the inevitability of a canon within a canon arising in any attempt to render public a Christian witness also becomes evident. It is better to have a canon within a canon be an explicit part of the public conversation, as it is in the Lutheran Confessions, than for it to be a covert part of that conversation. An explicit canon within the canon compels a more critical, truthful, and helpful ecumenical conversation.

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[31]Robert W. Bertram, "Our Common Confession and Its Implications for Today," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39 (Nov. 1968):715–21.

The Parish as a Confessing Community

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Over the past twenty-five years Robert W. Bertram has been in the forefront of a movement within American Lutheranism to reconstruct a classic mode of confessing identity. Such an identity will not be fettered in an ahistorical fixation on the past or insulated by a false parochialism or reduced to a pale privatism. Rather, this new mode of confessing identity presents itself as historically responsible to the contemporary life situation of the church, as ecumenically in dialogue with other faith traditions, and as publicly up front as a corporate reality in the world.[1]

This new mode of confessing identity takes note that there have been, are, and will be certain "times" within the life of the church catholic when it is necessary for movements to arise within the church and to testify, often against the established authorities of the church, to the sufficiency of the one Gospel-and-Sacraments as the source and ongoing vitality of our very life together. Bertram has sought to articulate criteria which persistently surface in the writings of these, rather diversified, confessing movements.[2] Such "times for confessing" have included, for instance: the Synod of Nicea of 325, the Diet of Augsburg of 1530 and its aftermath, the Confessing Church under Nazism of the 1930s–40s, the Vatican Council of 1962–65, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s–60s, and the ongoing anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa. These movements, both classical and contemporary, issue a summons to us as well to take our place publicly on the witness stand of history before God, the world, and the church in order to give voice to the faith-instilling freshness and sufficiency of the one Gospel-and-Sacraments.

Bertram has compared these times for confessing to "sneezing" when the church for its own sake and for the sake of the one Gospel-and-Sacraments cleanses itself of teachings and/or practices alien to the body's health and wholeness. Since sneezing

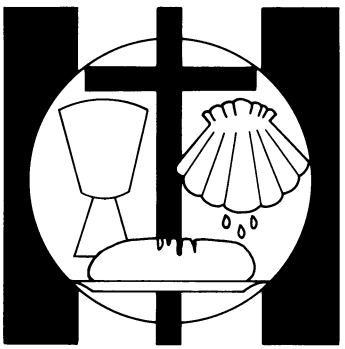
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[1]Robert W. Bertram, "Our Common Confession and Its Implications for Today," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39 (November 1968):715–21.

[2]Bertram, "Augsburg: A Modern 'Time for Confessing,' " unpublished manuscript, St. Louis, Missouri, Spring 1981; also, "Confessing the Faith of the Church," in *The New Church Debate*, ed. Carl Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 123–37; also, "Confessing As Re-defining Authority," in *The Debate on Status Confessionis: Studies in Christian Political Theology*, ed. Eckehart Lorenz (Geneva: Department of Studies, Lutheran World Federation, 1983), 95–104.

temporarily shuts down the body's other vital functions, he recommends that we pray with all earnestness, as a paraphrase of our Lord's Prayer, "Save us from the time of sneezing."[3]

In this tribute I have been asked to speak about "the parish as confessing community." How does the Lord of the church nurture the parish during those times when God is saving the church from a confessional trial so that when a "time of persecution" does summon the parish to take the witness stand, it will be prepared to do so with "confessable" faith?[4]



This essay will focus on the ecclesial dimension of faith formation as a key component of a parish's preparations for times for confessing. In this pursuit I will not rehearse Bertram's understanding of the "righteousness of faith" and its necessity for the freshness of the one Gospel-and-Sacraments, also in our time. Rather, I will assume his work and couple it with insights on the dynamics of faith put forth by Wolfhart Pannenberg and James Fowler. In a second part of this essay, I will borrow three insights advanced by the social theorist Jürgen Habermas in order to explore the connection between the ecclesial solidarity effected by faith and the nurturing of a parish's confessing character.

Faith and Its Formation

Bertram's focus on the relation of faith and Christ arises due to

> a special burden for current Lutheran theologies of justification to manage two apparently incompatible accents simultaneously. How to do justice to the Reformers' most embattled *sola* of all, *sola fide,* and at the same time do justice—not only compromise but maximize—*sola gratia propter Christum?* Indeed, how to accomplish the latter expressly by means of the former? How to emphasize the "wholly by faith" in such a way that God's gracious deed in Christ is not only not demoted thereby but is, as the Reformers would say, "necessitated" thereby?[5]

It is by shouldering this "special burden" that Lutherans propose to advance the radically new form of subjectivity offered by faith. Faith's radical newness resides in the surpassing value which Jesus ascribes to a person because of that person's faith in the one ascribing such value. The radical newness of faith's subjectivity, therefore, is precisely the

[3]Bertram, "Confessing the Faith of the Church," 123–28.

[4]Bertram, "Confessing the Faith of the Church," 123.

[5]Bertram, "Recent Lutheran Theologies on Justification by Faith: A Sampling," in *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII,* ed. H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 252.

intersubjectivity with Christ and with Christ's body as a result of faith.[6]

Under certain circumstances, however, this proposal for a radically new form of identity has fallen prey to the machinations of a false privatism and individualism. This inclination toward privatism and individualism appears to be particularly alluring in our American context, as Robert Bellah and his colleagues have persuasively argued in *Habits of the Heart.*[7] As Bertram has indicated, the counter movement against such an inclination is *precisely* the "wholly by faith" which places us "in the happy exchange," "outside and beyond ourselves" in Christ and in Christ's body, the church.[8]

Faith in Christ simultaneously constitutes ecclesial solidarity.

Wolfhart Pannenberg has articulated a theological anthropology with "being outside oneself" or "exocentricity" as one of its key components.[9] With this notion he emphasizes the constitutive connection between human identity and "sociation." He explores and synthesizes the contributions that a number of contemporary disciplines such as philosophical anthropology, social psychology and identity psychology have made to this notion. He shows that the origin of the modern concept of exocentricity arises by way of Luther's understanding of the First Commandment and his description of faith as trust wherein we abandon our identity to another. Not only are the contemporary secular disciplines not aware of the Reformation roots of their "modern" concept, they also are reticent to acknowledge the divine other, let alone divine Trinitarian other, into which their exocentricity places them. For Pannenberg, then, faith as trust is necessarily communal and ecclesial since the communion of the believer with Christ is always simultaneously a communion with Christ's body, "the solidarity of all Christians with one another."[10] In this Bertram and Pannenberg converge: faith in Christ simultaneously constitutes ecclesial solidarity.

James Fowler's faith development perspective adds an important component to our sketch: faith in Christ presents itself over a lifetime in a variety of forms analogous to stages.[11] First, Fowler shares with Bertram and Pannenberg an understanding of faith as trust in and relationship to the transcendent, which simultaneously puts a person in relationship with others. Second, he notes, fol-

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[6]Bertram, " 'Faith Alone Justifies': Luther on *Iustitia Fidei,*" in *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII,* ed. H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 173–75.

[7]Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[8]Bertram, "Faith Alone Justifies," 173–74; also, "Liberation by Faith, Confessing," unpublished manuscript, Texas Lutheran College, Seguin, Texas, 1984.

[9]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 37–73.

[10]Pannenberg, *Christianity Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 16; also, *The Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 35–40, 104.

[11]James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

lowing the lead of Erik Erikson, that this triadic shape of faith passes through a predictable succession of life-cycle crises and their resolutions. Third, borrowing from Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, he holds that faith's triadic shape presents itself through a variety of distinctive structures or patterns. These different structures or patterns of faith, like the life-cycle crises, follow a sequence in which one pattern builds on the former and leads to the next. This sequencing process can and often does stop or fixate at one particular stage or another. Even though a person may fixate at a certain structural stage in his or her faith, that same person, nevertheless, will have to meet the life-cycle crises situations as they arise no matter in what stage that person's faith is.

For our purposes what is of particular interest in the structural-developmental model which Fowler proposes is the notion of "social perspective taking." It is this capacity to take another's perspective and in this way to be outside oneself which is of decisive importance as a person passes from childhood through adolescence and into young adulthood and adulthood. As a person passes through the various stages, social perspective taking becomes a more complex process. Despite this increased complexity, Habermas demonstrates that the core phenomenon of social perspective taking is an interactional "communicative" event.[12] The thrust of these insights suggests that, as we in parishes expend considerable energy in forming people's "faith," we need to focus more specifically on the ecclesial dimension of faith formation.

Focusing on the ecclesial dimensions of faith formation will help individuals transcend the stage specific forms of egocentrality which are culturally exaggerated by our contemporary forms of individualism. This will also help them to relate with increased solidarity to others within their congregation as well as to other Christians throughout the world, particularly those least like themselves culturally, ethnically, materially, and nationally. Adults should be encouraged to pursue maturation in faith not only by more and better biblical, theological, ethical, and liturgical information, but also by establishing and nurturing relationships with others because of their Gospel-effected inclusion into Christ and Christ's body. Faith-effected ecclesial solidarity also will place those of us in Middle-Class America more in touch with the pervasive underside of life experienced most directly at the level of basic physical needs by Third World Christians and by the poor in the United States.

Ecclesial Solidarity and a Confessing Parish

A parish receives its identity as it is situated within the life process and story of a more encompassing ecclesial matrix. The parish as a confessing community will find itself to be embraced by a broad confessing movement and to be in collaboration with a vast cloud of witnesses to the one Gospel-and-Sacraments. Furthermore, as a confessing community, the parish will discover itself contributing to the momentum of the confessing movement and ultimately to the "confessability" of the faith to which it testifies.

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[12]Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 69–94; also, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 86–101.

There appear to be rough parallels between Fowler's structural stages of faith development and certain structural features that a parish exhibits as a confessing community. Viewing the parish from the perspective of a developing confessing character would be a refreshing alternative to other more popular but more innocuous parish research, research which remains disconnected from a heritage rooted in a confessing identity. One of Habermas's accomplishments has been to take Piaget's and Kohlberg's structural models of individual development and to extend these models, though with several strong provisos, as a way to understand the development of whole communities, cultures, and societies.[13]

In Habermas's expansion of the structural-developmental model to communities at least three components surface which can be beneficial for our purposes. First, Habermas points to a developing capacity for "decentration" as a key for the evolution of a community. That is, communities, like individuals, mature as they embody increasingly complex forms of understanding the life circumstances, needs, histories, and identities of other communities, especially the most strange, alien, or even hostile. A community's capacity for a decentered perspective of itself and of others is a formative component in the development of a reflexive and self-critical stance by the community. For a parish this capacity can help to insure that the parish is not merely the embodiment of a narrow tradition. Such a capacity seems to be a necessary component of a "confessing" community which often must stand against the authorities of its own ecclesiastical tradition.

A second component drawn from Habermas is that a community's developing character is bound constitutively to modes of "communicative" interaction. In communicative interaction the parties to a discussion hold each other accountable to the normative standards which function in the life of a community and/or between communities. It is also conceivable that the very norms which operate within and between communities can be called into question and be probed for their sufficient grounds. The driving force of this process of testing the truth claims of a normative tradition is the search for a new or renewed consensus among the different parties. This type of communicative process is precisely what is occurring when the sufficiency of the one Gospel-and-Sacraments is the ecclesial issue of the moment. As a parish joins in such a process it receives its identity as a confessing community, an identity that does not forsake its tradition but allows it to be reformed and transformed, renewed and reconstructed. A parish's search for a renewed appropriation of the truth claims of its normative tradition simultaneously gives rise to relationships of reciprocal understanding, recognition, and solidarity with other communities.

Habermas's notion of communicative interaction echoes one of the criteria that Bertram has gleaned from "times for confessing": "confessing as appeal for/to the oppressed." He emphasizes:

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[13]Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 95–129; also, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 22–101; also, "A Reply to My Critics," in *Habermas, Critical Debates*, eds. John B. Thompson and David Held (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1982), 250–63.

> The confessors' appeal is not merely an appeal *for* the oppressed . . . as oppressed objects, as helpless victims in whose behalf the confessors must intervene as third-party advocates. That could degenerate into a new and subtle form of patronizing. [Rather, their appeal is] also *to* them, thereby taking them seriously as responsible . . . [and] quite directly as participating agents . . . [because of their] faith in Christ.[14]

It is their faith that ennobles oppressed peoples and authorizes them to engage even their oppressors so that the oppressors too might ultimately be elevated beyond their oppressor status. In order, however, to use Habermas's understanding of communicative interaction for nurturing Christian confessing, we must penetrate more deeply into the phenomena of communicative interaction in order to establish: 1) the deep structure of sin and evil that exists within and between communities, 2) the divine grounding of critique embodied in the communicative structures of criticism and self-criticism that make repentance necessary, and 3) the christological foundation for reconciliation and solidarity that is necessitated by the deep structures of sin, evil, and critique.

Habermas also develops a third notion, that social movements are learning processes. Social movements arise as a result of communities communicatively reaching reciprocal recognition, understanding, and solidarity and, as they do, they become learning opportunities and avenues for other communities. From our perspective, confessing movements embody a witness factor, what Bertram calls "confessing as *martyria.*" In confessing as *martyria* a summons is issued to a parish to join with others confessing the sufficiency of the one Gospel-and-Sacraments, also for the church's own solidarity and life together *as* church. Bertram describes these martyrological times as "agonizingly short and not postponable" moments. Yet, these moments are "kairological" in that the whole church is being arraigned in a trial with a cosmic scope.[15]

A parish's identity as a confessing community also extends beyond the "time" for confessing to the degree that its confessing becomes incorporated into the development of its life story. The martyrological moments leave their imprint on a parish's subsequent history and life together. A parish can retain the character of a confessing community beyond its own time for confessing as it retains its ecclesial solidarity with confessing movements of previous times and those contemporaneous confessing communities of other locations. A parish which nurtures its ecclesial solidarity with the confessing tradition, both classical and contemporary, becomes a matrix for the formation of a faith that is at all times, if necessary, confessable, and for the formation of a people that is, if necessary, martyrological.

It has been one of our Lord's more promising gestures of ecclesial solidarity in our time and place to have nurtured his body, the church, through one Robert W. Bertram, teacher, confessor, and parishioner.

For this we give our Lord thanks and praise!

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[14]Bertram, "Augsburg: A Modern 'Time for Confessing.' "

[15]Bertram, "Confessing the Faith of the Church," 124, 129.

Don't Confuse Athanasius—Or God

Robert W. Bertram
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The chapel planners have suggested we use this morning's service to commemorate Athanasius, the fourth century bishop of Alexandria who figured prominently at the Council of Nicaea and who, after many near-defeats, helped steer Nicene orthodoxy to eventual victory at the Council of Constantinople, 381. Without Athanasius it is not likely we would have today that majestic confession of faith which we've come to call the Nicene Creed.

Whenever one speaks of Athanasius it seems to be necessary to remind ourselves not to confuse him with someone else. For one, don't confuse him with that other Athanasius—also a "saint"—who was a 10th century monk and later the abbot general of the monasteries on Mt. Athos. Also, don't confuse him with still another Athanasius, who appears in the Roman martyrology, a 5th century deacon of Jerusalem. Above all, don't confuse Athanasius—our Athanasius—with the author of the so-called "Athanasian Creed," the *Quicunque vult salus esse.* That confusion was perpetuated for over 1000 years before it was finally corrected.

To confuse St. Athanasius with all the wrong people is not only inaccurate. It's unfair. For if there is anything that Athanasius was not it's confused: Occasionally mistaken, or even down right wrong? Yes. But not confused. A bit of a wheeler-dealer and an accommodationist, no doubt. But confused? No. For that reason, namely, his remarkable freedom from confusion, I'd suggest we remember him today not in his role as a "saint" but belonging to that other category which the *Lutheran Book of Worship* has also thoughtfully included, "Theologians." And those two categories, "saints" and "theologians," are not necessarily identical. But theologians, given the mysteries of the faith they are supposed to talk about, need especially to guard against confusion. For as the apostle Paul reminds us, "Our God is a God not of confusion but of peace."

Which brings me to the so-called Athanasian Creed. Granted, that statement was not composed by Athanasius and was in fact composed well after his death, and in a different language from his own. But like Athanasius that creed has a very healthy

Christian abhorrence for "confusion." At one point it says,

> Now this is the catholic faith:
> We worship one God in Trinity
> and the Trinity in unity,
> neither *confusing* the persons
> nor dividing the divine being.

Later the creed says of "our Lord Jesus Christ,"

> He is completely one
> in the unity of his person
> without *confusing* his natures.

It is bad theology but, worse, it is bad faith to "confuse" the Father with the Son or with the Holy Spirit, or to "confuse" Christ's humanity with his deity.

Usually we are more concerned with the opposite caution, to keep things together: to remember (as well we should) that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all one and the same God, or to remember (as well we should) that Jesus our Lord is one and the same person. What we have traditionally been much more careless about, perhaps because that is harder to do, is to keep the three persons of the Trinity or the two natures of Christ *distinct, unconfused.* For *different* they are, and that they are *makes* a difference!

Why is that so? Why is it, as the *Quicunque vult* says, each person of the one Godhead is "distinct"? Why is it that

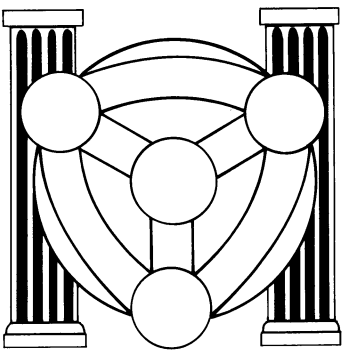
> The Father was neither made
> nor created nor begotten;
> the Son was neither made nor
> created
> but was alone begotten of the
> Father;
> the Spirit was neither made nor
> created
> but is proceeding
> from the Father and the Son?

And why is it, if our Lord Jesus Christ is one person, that his humanity and divinity must nevertheless not be confused? Why is that?

Well, there is a sense in which we cannot answer that question, why. Who can explain the Triune God? It has long been a joke among dogmaticians that the traditional doctrine of the Trinity

> has five properties (or notions),
> four relations,
> three persons,
> two processions,
> one divine nature,
> and no explanation.

And I certainly don't presume now to improve on that state of affairs.



On the other hand, there *is* a sense in which we *can* explain why the Father, the Son, and the Spirit differ from one another. It is like being asked by your grandson, "Grandpa, why does it have to snow?" and you have to admit to him that you don't really know why. But then you take a different tack with him and you say: "But aren't you glad it does snow? For suppose there were no snow. Just think, the ground and the grass would not be protected in winter, the dark mountains would never turn white, kids couldn't

make snowmen, there would be no sledding or skiing, and Christmas would not be the same. That's what would happen if snow got confused with rain. They're not the same, you know. And aren't you glad they're not?"

Similarly, the question arises: Why is it that God—Father, Son, *or* Holy Spirit—"was neither made nor created," and that God the Father was not even "begotten" by one of the other two, let alone "proceeds" from them? Answer: I don't know why, really. But aren't you glad that God *is* "neither made nor created"? For what if God were? What if God were, as we and all other things are, the handiwork of some Maker? What if the Triune God, whom we worship, were the product of some creative process or force other than Godself, say, the sum-total outcome of world history or of a cosmic evolution? But then the Triune God to whom we have entrusted our destinies, to whom we commend our dear ones, into whose Name we have been drowned in Baptism and raised up all new—that God would not really be the One who ultimately is in control of our destinies or even in control of God's own destiny. Then, for all the promises we have had from God, he would be in no sure position to deliver on any one of them. So aren't you glad that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—"was neither made nor created" and thus depends for his being on no one else, so that we *may* so depend?

And why is it that, within the one God, there is a Son who is begotten by a Father, a Child begotten by a Parent—not made by the Parent as a thing, not created by the Parent as some human creature but begotten by the Parent, of the Parent–God's own being and yet dependent on God as a Child? Why is that? I don't finally know why. But aren't you glad that the Son, who is neither made nor created, was nevertheless "alone begotten of the Father?" For what if God in no way *depended?* What if God in no way depended for God's being the way a child depends for her being on her parents? What if God were only like a Parent and never like a child, only begetting but never begotten? But aren't you delighted that God is also like a Child, a dependent? For those are not the same relationships: being depended upon and depending upon. They are quite different. But aren't you glad that God, the same God, is both those different "persons," God's own Parent and yet also God's own Child, simultaneously and forever?

Aren't you glad that God "was neither made nor created?"

That way, when God became one of us, Jesus, it wasn't only as a *human* that he was a dependent child, as we are. No, his childlike dependency went all the way back into his very Godness. True, dependent isn't all that God is. But aren't you glad God is that, too? Otherwise our kind of dependency, which Jesus made us proud of, would not have the great, great dignity it has. Dependency would not then be the Godlike thing it is —if Godself were not a Child as well as a Parent.

And why is it that God, the same single God, is also a third Someone, a *Sharer*—

God the Spirit? Why does God, on whom everything and everyone depends but who is simultaneously a childlike dependent—why is that same God so outgoing, so "proceeding" as to share Godself with the likes of us? Why does God share not only his good *things* with us (his galaxies and winds and atoms, his people and histories and languages and wisdom and all his millions and millions of other creatures) but share *Godself* with us, both as our Parent and as our Brother? Why is God also that third, a Self-Communicator and Sharer? I don't know why, ultimately. But aren't you glad? For if God were not such a Sharer, we could not live off her life but only off our own. We could not enjoy with God's joy but merely with our own. Without her sharing we could not die the Son's kind of death but only our own kind, our terminal and guilty kind. We could not sing with the Spirit's sounds but only with our own. Without the Spirit's recreating, we could not regain the Father's spit and image, the Son's cruciform and Eastered image, through which we are coming to resemble God, our Parent and Brother, but could merely go on looking more and more like ourselves.

So aren't you glad that in addition to being a Parent, in addition to being a Child, this God, the one God, is something else besides, namely, a "proceeding" Spirit? Why she is that, I don't know. All I know, and you do too, is that there is no point in looking a gift horse in the mouth, and there is every point in quitting when you're ahead. Beggars can't be grumblers, not when they are treated like junior deities.

Don't confuse Athanasius—or God. Be glad not only for the unity but for the threeness as well.

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Book Reviews

PREACHING, THE ART OF CONNECTING GOD AND PEOPLE. By F. Dean Lueking. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985. 128 pages. Cloth. $12.95.

An American congregation is as formidable a text for preaching as any Hebrew prophet or Greek gospel. Maybe more formidable, for we have lexicons for our Hebrew and Greek texts, but often only sociologists to help us with our congregations. Lueking is convinced that the congregation is as important in the act of preaching as our scripture lessons, and needs to be treated with devout and exegetical skill.

His thesis is a conviction: "[We must see] the lives of congregation members as story, told over a sustained period of time, and in the context of close and continuing preacher-to-people relationships." With that conviction, preaching becomes an integrative act that gathers all the odds and ends of pastoral work into a comprehensive *Seelsorge.* So this is far more than a book about preaching: it is the preaching that develops out of dynamic interchanges of pastor and people and then flows back into the congregation.

Lueking takes care lest we misunderstand his counsel. A congregation is not to be exploited for the preacher's vanity. Many pastors merely use their congregations. They mine visits and encounters for anecdotes that substitute for the hard work of exegesis. Others only complain of the bourgeois lumpiness of the people they are stuck with, lifeless in the pews each Sunday. Lueking will have none of this.

He shows pastor-preachers the rich resources that are assembled before us each Sunday morning and scattered through the highways and byways of the week. These people are not empty wineskins to be filled with the latest sermonic wine; they are vineyards to be celebrated and harvested. He sees, and helps us to see, the congregation as a spiritual force in its own right and a theological construct to be worked with and praised.

Eugene H. Peterson, Pastor
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THE CANONIZATION OF THE SYNAGOGUE SERVICE. By Lawrence A. Hoffmann. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979, 1986. 243 pages. Paper. $12.95.

The appearance of Lawrence Hoffman's *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* in a paperback edition is a welcome event. It is an indication that his work not only endures, but continues to make an important imprint on the study of liturgy in general, and Jewish liturgy in particular.

Understanding Talmudic dialectic is difficult enough as it is, and working one's way through the maze of dialectical exegesis through the ages is even more so. And yet it is indispensable and important to achieve this understanding since so much of Christian liturgy is built upon Jewish liturgy. The better you understand the latter, the better you really comprehend the former.

I would recommend, in the case of this book, that the reader begin at the end, with Chapter 11 on the Canonization Process. Then, follow Hoffman step-by-step through his precise, carefully crafted analysis based on a mastery of central texts, and you will see how his-

toric process, technique and dialectic go hand in hand in the service of clarity.

To understand the development of Judaism, one must understand the process of canonization. We know, for example, that the Pentateuch was canonized by the fourth century B.C.E., the rest of the Bible by the first century of our era, and the Mishnah by the second century.

These were the central tools built by the Rabbis for survival. One other important tool was the liturgy, and its basic forms were in existence by the second century. Its canonization process however followed the canonization of the Talmud and was the work of the Geonim, the successors to the Rabbinic sages who took up the torch of survival in Babylonia while the last embers of the Jewish state in Palestine were beginning to go out.

By a careful examination of Responsa of the period of the Geonim, from about 700 to 1000 and by an examination of significant texts from the Cairo Geniza the story gradually emerges.

In the first period there was tension and rivalry between the Jewish communities of Babylonia and Palestine, with the Babylonians struggling for primacy over the Palestinian Jewish community. The struggle between these centers was an ongoing one for many centuries, going as far back as the period of Jeremiah.

This earlier period saw the Geonate functioning in an Islamic Empire that had undisputed rule from Damascus to the Pillars of Hercules. The later period, which saw the decline of the major academies in Babylonia, had another set of problems. The world of Islam had been divided, and now had three centers, Bagdad, Cairo and Cordova. A threat to rabbinic authority, long simmering, came to the surface with the Karaites, who accepted only the Bible and not the Talmud as authority. At the same time, Jewish communities were burgeoning in the west, in North Africa, Italy, Spain and Western Europe.

Geonic decisions reflect sharp hostility to the Karaites on the one hand, and a tolerance for liturgical diversity in the western communities. What emerged was a canonized liturgy, with a central line, but flexible enough for a diversity that makes for continuing unity.

The central fact, however, is that the canonization process filtered through the Babylonian gaonate which became the center for Jewish survival after the Palestinian center had declined.

The Biblical, Mishnaic, Talmudic and Midrashic world has been thoroughly worked over. Two areas, hitherto neglected, the field of homiletic development, and the field of liturgical development, have been relatively neglected. Both fields, are happily now coming alive, and it is good to see how Hoffman has taken on the challenge of the history and development of Jewish liturgy, mastered the field, and has the scholarship and literary grace to unlock the key and allow us to enter.

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THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA IN THEIR LOCAL SETTING. By Colin J. Hemer. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1986. 375 pages. Paper. $11.50.

As the title accurately states, this careful study seeks to interpret the seven letters of Revelation in light of what can be known about their local historical setting in antiquity. Displaying impressive knowledge of biblical, classical, early Christian, numismatic and archaeological sources, the author amply demonstrates his thesis that the letters reflect their local setting despite their formal similarities.

After a brief general introduction, each of the letters is surveyed in successive chapters. At times, startling new light is shed on a letter, as

for example with the various possibilities for "the throne of Satan" at Pergamum (Rev 2:13) or with the warning about the "thief at night" at Sardis (Rev 3:3). Each of the seven cities and churches of Asia consequently take on a distinct profile. Yet the author makes cautious judgments and leaves options open. In fact the primary contribution of the book is the illumination of options available to interpreters once the historical settings are thoroughly reviewed.

There is also continuing reassessment of the classic study by Sir William Ramsey on the seven churches in Asia at the turn of the century. While many of his conclusions are upheld, more clarity is reached on the overall purpose of the Apocalypse. The author argues that John is battling on two fronts to preserve the churches in Asia; some Christians are seeking an accommodation with the synagogue for the sake of legal protection, though unsuccessfully; a greater number are trying to accommodate with their pagan surroundings through association with local guilds and cults and civic festivities (even imperial cult?). But John issues a call for no compromise with the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Domitian dating of Revelation is upheld.

This is not a book for every pastor because of its technical discussion. It presupposes considerable knowledge of the ancient world and archaeology. But for pastors with more scholarly interests in historical exegesis, it will prove rewarding. Useful summaries conclude each chapter. My main criticism is the omission of some recent American studies that would shed further light on the purpose of the letters in their historical setting of the first century C.E. (Schüssler-Fiorenza, A. Collins). Against current popularizations of biblical apocalyptic, this kind of study shows John was indeed addressing his message first and foremost to his original readers.

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NINE-HEADED DRAGON RIVER. By Peter Matthiessen. Boston: Shambhala, 1986. 288 pages. Cloth. $16.95.

Matthiessen is well-known as a writer on naturalistic topics; he is, at the same time, an excellent craftsman of the English language. In this book both of these skills interweave with a description of his deepening involvement with the Zen tradition in Buddhism, particularly as that is known through the Soto school. (Soto and Rinzai are the two major schools of Zen; their difference is in methodology rather than teaching.) Perhaps you know Matthiessen from earlier writings like *At Play in The Fields of The Lord* or *The Tree Where Man Was Born.*

In a journal entry from November 15, 1973, he tells himself, and us, "In this very breath that we take now lies the secret that all great teachers try to tell us, what one lama refers to as 'the precision and openness and intelligence of the present.' The purpose of meditation practice is not enlightenment; it is to pay attention even at unextraordinary times, to be of the present, nothing-but-the-present, to bear this mindfulness of now into each event of ordinary life. To be anywhere else is 'to paint eyeballs on chaos.' " The manner in which the book is written will convince you that Matthiessen has learned the purpose of meditation; the book is itself a meditation and a delight to read for that reason.

You will learn much of the Zen tradition in this book; here you will be introduced to both the Rinzai tradition and the Soto, though emphasis is on the latter; you will learn of the great Dogen (1200–1253), who is, in a sense, akin to Thomas Aquinas, his western contemporary, in importance in the history of Zen.

This is a beautifully written book with great attention to detail; it is a highly personal book. If you are seeking one book in 1987 on the eastern path, you can do no better.

Jay C. Rochelle
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

BUILDING THE HOUSE CHURCH. By Lois Barrett. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986. 176 pages. Paper. $8.95.

As one who was active in the house church movement for many years in many different guises, I welcomed this book, especially when I saw that the themes I would have naturally suggested were covered in its pages.

This is a *useful* book. It is sparely written; there are a lot of examples of various solutions to problems which have been made by a number of house churches. The agenda covered in the chapters includes covenant, worship, teaching and learning, children, sharing, discipling, decision-making, and growing. Each chapter concludes with study questions. The book is meant to be used as a tool for the development of house churches.

The chapter on *growing* gives helpful suggestions on how the house church might split, cell-like, and how an overarching structure might be built to connect each cell in a larger church. A good deal of emphasis is placed upon the covenanting process, which is a key to the survival and growth of a house church, and upon the worship patterns which develop. The latter are more often than not what this reviewer called "skeletal," i.e. they offer a framework for a more spontaneous form of worship but the framework assists people to know what to do and when to do it. Face-to-face fellowship is the norm for a house church and there is a good discussion of conflict-resolution. The book concludes with a helpful bibliography and gives addresses for magazines devoted to the house church movement. Although the book is based primarily upon Mennonite models, it could readily be adapted for other denominations.

Jay C. Rochelle

ZEN POEMS OF THE FIVE MOUNTAINS. By David Pollack. AAR Studies in Religion 37. New York: Crossroad and Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985. 167 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Those who have been familiar with the Haiku form of Japanese poetry through any of the collections published in the U.S. since the early Fifties may be interested to delve further into the world of Zen poetry. This collection is extensive; over two hundred poems are included by the major medieval writers. This is the largest collection published to date in the U.S., and it includes thumbnail biographies of all the poets whose work is represented here. The introduction makes clear the metaphysical meaning of the poetry and gives a good overview of the history and scope of Zen poetry. Since Zen is intimately connected with the arts, especially with poetry, calligraphy, tea ceremony, flower arranging, and swordsmanship, this volume offers a delightful introduction to the Zen tradition in Japanese Buddhism from an aesthetic, rather than a theological or philosophical, perspective. In the poetic tradition, too, one finds the key to the introduction of Chinese thought into the Japanese world. The book is further graced by 19 black-and-white reproductions of famous *sumi-ye* paintings and calligraphy. The poems are arranged under 16 headings, including such things as *doctrine, meditation and practice, nature,* and *friendship.* In all, this is a worthwhile addition to the library of those who are beginning to pay, or have long since paid, attention to this important edge of Christian ecumenical dialogue.

Jay C. Rochelle

THE GREEK MAGICAL PAPYRI IN TRANSLATION INCLUDING THE DEMOTIC SPELLS. Edited by Hans Dieter Betz. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. lviii and 339 pages. Cloth. $39.95.

Greek Magical Papyri belong to the esoterica of scholarship about antiquity, both classical and biblical. The texts invoke gods not familiar from classical mythology or mystery religions. Rather, one finds primarily the celes-

tial gods [Helios, Selene], Hermes, or the chthonic gods of the underworld [Hekate, etc.]. (Christ is represented as Helios in the cemetery under St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.) Strange incantations appear, formulae that seem to be made up of nonsense syllables strung together without clear semantic significance. Recipes for potions, unguents, etc., with the most esoteric ingredients, are prescribed. Rites of sympathetic magic are suggested, at times using small statues of wax, special lamps, inscribed stones, and the like. All of this is intended to accomplish desired ends: the warding off of sickness or the maintenance of health, the downfall of an enemy, the securing of love, the safety of a traveler or absent friend, the accomplishment of a purpose, the insurance of fertility or good crops, the gaining of wealth or prosperity. It all sounds much like voodoo—and is.

Betz, Professor of New Testament at the University of Chicago Divinity School, gathered an international team of fifteen scholars to provide the first comprehensive translation of these texts into English as a contribution to the *Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti.* It is a major achievement that makes this body of texts available to a new world of readers with some guidance and interpretive aid provided. It is the most complete collection available: 130 texts in all. The translations are edited meticulously and given a helpful typographic format that separates individual spells and indicates titles and rubrics. Betz's introduction gives the history of scholarship and suggests the value of these texts to the modern world. No commentary is provided (it is far too early in the history of scholarship to provide it), but interpretive historical notes on specific points of difficulty are given, as well as bibliographical references. A nine page Glossary at the end of the volume explains more difficult technical terms, names, and some customs, e.g. why lamps used in these rites may not be painted red. In short, this is a major accomplishment that should be greeted with appropriate applause.

At the same time, this book reminds one of an ancient piece of sculpture, a torso that is incomplete. Although there are helpful lists to indicate the best available printing of each original text, (The Washington University Papyri [nos. CCXI, and CXII] are incorrectly located in Washington; they are actually in St. Louis. The page numbers for the introduction to the Demotic papyri are missing on p. xxix), there is no index of names, topics, or terms. Four additional volumes are promised for the future, but a fifth would be most useful: a new printing of all the original texts in one volume. It would be even better if that were the first volume of a corpus of all magical texts. Then the torso would be filled out and one could more competently evaluate the whole.

But, in the meantime, this volume should be warmly welcomed. And the promise made on the dust jacket and the spine of the binding that this is "Volume One: Texts," to be followed by a volume of indexes, should be hailed as a promise of the rest of the sculpture. Congratulations to the research team and the editor.

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DYNAMICS IN PASTORING. By Jacob Firet. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. 319 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

People who live in a shopping-mall environment develop a shopping-mall soul. The basic human petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is debased into the predatory "I wonder how much loot I can carry away." In this kind of world, churches are shaped to meet consumer demands, and pastors are trained to manage the merchandising. Once upon a time we were expected to be single-minded in guiding our congregations to "the one thing needful." In recent generations we have become nervously ambidextrous in serving up whatever will make the customers happy. Fragmented

and harried, the pastor's name is Legion, "for we are many." But "pastoring-on-the-run or the pastoral quick-fix is a contradiction in terms" says Firet, professor of Practical Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Is there a way back? Is there a way to recover an integrated identity? Is there insight or strategy by which we can re-shape a biblical ministry in a world that cares little for the Bible? Is there a word that identifies the unique role of pastor? Firet thinks that there is and proposes the word *agogic.* Based on the Greek *ago* and familiar in English in "pedagogy," *agogy* locates the unique moment of pastoral work as the movement into wholeness, into salvation and blessedness, and into the realm of God that it is the pastor's work to facilitate.

In the first section of the book, pastoral work is presented under three modes: *kerygma, didache,* and *paraklesis.* These modes are developed in depth and in a continuous dialogue with Scripture and theology. This foundational work is done thoroughly with an exegetical flare. Firet is determined to save pastoral work from being swept out on a tide of fad and fashion. He does this anchoring work well.

In the second section the agogic moment is clarified. Extensive background is assembled by discussing and evaluating the psychologists of learning and growth. Agogy is "life help." "It does not aim at 'Enlightenment'—the pedagogical ideal of the eighteenth century; nor at *Bildung* (education in a classical sense), nor at the refinement, adornment, or glorification of existence. Agogy is life-oriented; it aims at the fullness, the multiplicity, the breadth, and the depth of human life—the full functioning of a human being in all the situations which make up a human life. In the final analysis this means that all agogic intervention aims at the activation of humans as 'creators on the eighth day,' people who are underway and find a home in a traversable and inhabitable world." This is a world in which God's word is sovereign. It is the pastor's task and privilege to clarify or articulate or represent that word in preaching, teaching, and pastoral care *(kerygma, didache, paraklesis).*

The third section shows all this being worked out in the life work of a pastor whose ministry is an "agogic field." Firet is critical of every shallow avoidance of the biblical, word-of-God center, and all unfocused, albeit pious, efforts at being helpful: "What appears to be *kerygma* is only exclamation, not proclamation. What appears to be *didache* is an equally impressive but quickly dissipated sound, not a voice which points the way. What appears to be *paraklesis* is a concatenation of words—think of Job's indictment of his 'windy' friends (Job 16:2–4)—not speech that addresses people in their own situation. Possibly some church members are 'edified' by such a performance; but an agogic situation, one in which life has been promoted, it is not."

This is all rich and hearty fare. Blessed with such a banquet it seems rude to find fault. But there are two gaping lacunae in this work which, especially because of the overall excellence and probable influence of the book, require notice.

The first gap occurs when Firet describes the work of the pastor in the modes of *kerygma, didache,* and *paraklesis.* These modes are unarguably central. But there is another mode in which pastors spend large chunks of time, namely administration, or, to follow Firet's Greek nomenclature, *kybernesis* (1 Cor 12:28). (The situation may be very different in the Netherlands, where *kybernesis* may not be a major concern). If this major mode of pastoral activity is not given biblical and theological footing on a par with the other three, the pastor is left to the wolves of secularism who will proceed, between Sundays, to rip apart his biblical and theological identity with the teeth of business techniques, sales promotion, and management procedures. To fail to arm and defend the pastor in this area where so much of our work takes place is to expose our flank to the enemy.

The second lacuna is *leiturgia.* Worship and prayer are the actual living context in which the lives of pastors and congregation intersect as they listen to and answer the word of God. To write a book on pastoral work that omits a thorough orientation and constant reorientation in worship and prayer is like writing a book on navigation and leaving out everything about the ocean. Sunday after Sunday pastors bring congregations to attention before the word of God in worship. Through the week pastors offer up the raw materials of each day in petition and praise and sacrifice—that is, in prayer—to be metabolized into the modes of ministry. Only as the pastor embraces the life of liturgy, gathering congregations in centuries-composted and sacrament-shaped worship, and assiduously cultivates the interior passion of prayer, will agogic moments come to characterize pastoral work. But all of this is marginal in Firet's book. Through the centuries we have had many wise masters who have led us in worship and taught us to pray. These writers on spirituality and prayer are precisely the masters of the agogic moment. Firet engages in extensive and learned dialogue with the professors of psychology in order to understand as much as possible about the agogic moment. Why is there not also an extensive dialogue with the spiritual doctors of the church who specialize in teaching us how to live out this moment, this fragile, critical moment in which words become flesh? These are the very persons in our communion of saints with whom pastors need to be on the most familiar terms. Gregory of Nyssa has more and wiser things to say to persons on the agogic moment than Gordon Allport (Although it is also good to have Allport among our minor mentors).

Jacob Firet has written an important book. It is astonishingly rich in exegesis and theology. Like the Venus de Milo, everything that is before us here is wonderful, but we cannot help regretting what is missing.

Eugene H. Peterson, Pastor

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT: ASPECTS OF CONVERSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Beverly Roberts Gaventa. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. xvi and 160 pages. Paper. $8.95.

Gaventa considers the theme of "conversion" in the New Testament by examining key texts in Paul (chapter 1), the Book of Acts (chapters 2 and 3), and the Gospel of John and 1 Peter (chapter 4). As part of the conclusion, the author draws implications from her biblical work on "conversion" for the "born again" phenomenon in contemporary Christianity. She encourages those who tend to focus inordinately on the conversion experience itself to rethink the place and purpose of "conversion" in light of the biblical emphases, and she urges those who tend to ignore this theme to acknowledge the integral place "conversion" holds in the New Testament witness.

Gaventa's most original work appears in chapters 2 and 3, where she presents a literary analysis of the Lukan narratives depicting Paul's "conversion" (Acts 8:26–40) and Cornelius (Acts 10). Unlike most previous Luke-Acts scholars who were primarily concerned with historical and literary-source questions, Gaventa demonstrates how these Lukan narratives unfold literarily and how they fit into the larger literary design of Acts. Thus, for example, she shows convincingly that Luke adapts the story of Paul's conversion to fit his purpose at three different junctures in the narrative: Acts 9 is a story about "the reversal of an enemy" as part of the church's movement to the Gentile world; Acts 22 is the first of two defense speeches depicting Paul as the faithful Jew; and Acts 26, also a defense speech, highlights Paul as victim of Jewish factionalism. This final account emphasizes as well Paul's obedience to the call to the Gentile mission, first enunciated in Acts 9.

Gaventa suggests a threefold typology—alternation, conversion, and transformation—to categorize both ancient and contemporary

religious phenomena of personal change. She distinguishes between "conversion" as a radical change which results in a rejection of the person's past and "transformation" as a radical change which results in a reinterpretation of one's past and present. Although perhaps helpful, this distinction is not easily drawn and has limited value in interpreting the biblical texts considered.

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JESUS: THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF GOD. By Donald G. Dawe. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985. 204 pages. Paper. $15.95.

Dawe, professor of systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, here presents a study of Christology and Soteriology. He stresses the need for a return to the root metaphor of "coinherence" from classical Christologies rather than a theology of disjunction which characterizes modern Christologies. The nature of God and humanity cannot be spoken of in isolation from one another. Dawe emphasizes the importance of remembering that Jesus does not only tell us about the nature of God, but Jesus also tells us what it is to be fully human.

Thus, resurrection provides new ground for human hope. The cross witnessed the death of the tribal, Protector God. "The death of Jesus means that the root metaphor for the meaning of God is not 'protection' but 'transformation.' "

Dawe describes how he experienced the presence of the Holy at a seminar in Punjabi University. As he stood and confessed the presence of God with Hindus, Muslims, and people of other faiths, the place no longer seemed strange, nor the words unusable. "They had become transparent in a moment of divine self-manifestation . . . God, the 'Impressive Other,' had broken through the limits of this experience to authenticate the divine presence."

The author stresses the universal access to God's grace. God says yes to all, and Jesus revealed to us not a tribal God, but a universal Lord. The pattern of new life through death and resurrection was embodied by Jesus, and the uniqueness of Christianity is the way in which Christians witness to this pattern. Thus, when we see this pattern in the liturgies or faiths of other religions, we can affirm that it is God's gift to them.

Dawe concludes by stressing the importance of grounding our faith on the center of new life given in Jesus. Our faith should not be concerned with constructing fences to maintain orthodoxy and proper doctrine. It should rather be centered on the new life given in Jesus. Dawe writes, "We do not need to protect Christ and the Kingdom from enemies. Jesus Christ is Lord already."

One does not have to agree with Dawe's conclusions to benefit from this book. Dawe's scholarship and his method of argumentation are good, and he articulates his position well. Religious pluralism is a factor with which we must deal, and this book will spur debate and interest.

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CHUANG TZU, WORLD PHILOSOPHER AT PLAY. By Kuang-Ming Wu. New York: Crossroad and Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982, xi and 137 pages. Cloth. $12.45.

If my library were to catch fire and all I could rescue were a translation of Hui Neng, one of Chuang Tzu, D. T. Suzuki's "Essence of Buddhism" and, from a badly burned Bible, the first few pages of St. John's Gospel, I would have no excuse dying one evening "without having seen the Tao in the morning. . . ."

Wu's learned, yet quite succulent initiation into Chuang Tzu, that lovable, ironic, old curmudgeon, had for me the great merit of sending me back after much too long a truancy to what one should not read once a year, but daily, if one is to restore one's equilibrium after the 6 o'clock news.

There are of course nobler, less therapeutic uses for the sage's writings. One can read him to improve one's fluency in archaic Chinese or to stuff the left hemisphere with erudition. Here too Wu may be helpful, for he discusses one whom he calls a "world philosopher"—as if Chuang Tzu ignored heaven—in relation to Hegel, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and others, thereby offering an ample supply of fascinating ammunition for symposium dueling. Being not in dire need of such materials I value the playful Master simply as a lifeguard for my sanity and so I read him, with Professor Wu's apparent approval, with the right hemisphere, for Wu stresses that the only way to grasp Chuang Tzu's bequest is to regard it as an evocative text that counsels us to practice that "fasting of the heart," that self-emptying which is a prerequisite if one is to come home to oneself, to that "Self which is the lord of the self" to borrow from Irving Babbitt. This ontological "home-coming" is for Chuang Tzu at the base of all true sociality, all true service to one's fellow beings, if it is to be free from meddlesomeness. And it is this homecoming that is precisely that against which all the conventions of society seem to conspire.

Kuang-Ming Wu's diagnosis of Western thinking as hereditarily tainted with a view of the world and of life itself as "problems to be solved" may well be responsible for all those commentaries, annotations and "summaries of basic ideas" which are so useless in grasping Chuang Tzu's evocative aphorisms and parables. They have to be received with the mind open and to be allowed to percolate and foment in our depth, as if they were musical themes which demand to be heard repeatedly and responded to as a Bach Fugue which must be played over and over again to yield in time its mystery and perhaps The Mystery.

What Wu actually stresses is the quality which in German and Dutch (alas there is no English equivalent) would be called the *"musisch"* character of Chuang Tzu.

This word *"musisch"* alludes to the particular sensitivity to the Muses, to the poetic, which is either present or absent in a person. Where it is absent it is almost impossible to derive much from a thinker in whom philosophy and poetry are inseparably interwoven and who therefore demands resonance rather than cold cogitation if one is to share in his appraisal of the human condition. He demands an intense response to life, a response that in reality stamps us as truly human persons. As persons we are foci of experiences. The fullness of our being, our True Self, is unseparated from the Tao which is inexpressible either by word or silence. The great Japanese Zen Master Dōgen spoke a millennium and a half after Chuang Tzu of the self-emptying required for experiencing this fullness as "dropping off body and mind; body and mind dropped off" that kenosis, that is the crucial pre-condition in Taoist, Buddhist and Christian esoteric tradition alike for "salvation."

Chuang Tzu is often regarded as some kind of pre-Buddhist Buddhist. It seems more responsible on the contrary to see Chinese Mahayana in general and Zen in particular as being decidedly post-Chuang Tzu!

This philosopher-mystic, who was a poet, this poet who juggled imagery as if he were an expressionist painter wrote: "Verily, God is great!" said the sick man, "See how he has doubled me up. My back is so hunched that my guts are on top of my body. My cheeks are level with my navel, my shoulders higher than my neck, my hair grows up towards the sky. The whole economy of my organism is deranged, yet my mental equilibrium is not disturbed."

He was the mystical poet of the rational for whom there is much more to reason than calculative and deductive literality. No wonder he

is so misread that his *wu-wei,* his "non-doing" is interpreted as "doing nothing," and his "not trying to even begin trying" becomes a "trying nothing," and that his balanced meandering through the vicissitudes of this baffling world is misinterpreted as a romantically ego-bound hedonism, his dismissal of all law-and-order obsessions as antinomianism. Neither is it astonishing that his ironical and witty declaration of independence from those conventional compulsions that stand in the way of our coming to grips with our own truth, with the True Self that can only be lived, is resented. He is indeed the arch-enemy of the petit bourgeois mind, academic or not. He challenges us to profound life engagements, he mocks especially all that do-gooding that is ultimately self-serving. Power seeking politicians, profiteers must reject this apparent but only apparent nihilist, who indeed negates. But his negation is that of all false moralism, spurious piety and all that religion that is the very death of religion.

Far from being cynical, he is amusingly sceptical about our ability to reform the world by some clever sleight of hand to our heart's desire. Life—as it is—is the root issue for Chuang Tzu and hence he remains as valid for us in 1987 as he was in China in 500 B.C. He himself deflates his evocative and liberating aphorisms and parables: "They are only words. Once you have grasped the meaning, discard them."

For what really matters is the Tao, the unnamable Reality of which we may become fully aware, but only at the price of overcoming all those complex appetitions that make us deviate and estranged from It. The unity of Self and Nature or rather of "that which cannot be helped" and "that which I can't help being" does not amount to a deterministic monism, provided the standpoint of Being so dear to the West is abandoned or relativized, so that the Many in One—the One in Many is perceived. Then conflict becomes confluence and dichotomy is replaced by diversity in Oneness. I have only one regret: that the book is not twice as long, so that more copious illustrations from the Chuang Tzu texts were incorporated, which would prevent the reader from developing a wry neck by jumping from Wu to Giles, Watson, Lin Yutan's translations and to Thomas Merton's precious transliterations. Having trespassed far beyond the allotted space: a deep bow of gratitude to Wu for having served this delectable appetizer for that ultimate of Chinese cuisine which contains all the nourishment for heart and mind to supplement our daily, enforced deficiency diet.

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DIVINE COMMUNICATION. By Hans Schwarz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985. xii and 162 pages. Paper. $10.95.

In this time of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, and in view of the recent WCC statement on *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry,* one finds that Schwarz's book sets the stage biblically and historically for the discussions in the ecumenical arena. Although a Lutheran by confession, he is not at all reticent about criticizing Lutheran practices or tradition.

Schwarz shows an appreciation for and a commitment to the interconfessional discussions prevalent over the recent decades as well as the historical roots which precede them. Strongest in his examination of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic positions, he nevertheless strives to bring into his discussion the Reformed, Anabaptist, and Eastern Orthodox traditions as well.

This he essentially does in a three-part presentation: 1) a review of what we have meant by "Word of God." Sounding somewhat Barthian at times, he is concerned to ask "How does God speak to us today?" "How does the Word encounter us?" Then Schwarz turns to 2) Baptism and 3) Eucharist in order to examine each in its biblical, historical, and contemporary perspectives.

Consistently concerned to emphasize the christocentric character of the sacraments and their character as "acts of God," he defines sacrament as "the visible side of the pronouncement of God's redemptive word. Word and sacrament belong together as powerful instruments of God's grace."

He provides summaries of the major historical controversies that have surrounded the sacraments, and he briefly reviews contemporary concerns and issues having to do with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. All in all he presents a general and rather broad examination of the current trends and theological quagmire that often surrounds ecumenical discussions of sacramental theology and practice.

Perhaps the major shortcoming of this book is that Schwarz tackles certain subjects far too superficially. An example of this would be his remarks on the "third use of the Law" and the "Word of Guidance" section (p. 28ff.). Given the controversy which has surrounded this topic, it would seem far better to have left it out altogether than to approach it in such a cursory way.

The most engaging section of the book is that of "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper for Today," where he brings the ecclesiological aspect of the sacrament to light in a stronger than usual, though positive way.

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AFRICAN RELIGION IN AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP. By David Westerlund. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1985. 104 pages. Paper. SEK 69.

This is the seventh in a series concerning Western and African studies of African religion. The subtitle, "A Preliminary Study of the Religious and Political Background," refers to the background of African professors of comparative religion. Most of the professors considered are from non-theological departments at state universities in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, and Kenya; but theological professors from Sierre Leone and Zaire are also included.

The purpose of the study is to point up both similarities and differences in the approach of these authors as compared to their Western counterparts. For example, the Africans' use of Christian theological terms as well as Western philosophical language is not surprising considering that most of the writers are Christian and have been trained in the West. What many of us Westerners have not known are their objections to such words and concepts as "animism," "fetishism," "ancestor worship," and "high God." The objections are based on the tendency among Western scholars to describe African religion as an aberration or at least sub-Christian. Westerlund, on the other hand, believes that the national background of the African professors leads them to defend and uphold what seems to have been put down. Particularly in the areas of magic and witchcraft the African scholars see more possibilities for good over against their Western counterparts.

The value of this book is its challenge to assumptions held by Western Historians of Religions as well as by theologians about African Religion. At the same time it questions the tendency among African scholars to generalize certain beliefs and philosophies that may not survive the scrutiny of the close examination of a particular people or tribe.

Although dialogue with persons committed to African religion may still be rather rare for us in the West, the proliferation of non-Christian religion throughout the West would suggest that contacts with persons holding other beliefs will soon be the rule rather than the exception.

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THE LAUGHTER OF GOD: AT EASE WITH PRAYER. By Miriam Pollard, O.C.S.O. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986. 128 pages. Cloth. $10.95. Paper. $5.95.

THE JOYFUL CHRIST: THE HEALING POWER OF HUMOR. By Cal Samra. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. xxi and 212 pages. Paper. $7.95.

If it be true that the roots of the words "human" and "humor" are to be found in the word, "humus," then the earthy and base nature of laughter is again reaffirmed. Such intertwinings of humor and joy with the basic essence of humanity form the framework of two current books on the holy and healing function of the gift of laughter.

Cal Samra is a member of the Holy Fools, an ecumenical fellowship of Christian clowns. His book, *The Joyful Christ,* takes exactly that kind of clownish tack: one liners from everyone from Erma Bombeck to C. S. Lewis. There is something of the joke book here; its strength is quick and incisive illumination. The weakness is the obverse; the writing is often fragmented, sporadic, not sustained.

Part of the difficulty is that Samra tries to cover about every possible angle of the topic of humor. After an opening section which asks: "Where are all the joyful Christians?" he then speaks about ten pages each on what he calls the laughter of God and his prophets, the joyful Christ, the happy apostles, the glad martyrs, and the holy laughing saints.

All of these giant steps through history lead to one of Samra's major contributions that contemporary Christianity needs icons and images of a joyful smiling or laughing Christ. He reprints several such portraits and tells the reader how to obtain copies. Such images, Samra suggests, will help to heal the broken divisions of Christianity among us.

The tone of the book is exhortatory: Come on, Christian, be happy! The book itself is a revised and expanded edition of a previous book: *Jesus Put on a Happy Face.* Such an upbeat mood begins to wear a bit thin after a while.

The usefulness of the book lies in its marshalling wide-ranging perspectives in the relationship of laughter and the Christian faith. But in this book, the sum of its parts is greater than its whole.

Sister Miriam Pollard sets a different note in the opening sentences of her book: "Sometimes I wonder whether God could take us as seriously as we take ourselves. Certainly he is serious. But he is also warm, witty, and ingenious at threading his way among our eccentricities, limitations, and exhibitions of self-interest." She therefore assumes that what is needed is to rest, to be at ease, to surrender to God's playfulness, and to be open to that playfulness. In order to perceive the link between God and our daily circumstances, be aware that God loves to tinker. After all, she says: "God can take much better care of us than we can. We may as well let him."

And the way to this rest in God is through prayer—not prayer as a separate activity but prayer as transforming the whole of life's experiences and relationships. She is insistent that like playing, praying fulfills itself without achieving anything. Her observations on prayer are sensible and sensitive: "Prayer isn't a thing or performance but a personal pleasure and love." She is quietly eloquent about the importance of an anteroom for prayer, a setting aside a sacred space, a vestibule in which "we are willing to be known, touched, even changed":

> The point of the anteroom is not to get ourselves spruced up for God and to put on company manners. It is to let ourselves be taken by the hand and pulled very gently out of the ruts of activity and pose into which we slip and which fit so tightly we are in danger of cramming our prayer into the same pattern. It is also a way of realizing what the reality of life is—not something I construct but something I am given. And it is a way of being very simple with God.

Simplicity is all. We have to realize that "the struggle itself, the prosaic, modest keeping-at-it, the daily prayer, the daily work on our one practice is what counts to God." She continues:

> He's not out for the kind of perfection we want. He's out for the love, the faith, the sharing, the trust, the picking up of pieces, the coming back. This often painful, flop-ful journey is a big love story and he wants it with all his heart.

The writing is simple and rich at the same time. To call it devotional is misleading. Its very conversational but not chatty style reflects the ease-ful restfulness which the book greatly propounds.

And the motif of the laughter of God runs almost subterranean through the book. After all, anyone who writes the following lines can't take one's self too seriously: "It takes an interesting God to make basset hounds. He couldn't possibly be stuffy."

So read Samra and laugh. Read Pollard and be reminded that in God we rest and have our being and that gives us more than good reason to live in joyful response to him.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS. A COMMENTARY ON THE GREEK TEXT. By F. F. Bruce. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. xx and 305 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES. A COMMENTARY ON THE GREEK TEXT. By Peter H. Davids. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. xxxviii and 226 pages. Cloth. $14.95.

These are the second and third volumes in this significant new commentary series. Only Luke by I. Howard Marshall (1978) appeared earlier in the NIGTC. Both of these volumes deserve the attention of scholars and pastors. The somewhat tardy appearance of this review is in no way a judgment against their value. It takes time to live with major commentaries.

Bruce's commentary on Galatians is the solid fare one comes to expect from the emeritus professor of New Testament at Manchester University. An eleven page bibliography demonstrates his knowledge of modern research—and the commentary proper shows full use of it. The introduction (58 pages) is full of useful material. Bruce opts for the South (or provincial) Galatian theory, with the notation that the evidence is "not conclusive" (p. 18). He holds that the opposition is Jewish-Christian from Judaea (cf. Acts 15:1), and responds favorably to R. Jewett's suggestion that a resurgence of "zealot" activity in Judaea might have motivated the desire to escape persecution (p. 31). Some of the best pages in the book are his summation of Paul's theology in Galatians in relation to earlier Christianity and the teaching of Jesus (pp. 33–42). Paul, like Jesus, treated the law as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself. Bruce dates the letter early, even prior to 1 Thessalonians, and accounts for the difference in theological accent by crediting Silvanus with a major share in the drafting of the Thessalonian letters.

Bruce divides the letter into a surprising number of sections, but makes no claim that his outline corresponds to Paul's conscious strategy in constructing his argument. That is disappointing, since one major function of a commentary is to trace out an author's mode of constructing his document and indicating his progression of thought. The commentary proper is full, clear, and illuminating. Bruce recognizes the implicit citation of earlier tradition at 1:4 and 4:4. As is to be expected, one of his major conversation partners is Hans Dieter Betz's commentary in the *Hermeneia* series. He is appreciative of Betz's work, even when he differs from him.

Peter Davids' NIGTC commentary on James is less successful. He provides a major intro-

duction to the book (61 pages), in which he argues that James is a two-stage work. Initially it was sermons and sayings, probably by James the Just; later it was compiled into the present form by a redactor, possibly also James the Just, about 55–65 C.E. In this way Davids accounts for the theology which has its roots in Judaism (stage 1), while its language is strongly influenced by Hellenism (stage 2). In form it is a literary epistle, a tract intended for publication, carefully constructed. There is no clear, specific historical situation in which to set the epistle, still the dire economic situation in early first century Palestine arising from the formation of huge latifundia fits the epistle's strong condemnations of the rich. Thus James gives us the last picture of the Palestinian church before the Jewish War of 66–70 C.E.

Davids explores a series of theological themes in the book: suffering/testing; eschatology; Christology; poverty/piety; law, grace, and faith; wisdom; prayer. For James the apocalyptic consummation is close; hence the community must be impartial and charitable as the community of the poor, seek wisdom, and patiently wait as they pray. Davids struggles to show the relevance of Christology in the letter, not too successfully. He stresses that Christ is the leader whose sayings still give guidance to the church, without making clear that there are no explicit citations of words of Jesus.

The New International Greek Testament Commentary, with three published volumes, is now well on its way. Pastors will find the series useful—especially the volume by Bruce.

Edgar Krentz

THE TRIUMPH OF THE MEEK. By Michael Walsh. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. 256 pages. Cloth. $17.95.

This engaging narrative of the church's growth from Jesus and Paul down to Diocletian and Constantine is written with unusual color, clarity, and authority.

The first half of the book (chaps. 1–5) describes the life of Jesus and the church of the apostles as told in the New Testament on the background of first century Palestine. Next the author turns to the post-apostolic period, treating in successive chapters the church of the East, of North Africa, and of Rome (chaps. 6–8). Then after tracing developments in worship (chap. 9) and ethics (chap. 10) the author deals with the final challenge, the persecutions under Diocletian and Galerius, and concludes with the conversion of Constantine (chap. 11).

The text is complemented by a stunning array of well chosen illustrations and photos, many in full color, all beautifully reproduced. The only lapse I detected was a picture of the monastery of temptation on the cliffs above Jericho improbably labeled as Herod's palace at Masada (p. 35)! Otherwise the pictures are marvelously appropriate and an altogether impressive adjunct to the text.

The book is aimed at the non-specialist who still wants solid information and does not care to be patronized. This volume is a delight to eye and mind and deserves a wide readership.

Robert Smith
Christ Seminary—Seminex
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

LEAVES FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF A TAMED CYNIC. By Reinhold Niebuhr with Foreword by Martin E. Marty. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980. 152 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Niebuhr a "tamed cynic"? I found him decidedly untamed, possessed of a trenchant, incisive, sometimes caustic wit. And if a cynic is one who has a crabbed, narrowly gloomy vision, Niebuhr does not qualify. He was in the best sense critical, not cynical, addressing his powerful and subtle intellect to questions of the proper role of the faith and the church in modern industrial society.

He did so out of his earliest experiences in the pastoral ministry, at a small parish in Detroit, where he served from 1915 to 1928 before moving on to a distinguished career as professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Though profound changes have occurred since then, many of his observations on the society remain as contemporary as this morning's newspaper.

Yet, out of all the roles pastors assume, Niebuhr speaks most consistently to the preacher in us, not the social observer, the teacher, administrator, or organizer. He speaks to—and for—me when he observes, for example, "I think the real clue to the tameness of a preacher is the difficulty one finds in telling unpleasant truths to people whom one has learned to love."

Whether neophyte or veteran, whether a first-time or repeat reader, you will profit from these musings, now in their fourth "incarnation." Niebuhr delights when he articulates the conflicts many of us feel between faith and reason. He disquiets [me, at least] with some of his theological views. But his views cannot be lightly and hastily dismissed; they are worthy of careful dialogue in your mind and heart, and perhaps in the company of colleagues.

Martin Marty's foreword reveals his pastor's heart as well as his historian's mind. It is invaluable for providing perspective on the man, Reinhold Niebuhr, and on his impact on church and society in the United States.

Frederick Reklau, Pastor
Grace Lutheran Church
Evanston, Illinois

BIBLE AND MISSION. Edited by Wayne Stumme. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. 206 pages. Paper. $10.95.

Editor Wayne Stumme is director of the Institute for Mission in the U.S.A. (located at Trinity Seminary in Columbia, Ohio). The Institute is engaged in research, education, and consultation on issues affecting the church in its mission in the U.S.A. Stumme conceives of this present volume as the first in a series. The second will focus on the Lutheran experience in changing urban communities, and the third on ministry with the poor. Stumme himself regards the economic barrier to be the toughest one the church must cross in its efforts to be faithful to its sending Lord.

These essays, for all their diversity, reveal authors who grapple seriously with the Bible as source and resource for mission and who seek to connect their thinking to churchly action and their doing to churchly reflection.

Theology will increasingly be informed and influenced by the engagement of pastors and parishes with the needs of ordinary people. Not only are professional theologians paying closer attention to the church's praxis, but the practitioners are being encouraged, as in this present volume, to speak up and write it up and address their seminary and university colleagues.

Robert Smith

THE EUCHARIST OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS. By Willy Rordorf and others. Edited by Raymond Johanny. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. New York: Pueblo, 1986. x and 224 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Ten documents of the early church relating to liturgy are examined in this book, from the Didache through Irenaeus and Cyprian and ending with the *Didascalia.* Each section contains brief notes on the person and times behind the document, translations of salient texts, and comments on the liturgical nuances, innovations, and shifts each text marked from the preceding times. Despite the fact that the book is written by nine different people, its form overcomes unevenness and one is able to trace development from first through fourth centuries in a systematic way. The excitement the authors try to convey concerning the early period

of liturgical fervor is well summed up in the editor's poem on page vii:

Earth broken open
by the hand of the living One.
Passage accomplished
by the fire of the Spirit.
Food for our exoduses.
Bread for our tasks
and our struggles.
Wine of joy,
intoxicating;
wine for extravagant
daring deeds.
Path of hope,
Certitude of love.
Jesus Christ, Lord!

Jay C. Rochelle

THE KAIROS DOCUMENT: CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH. Foreword by John W. de Gruchy. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. 58 pages. Paper. $2.95.

For those who have managed to escape the furore over the Kairos Document, here is a handy edition from Eerdmans. The Document is a product of leaders of the churches of South Africa and has been the subject of a number of major conferences and thinktanks in the USA during the last months of 1986.

The Kairos Document challenges the church and the state in South Africa by interpreting the social scene from a theological perspective; three forms of theology are identified. There is "state theology," which is a perversion of the gospel for the sake of maintaining apartheid as the social structure for the State. "Church theology" is criticized for its naive view of politics, inward-turning spirituality, and uncritical acceptance of non-violence. Finally, "prophetic theology" is called for, which would begin with social analysis, go on to exegesis of biblical texts of liberation, and move into a hopeful future. The document ends with a call to action.

It would be easy to sequester this document to its land of origin. *Kairos* raises for us, however, questions about the American scene which we do well to attend. How is our theology captive to inward-turned spirituality and naive uncritical acceptance of state control? Where is our prophetic voice? Is there a "state theology" at work in the USA? *Kairos* is a good example of big things in small packages.

Jay C. Rochelle

Briefly Noted

A HISTORY OF ISRAEL: FROM ALEXANDER THE GREAT TO BAR KOCHBA. By H. Jagersma. (Fortress, $12.95). In an earlier work, J., a Belgian scholar, surveyed Israel's history in the Old Testament period. The present volume starts after the death of Alexander (323 B.C.E.) and extends to the second Jewish revolt, in 132–135 C.E., under Simon ben Kosiba (Bar Kochba in Christian tradition); it matches its predecessor in clarity, brevity, and the use of numbered paragraphs to organize the discussion. Some important findings: The actions of Antiochus IV against the Jewish religion came at the suggestion of Hellenists in Jerusalem; the conquest of the Samaritans and the destruction of their temple by John Hyrcanus in the late second century B.C.E. led to the unbridgeable gulf between Jews and Samaritans attested in the New Testament; the defeat of the Jews in the Second Revolt against Rome deprived them of their political homeland, but the Torah survived as the bond that held them together. RWK

GESCHICHTE DES VOLKES ISRAEL UND SEINER NACHBARN IN GRUNDZÜGEN 2. By Herbert Donner (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, DM 36,80). In this second volume of his authoritative outline history of Israel and its neighbors, D. covers the period from the division of the kingdom to the time of Alexander, with a short supplement extending the story through the Second Revolt. Findings: The effect of Sennacherib's 701 campaign [there was not, contra Bright, a second campaign] was to bring a temporary end to the kingdom of Judah and to quell any further revolts against Assyrian sovereignty; the central contribution of Deuteronomy to the Josianic reform is confirmed [contra Würthwein]; Nehemiah probably preceded Ezra though the order of the two was reversed by the Chronicler for theological reasons; the identity of the lawbook brought back by Ezra is uncertain; the main features of the Samaritan schism were in place by the fourth century. RWK

THE TEMPLE SCROLL: AN INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION & COMMENTARY. By Johann Maier (JSOT Press, $13.50 paper; $28.50 cloth). The longest of the Qumran scrolls, this document was seized from a Bethlehem antiquities dealer following the 1967 war and published in a three-volume, Hebrew critical edition by Yigael Yadin in 1977 (English, 1983). M. provides a more popular account of this highly important, but relatively obscure document that dates to the 2nd century B.C.E. or earlier. He would prefer to call it the Holiness Scroll because it lays out zones of holiness, beginning with the holy land itself and culminating in the Holy of Holies. Framed as a message from God to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the scroll describes how the temple should be built and how the cult should be organized after the conquest. For the scholar it actually provides a priceless peek at a number of debates about the cult in the period of Second Temple Judaism. From it one can reconstruct the Qumran community's cultic calendar and all its festivals; both here and in the book of Jubilees the solar calendar is used. RWK

OUTSIDE THE OLD TESTAMENT. Edited by M. de Jonge (Cambridge, $18.95 paper; $49.50 cloth). This is volume 4 of Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200 and introduces twelve ancient writings dealing with prominent OT figures (e.g. Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah). In each case there is an introduction, an extract from the writing itself, and a brief commentary. These writings are studied primarily to discover Jewish beliefs and customs that were not preserved in later rabbinic sources. Not to be forgotten, however, is that they were taken over and preserved exclusively in the Christian church where they were often interpreted as speaking prophetically of Christ and the Christian era. RWK

DIE BIBEL KENNEN. By Friedhardt Gutsche and Reinhard Schinzer (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, DM 24). This book provides outlines, charts, chronological tables and the like that will help a person to know the Bible (hence the title) and to read it. The book promotes group Bible reading. An English translation would be a welcome boon for parish circles and for seminarians who want to increase quickly their overall grasp of the Bible's content. RWK

ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. Edited by Bernhard Lang. (Fortress, $6.95). This eighth volume in the series Issues in Religion and Theology contains ten essays that illustrate comparative ethnography or structural anthropology. One essay, for example, compares Jeremiah and Handsome Lake, a Seneca Indian. While the content of their "prophetic" messages is not really similar, the religious and social mechanisms that produced it are. These include revelatory experience, prophet-audience interaction, and the like. Another essay investigates

Jewish dietary laws and concludes that it is the animals outside the normal classification system (animals with cloven hooves that chew the cud) that were considered impure. By avoiding anything in nature that seems to challenge God's "order" people confirm the divine order. While there is some parallelomania and weird exegesis in this field (one scholar assumed that Cain and Abel engaged in homosexual incest), the results of anthropological studies are already producing new access to the meaning of the "dead world" of the Bible. RWK

DEATH AND RESURRECTION. By Joanne E. McWilliam Dewart. (Michael Glazier, $15.95); **THE EUCHARIST.** Compiled by Daniel J. Sheerin (Michael Glazier, $15.95). Both of these volumes are in the series, "Message of the Fathers of the Church," which will help those who have neither time nor linguistic facility to do research in Migne's **Patrologia** to explore the early Christian witness on a variety of topics. "Fathers" here includes orthodox and unorthodox, and some leaders as late as the ninth century. *Death and Resurrection* starts with the biblical roots and concludes with Augustine. The emphasis is on the teaching of the resurrection, and the author intersperses the patristic material with lots of commentary. *Eucharist,* on the other hand, offers minimal commentary, but provides quotations on a wide variety of significant issues: the testimony of a given apologist; Eucharistic instructions; scriptural exegesis and the Eucharist, the Eucharist and the Christian community; Eucharistic prayer and chant. An excellent reference tool. JCR

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE? By Bruce C. Birch (Westminster, $8.95). The six chapters of this book originally appeared as a series of articles in *Sojourners.* Written in a popular style and supplied with study questions at the end, these essays would provide solid reading for a parish adult forum that would like to sharpen its social ministry and ground it in the biblical witness. As a byproduct, the reader of this book gets a brief overview of the basic contents of the Old Testament canon. RWK

BIBLIOGRAPHIE BIBLIQUE, VOLUME III. By Paul-Emile Langevin (Les Presses de L'université Laval, $125). This index to biblical studies covers publications in French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish and its narrative sections and running heads are also printed in these five languages. For 120 periodicals, that had been indexed for the years 1930–1975 in Volumes I and II of **Bibliographie Biblique,** L. adds materials from 1976–1983. He also indexes 43 additional journals from 1930 to 1983, plus some 450 books that contain collections of articles (Festschriften or Jubilee Volumes). The index is divided into five sections (Introduction to the Bible, Old Testament, New Testament, the person of Christ, and biblical themes). An appendix provides indexes to authors and to the 2,000 headings into which the five sections of the book are divided. The three volumes of this invaluable guide to retrieving biblical scholarship are a living tribute to the industry and persistence of L. RWK

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH: CHAPTERS 1–39. By John N. Oswalt (Eerdmans, $29.95). O., professor at Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Deerfield, IL, argues for the essential unity of the entire book of Isaiah in this first lengthy (746 pages) installment of a two-volume work on the prophet. The woman in 7:14 is designated only as a "maiden" in this commentary, a term which for him, however, has overtones of "virgin" about it. He allows that the significance of her child has more to do with his still being immature when the two nations invading Judah would be destroyed than with his virginal conception. But the ambiguity of *alma,* in his judgment, allows the prophecy to apply both to its contemporary significance at the time of Isaiah and to its ultimate fulfilment in the virginal conception of Jesus. Conservatives will no doubt value this book for its updating of the

earlier work of E. J. Young, who defended a unitary authorship in his three volume commentary of 1964–1972. Cf. also the two volume commentary of H. Leupold in 1963–1971. RWK

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE AGE OF JESUS CHRIST. By Emil Schürer. Volume III.1 revised and edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman. (T & T Clark, $48.50). While retaining the structure of Schürer's original, this is really a new history of the period from 175 B.C.E. to 135 C.E. After a survey of diaspora Judaism by M. (pp. 1–176), this volume consists of authoritative introductions to the voluminous extant Jewish literature of the period composed in Semitic languages (pp. 177–469, written by V.), including an extensive discussion of the Qumran finds (pp. 380–469), and composed in Greek (470–704, written by G.). The second, smaller part of Volume III, still forthcoming, will treat literature whose original language is uncertain, and it will supply indexes for the whole three volume history. RWK

OLD TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN PREACHING. By Hans Walter Wolff (Fortress, $8.95). One of the most distinguished OT scholars of the 20th century and a frequent contributor to *Currents*, W. here presents a collection of sermon meditations which demonstrate his conviction that careful exegetical study stands in the service of Christian proclamation. His recipe: inquire carefully into the historical meaning of the text to grasp its intention; compare the text with corresponding NT passages; and apply the text to contemporary hearers in ways appropriate to the original intention of the passage. W. subsumes his hermeneutic under typological exegesis. The translator is Gary Stansell of St. Olaf College. RWK

TEXTUAL CRITICISM: RECOVERING THE TEXT OF THE HEBREW BIBLE. By P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. (Fortress, $4.95). In this new volume of Guides to Biblical Scholarship, M. lucidly defends the science and art of textual criticism and provides scores of examples to illustrate how textual corruption arose and how the textual critic tries to remove it. One of the appendixes gives a thumbnail characterization of the text of each of the books in the Hebrew Bible. RWK

PROBLEMS OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By Henning Graf Reventlow (Fortress, $12.95). The major portion of this monograph is dedicated to the relationship between the two testaments, and it canvasses, always with abundant bibliography, what has been said in this century about ongoing salvation history, typology, a sensus plenior, promise and fulfillment, and the like as possible theological bridges to hold the canon together. A final chapter surveys "new approaches" to the problem in our time. So many scholars are here assessed that the text reads almost like an annotated bibliography. That makes it a handy and welcome reference tool, but the book itself would be almost impossible to "read" from cover to cover. RWK

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

Preaching Helps

Second Sunday after Pentecost—Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, Series A

Focus

"Nostalgia is the San Francisco disease and incurable," writes Herb Caen in his *Chronicle* column. (There ought to be a connection possible here to Lutheran loyalty to the western catholic liturgy. But before I try for that junction, make your own connection to your weekly sermon as you read a reader's reaction to Herb Caen's every-Sunday attempt to wax nostalgic about things Franciscan . . .)

> "I read your column all the time," writes Roy Thinnes, "except for the Sunday ones that would bore a cabbage to coleslaw."

After working that one over, Mr. Caen describes the cover of the February issue of *Discover* magazine: a one-way traffic sign with arrows at either end, over these arresting words:

> In the universes of both Newton and Einstein, time flows backward into the past as readily as it does forward into the future. Which means we should all have memories of the future. That we don't—and that physicists can't find a single arrow of time that points in any direction but ahead—is one of the most profound and vexing mysteries in nature.

"What a compelling phrase," adds Caen," 'memories of the future.' I admit I have none I can live with: a world destroyed, perhaps."

The juncture, in Vol. 5, No. 4 of *Liturgy,* Journal of The Liturgical Conference:

> [J. D.] Chrichton sees liturgy as revelation—as a third level of manifestation of the central mystery of God. The first level is the ahistorical, uncreated God; the second is the manifestation of God in history, through the incarnation.

The third level, then, is revelation—the liturgy not only brings the past into the present but also "rehearses" future events as if they were present.

The liturgy is always beyond us. No need to make coleslaw out of that.

George W. Hoyer
Preaching Helps Editor

Second Sunday after Pentecost June 21, 1987

Psalm 31:1–5 (6–18) 19–24
Deuteronomy 11:18–21, 26–28
Romans 3:21–25a, 27–28
Matthew 7: (15–20) 21–29

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall,
All the kings horses and all the kings men,
Couldn't put Humpty back together again!"

It is the nature of fallen things to shatter. When a glass falls into the sink, it breaks. When a plane falls from the sky, life is lost. Humpty Dumpty's great fall, and all other falls, can never be put back together as they were before.

Our scripture lessons for this Sunday have to do with falling. Jesus concludes the Beatitudes in Matthew with words about falling into the hands of false prophets and false teachings. Moses warns in Deuteronomy about faithfully teaching our children the ways of God so that they will not fall away to false gods. Paul in Romans says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Falling is dangerous for it leads to brokenness and death.

The gospel lesson is the dramatic conclusion to the Beatitudes. The best and simplest sermon illustrations were saved for the end of the sermon.

Matthew 7:15–20. Jesus warns, "Beware of false prophets." False prophets are wolves who dress like sheep. On the outside they wear the same clothes as any other Christian. False prophets cannot be immediately distinguished from the flock. But it is a wolf's nature to devour sheep. First a wolf gets the sheep away from the master (for it is impossible to plunder sheep with the shepherd close by). Once the wolf has them far enough away, dinner is served. After falling for the wolf's sweet talk and nice appearance, the sheep will fall prey to their most deadly enemy. Falling into the hands and mouths of a false prophet can mean nothing but death.

The second half of this section deals with another powerful image. To paraphrase the verse, "You will know false prophets by their fruit. Are tomatoes grown on dandelions or peaches harvested from a tumble weed?" If a tree has fallen to decay on the inside it cannot produce fruit on the outside.

Who might be false prophets in our context, and what fruits do they bear? Are they the Fundamentalists, who marry traditional-sounding theology to right wing politics? Are they seminary professors whose philosophical and historical inquiries often seem far removed from parish life? Or are they—potentially—all the readers of *Currents* who may be tempted to see the life of the church dependent on their homiletical efforts, or who may exhort the faithful to heroic acts of justice without grounding that call sufficiently in God's prior love in Jesus Christ? Perhaps, instead of looking for false prophets out there somewhere, we need to preach first of all to ourselves, to encourage ourselves to be prophets unafraid to denounce the real sins of arrogance, pride, and parochialism that so afflict the church. And we also need to encourage ourselves to say once more this Sunday, with clarity and with creativity and with relevance to the daily life of the faithful, that God's love worked our salvation through Jesus Christ. By our fruits of pastoral concern and Gospel centeredness we will be known as true prophets.

Matthew 7:21–23. Wolves dressed as sheep can be so good looking that we may not ever notice they are wolves. But God will know. Justice will reign and there will come a day when all will be exposed, either now or on "that day" to come. Wolves in the meantime can preach, cast out devils, and do great things using Jesus' name. Clarence Jordan writes (*Sermon on the Mount,* 119–120), "A pious repetition of Jesus' name is no substitute for a life of loving obedience to the Father. A 'worship service' is

of little value unless it leads to worshipful service!" In the end great will be their fall when Jesus says, "I never knew you."

Matthew 7:24–29. What better way to end the Beatitudes than with a parable so plain and beautiful that it hardly needs an explanation. There are two choices: one can build a house with no foundation and watch it wash away with the first big rain, or one can found it on bedrock and rest securely. The wise builders are those who hear the words of Jesus and do them. Wise preachers are those who preach the gospel in order to enable and empower the faithful to believe and obey. Foolish builders are those who only hear the words of Jesus. Foolish preachers are those who don't evoke the Holy Spirit for each of their hearers or who preach such a generalized gospel that it neither calls for nor requires a response.

A good foundation is the key. Since storms rage and wolves hide their true identity, we need to be on guard. Grounded in the cross of Christ, we have a foundation that mocks rising waters and pernicious wolves. We need not fear the fall. The Lord is our refuge, our strong fortress, and our rock. He preserves the faithful and gives courage to the fainthearted (Psalm 31).

Roy Hammerling
Prairie Valley Lutheran Parish
Williston, North Dakota

Third Sunday after Pentecost June 28, 1987

Psalm 50:1–15
Hosea 5:15–6:6
Romans 4:18–25
Matthew 9:9–13

Did you ever play the game "Hot Potato"? I haven't played it for years, but I still remember the giddy combination of dread and delight as we sat in a circle and passed the potato quickly behind our backs, hoping against hope never to be holding on to it when the call came: "Hot Potato!"

The lessons for this Sunday surely qualify as "hot potatoes." For together they form a triptych of passion: a threefold portrait of a God of all-consuming passion and thus—because God has made us the people of God—of a people whose lives and words and deeds can be no less passionate than God's own.

The first panel comes from Hosea who lived when Israel was in a state of anarchy and chaos and when religious life was in a shambles. The people of Israel then called themselves followers of Yahweh but, if they were, they were so only on the outside, going through the motions, never surrendering their hearts to the God who had always rescued them, fed them, and loved them.

God sends Hosea to proclaim some very dangerous words. God says, "You and I, my people, are like husband and wife, like lover and beloved. But the relationship isn't going well.

"You think if you keep up the house, get my meals on time, and behave nicely, you are fulfilling our vows. And I'll just keep coming home and give you a peck on the cheek, and we don't need to talk about it.

"Don't you see? I don't care if the house is clean or if you cook my favorite dish—what I want is *you,* your heart, and your love. If I can't have that, you can just forget about the rest!"

And God continues: "What I want is love, not sacrifice. What I want is a burning, faithful love that sees *me* as the one who loves you and desires *your* love, not as someone you serve, impersonally, by performing little duties and observing little laws. All of you, that's what I desire and that, as your God, is what I demand."

The second panel comes from St. Paul, who describes the unswerving faithfulness of Abraham. Abraham heard God's unreasonable demands and strange promises and said, "I believe you." Abraham became for his people and

for all believers a picture of the Christ to come, who would trust and be faithful all the way to the cross, all the way into the grave.

And then the third panel, the Gospel, in which we find Jesus with all the wrong people. If we thought the first two pictures were outrageous, here Jesus goes over the edge.

First, he calls Matthew, a tax collector, someone whose unclean money even a beggar would disdain. Yet Jesus walks right up to him and calls him a disciple. He says, "Follow me," and—even more amazing—Matthew does. He just gets up, leaves his job—no thirty days' notice here!—and begins walking down the road with Jesus.

Then, Jesus goes out to dinner, and who are the ones who get to sit at his table and eat with him? Tax collectors and sinners! The teachers of the law, the Pharisees who cared more passionately about the law than about God, the virtuous and rich whom *everybody* wanted to take to dinner were left standing outside. And meantime, Jesus is inside, partying with all the undesirables. *Really!*

Jesus had an answer for his critics: "What I want is mercy, not sacrifice." (Sounds like Hosea!) "What I want are those who are open to healing, those who know their sin too well, those who never imagined God would look at them or love them. I came not to call the virtuous, but sinners."

There we have it—three pictures of who God is and of what it means to be God's people—just the sort of things we'd hoped God would never ask us to be or to do: to be open to all, to believe truly that God's love and forgiveness are meant for all people; to be unswervingly faithful, even when it looks ridiculous; and to be passionate in loving God by loving all God's people.

But how shall we ever do this? Only a few Sundays after the Feast of Pentecost, it is helpful to remember that God has sent us the Spirit, a mighty Spirit, with fire, who can turn and melt even our dry, reluctant hearts. The Spirit who enables us to dream of the universality of God's new realm—a realm not restricted to one denomination or nation, to one government, language, sex, or race.

Jesus calls us just *because* we are sinners. And once loved and welcomed to his table, there's nothing to do but to invite everyone else, every other sinner, every other person.

God calls us to welcome, to invite, to love—and not to judge. God calls us to love sinners as passionately as God does, as passionately as God loves *us*. God calls us not into niceness and the same old rut of rules and ritual, but into the newness of love that refuses to rebuild the walls of separation and judgment Jesus' death and resurrection have so dramatically broken down.

In sharing bread and wine together, we dare to look around us, to laugh and say with joy: "Look who's coming to dinner—the people who need God the most—*all* of us."

Lucy Kolin
Westlake Lutheran Church
Daly City, California

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost July 5, 1987

Psalm 100
Exodus 19:2-8a
Romans 5:6–11
Matthew 9:35–10:8

A sure way to tug at the heartstrings (and purse strings) of the average congregation is a description of need for foreign missions. Perhaps this is because we consider ourselves better off (materially as well as spiritually) than those "poor heathen" of Africa, New Guinea, etc.

Unfortunately, for too many, the concept of "foreign missions" is the operating definition for the word "mission" when applied to the work of the church. Our lessons today serve to broaden and clarify that definition.

The First Lesson tells of God's declaring to Israel the special nature of their relationship. Israel, the LORD says, is "my special possession" (Exod 19:5, NEB). The intent of this declaration was that Israel would serve as "leaven," the special people that would cause all the world to be lifted up to the LORD and to know him for who he is, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Human nature being what it is, however, this specialness was corrupted to an understanding of Israel's superiority. It was felt that Israel should, by divine right, rule over the nations.

Today, we of the church continue in this "leavening" responsibility as God's people. We enjoy this "special" relationship, but we tend to forget its purpose. We share our love and mercy with others within the "group," i.e., "Christians like us," but too often withhold that love and mercy from those who are different and unlike us. The result is the paradox of supporting foreign missions and neglecting the fertile fields in our own neighborhoods.

The Gospel tells of Jesus overlooking the teeming mass of people below and of the compassion (literally: "the pain of love") he felt toward them. Feelings of sympathy are not enough. Jesus tells his disciples that "the crop is heavy, but laborers are scarce; you must therefore beg the owner to send laborers to harvest his crop" (Matt 9:38).

Most people today, when told to "pray for missionaries" or "pray for workers to go into the field," respond with prayer and/or donations to overseas mission causes. This is all well and good, but there needs to be more. We need to realize that when we are told "The Kingdom of Heaven is upon you" it's meant not only generically, but in the most intimate and personal sense as well. All of us are now "special possessions" set apart as God's own. This implies that at one point we were not special or set apart, but were, indeed, God's enemies. Paul writes in Romans 5:10: "For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life!" Saved, we are to be saving.

Christ's act of reconciliation required that he take personal action. No one could take up that cross for him. In the same way, being recipients of that special grace, we are to respond in a personal way. The point must be made that the call of Jesus for more workers is our call. Because of Christ's reconciling act, we are able to respond freely, not under the threat of the law. Realizing that those awaiting "harvest" are not any different from our former selves ("In Adam we have all been one," as the hymn puts it), we are able to go forth humbly and with compassion. When we take steps to discover where the harvest waits within our personal life setting, we will come to greater understanding of and faith in the One who reconciles.

Daniel P. Schlewitz
Trinity Lutheran Church
Chowchilla, California

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost July 12, 1987

Psalm 69:1–20
Jeremiah 20:7–13
Romans 5:12–15
Matthew 10:24–33
Hymn 476 LBW

Have no fear, little flock,
Have no fear, little flock!
For the Father has chosen
to give you the kingdom—

That could be reason enough for fear! For once the "charge" of the kingdom has been given, the people of God have an awesome responsibility of living in that kingdom and bringing the kingdom's message to others. In that process, the chosen are more than likely going to experience hardship, challenge to faith, and persecution for the faith.

Jeremiah felt that weight of God's compelling word. "Slandered if I speak—ulcers if I'm quiet!" Though feeling deceived by God, crying out to God in an almost heretical manner, and continuing to hear the laughing and mocking whispers of those around him, Jeremiah remembers. He calls upon the God to whom he has committed his life and ministry, and musters the resources of faith in a defender who will triumph over those who scoff and jeer. Sing! Praise! Deliverance comes. Peace, though sometimes fleeting (cf. vv. 14–18), can be felt in the lives of those chosen to be given the kingdom.

Have no fear, little flock,
Have good cheer, little flock!
For the Father will keep you
in his love forever—

Alienation from God is keenly felt in the hour of trial. Waiting for God is the agonizing experience of our separation from God. Sometimes the chosen are suffering from sins committed or good omitted (Ps 69:5), from those things of which we are accused (69:4c) or, in some vicarious way, being the object of another's anger at God (69:7). We worry about the lack of oneness we have with one another, too, even in the church. But the potential and power of confession can again be discovered as it opens us up for receiving the love of God, who knows us intimately and has not abandoned the flock. God answers, draws near, redeems, and sets free. Hope can be established once more for those in distress, and good cheer can be the countenance of those who suffer (69:29ff).

Have no fear, little flock,
Praise the Lord high above!
For he stoops down to heal you. . .

The one who "was to come" has come! Immanuel! The one of whom Adam was a type comes to us who are linked with Adam through sin. Christ comes bringing us the "free gift" of God, the grace of God which forgives our sin and calls us to discipleship. Christ comes, identifying with us, loving us, healing us with the cross, and providing the cure for the imminent death of sin with the victory over the tomb. If the slave is like the master, and the student like the teacher, and if we are going to be "maligned" like the head of the house, then we also shall share in that victory of God over suffering and death (Rom 6:5ff). Victory comes through Christ's suffering; triumph over death comes through Christ's death and resurrection. This is the sure foundation of faith.

We need not fear, then, to proclaim our faith from the housetops and in plain view of those who would not accept the message of the kingdom. We need not fear those who slander or would kill us, for they do not have the final word of life as God does. Rather, we should be aware of the consequences of not speaking up, of not living up to the commitments we have made with God.

Which is more perilous, concealing the truth of God's Good News or facing the disapproval of people? While the question seems to have an easy answer, self-esteem and acceptance of us by others are a very high priority for anyone as we live in community with one another. Are we then to be motivated to witness to our faith by threats? How can Jesus expect joy to be on the lips of those speaking boldly about God? We can see the Good News of Christ's suffering love going before us and the grace of God given to us as the true inspiration of joy in discipleship, pre-empting any threat.

. . . *uplifts and restores you!*

Jesus' foretelling of what is in store for the chosen continues to echo the imperative "Fear not," the comfort of a gracious Master, a message from a loving Father. This is precisely the reason our suffering and shame will not be futile! God has adopted us as children. God gives the kingdom to the chosen as inheritors. This relationship with God far exceeds the limits we sometimes perceive. God goes before us as de-

fender, grants victory as redeemer, and values us highly as the chosen, nurturing us with love and comfort as we grow in discipleship.

Have no fear little flock!
Thankful hearts raise to God!
For he stands close beside you,
In all things works with you;
Thankful hearts raise to God!

Christopher Nolte
Fairlawn Towne and Care Center
Portland, Oregon

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost July 19, 1987

Psalm 89:1–4, 15–18
Jeremiah 28:5–9
Romans 6:1b–11
Matthew 10:34–42

Those twelve disciples of Jesus didn't choose to follow him. He told them, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you" (John 15:16). Left to themselves, they would have chosen their own way of life. So the theme of the Gospel for this day might well be: "Discipleship Means a Special Kind of Warfare."

Hardly did those first disciples of Jesus know what faced them down through the years. Does anyone of us really know? Anyone who says "Yes" to the call of Christ today is not going to know exactly what life's experience will be. Our Lord Jesus in effect said, "Don't think that I have come to bring peace to the fallen and corrupted creation while it still exists. I didn't come to cast peace over the earth as a sower casts seed. I came to bring a sword for those who are chosen to be my disciples; conflicts and disagreements will stab and cut into their human existence."

We may well ask, "Why? What's the reason?" Neutrality is not possible. We are either for Christ or against him. The demonic forces of evil exert their power (cf. 1 John 5:19; Eph 6:12). Between the two camps clash and division are inevitable (cf. Luke 10: 5–9; 12:51). And there will always be conflict and disagreement between people, even in a family household between husband and wife, parents and children and relatives. Has there never been a father who wanted his son to take over his successful business but the son wanted to be a foreign missionary? And though the son was happy in his way of life, the father went on, never quite understanding or accepting the son's decision. How about the worldly mother who never got over her daughter's refusal of a movie contract because that daughter chose to teach in a Christian school? Real peace comes between people when they are all renewed in spirit to become one as Jesus and the Father are one (cf. John 17: 11, 21–23).

"Yes," says Jesus, "to be worthy of me you must take up your cross and follow me" (v. 38). The working principle of Christian discipleship is to win life by losing it (v. 39). Our human problem is that by our fallen nature we want to do our own thing, find our own life, be "comfortable" people who choose to evade any denial of self. But Christ calls us to do *his* thing, to deny self-service, and serve our neighbor within the embrace of our Savior's love. Every day we are to make our choice between the natural affection of self, also of the desires of others for us, and the claims of Christ who calls us to discipleship. Christ's call is to carry his cross day by day to some place of our crucifixion (cf. Luke 9:23). This is the real way to life and it brings its joyous harvest (cf. John 12:24).

It was Martin Luther who said that it was no light matter or a bit of fun to take sides against the devil and, in the power of the Holy Spirit,

die spiritually to the world and our own sinfulness and arise to new life in Christ (cf. Rom 6:1–11). The second lesson for this day proclaims the death and resurrection that is ours in the gift of our baptism. This new life characterized by repentance and faith in the forgiveness of sins is marked by the daily dying of the old and the coming to life of the new. Our baptism, Luther goes on to say, loads onto our shoulders a lifelong struggle with a mighty enemy, the devil and our own fleshly nature. The baptismal covenant, Luther reminds us, puts us in the situation where we must cease seeking our own glory and righteousness in order to seek and pray for what God will give us. Specifically, Luther may be quoted to say: "First of all you must give yourself up to your baptism and its significance, that is, you must desire to die in your sinfulness and be made new in Christ according to the promise of that sacrament. And God complies. He fills you with his grace and grants you his Holy Spirit, who begins to mortify the old nature and to prepare you for death and resurrection on the last day. Secondly, you begin to mortify your sin more and more until the day you die. God complies with this desire too, and disciplines you all your life with many good works and many kinds of sufferings, whereby he fulfills what you have desired in your baptism" (WA ii, 730,23).

Jesus would say, "In your baptism I have set you free to live and walk in newness of life. You are free to be obedient to my call in the obedience of faith. It will be painful to say "No" to your personal ambitions, your ease and comfort, your desire to do your own thing. Serving me through serving your neighbors whom God places alongside of you will often be like a cross. But remember that when I appeared to those fear-filled disciples behind those locked doors after my resurrection, my greeting was, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you' " (John 20:21). We are to be his instruments of forgiveness in this world. Whoever receives us when we are serving in his name will receive Jesus Christ. We are the "pipelines" of his grace. And whoever gives a hand to one of his disciples, even a cup of cold water when needed, will receive his or her reward (v. 42).

Yes, "peace be with you." The word peace is used in the New Testament 80-times-plus to mean the peace of unbroken union with God in the midst of adversity and suffering, a peace that "passes all human understanding." It is not the peace of compromise or evasion. It is the peace which is given when God gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy word, and are enabled to live under the gracious rule of Christ's spirit in our lives.

The Christian life is not to be compared with the comfort and contentment which a bird might enjoy while sitting in a nest with a peaceful view of a quiet and lovely valley. The Christian life is rather like that of a bird sitting safely in its nest on a strong limb of a sturdy tree, a limb that stretches out over a roaring waterfall.

The apostle Paul was weak in himself yet strong in Christ. In the eighth chapter of Romans he considers that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us. If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" (vv. 18, 31). Yes, discipleship is a special kind of warfare. But the disciple is a sure winner. Amen. (It shall be so).

Harry G. Coiner
Waynesboro, Virginia

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 26, 1987

Psalm 145: 1–2 (3–13) 14–22
Zechariah 9:9–12
Romans 7:15–25a
Matthew 11:25–30

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden." Words are not adequate to describe the

soothing effect that these words of Jesus in the Gospel lesson have had on many Christians. Some come to worship still feeling the agitation of the workplace and the strains of family living. Others are burdened by an assortment of anxieties about money, health, and the well-being of others close to them. Still others have gone out, as Jesus' disciples did at his command in Matthew 10, but have had their enthusiasm dampened by the apathy of the world. Jesus' invitation to "come" certainly has application to persons weighted down in these ways. Yet it seems to be aimed most directly at those who labor under the law, who are laden with its heavy load of guilt, and who live with the condemnation that the law brings down upon every person, including the Christian woman or man.

The morning mail brought me an "I'm-not-so-sure-how-to-start-this" letter from an out-of-town guest at a recent wedding. "I'm a born-again Christian," she wrote, "and I am engaged to a man who is studying to be a minister." The author went on to state that while she found the homily I had preached uplifting, she was very offended by the "social drinks" I had imbibed along with others at the reception. It also caused a "lost" and "confused" brother to whom she had been witnessing, or so she claimed, to go into a "total tailspin." She conceded that "it's tough being in your position" and tried to assure me that she was not judging and condemning me. Nevertheless, she asserted that "you will have to answer for your actions in front of the Lord on Judgment Day."

The Second Lesson from Romans 7 shows how well the apostle Paul was acquainted with the heavy burden produced by all such laboring under the law. One's actions are most obviously out of sync with the "inner man" who assents to God's law. The problem is that "sin" still dwells within each of us. Good intentions are insufficient; the road to hell is paved with them. Evil lies at hand even when the letter of the Law is obeyed. We become proud of being humble. Self-righteousness infects our hearts and causes us to look down our noses at the sinner next to us. "Rest" can come only from Jesus Christ and the Gospel associated with his name. He knows the Father as no one else does, and it's that Father's "gracious will" (so aptly developed and described for us in the Psalm for the day) that he has chosen to reveal to us. Jesus' death and resurrection "spell relief" from the guilt and condemnation of the Law because they assert the forgiveness of our sins and give promise of a new day.

Coming to Jesus for such "rest" must be as regular as part of our life as eating and sleeping. The battle with the old Adam and Eve rages on within us. We remain *simul justus et peccator.* Original sin is still operative in us. It is, as Martin Luther put it, "like (a person's) beard, which, though shaved off today so that a man is very smooth around his mouth, yet grows again by tomorrow morning." Paul's description of himself as a "wretched man" fits the baptized, born-again child of God for whom the Law's accusing function is only intensified. The higher righteousness set forth by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount enables us to see more clearly what we cannot reach. Within the fellowship of the church, offense is given and taken. Theological self-justification fails to reconcile the "weaker" sister or brother to us. Only God's forgiveness can do that.

Regularity, however, is not enough. Equally important is attitude. The model for us is the one presented in Zechariah 9:9–12. It's the triumphant king who comes "humble" and "riding on an ass." Jesus points out that relief from the Law eludes "the wise" and "the understanding." We can remain too full of pride and arrogance to admit to the born-again crowd of Christians offended by social drinking that we may have done something improper. Who can resist the temptation to ridicule fundamentalists? But we are deceiving ourselves. For "rest," says Jesus, comes to "babes," to the "poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3), to those who number themselves among "the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 11:11). Our LBW service

of worship opens with the confession that "we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves." It is in fact a way of asserting how thoroughly dependent we are upon God's grace and the forgiveness obtained for us by Jesus Christ.

Jesus' invitation also includes a new "yoke." He asks us to take it upon ourselves. The same Gospel of grace that lightens the load of guilt and condemnation burdens us with concern for our fellow human beings. This "yoke" of a servant is "easy." It fits us because the meek and lowly "heart" of Jesus kept pumping within us by the Holy Spirit is in sync with our true self. This "burden" is also "light." It breathes the air of the new world that God through the redemptive work of his Son is determined to bring about. It even believes that he can incorporate our mistakes and failures into the process.

Jon Diefenthaler
Bethany Lutheran Church
Waynesboro, Virginia

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost August 2, 1987

Psalm 65
Isaiah 55:10–11
Romans 8:18–25
Matthew 13:1–9 (18–23)

Parched land and thirsty crops need rain. This may be one of the pictures that you keep before you as the Holy Spirit excites you to "sow the seed" this Sunday. That rain also needs to soak in and get to the roots. At least some of the groaning of creation (Rom 8) results from our inability to hear God's voice because we have a less than adequate picture of God. Some picture God as grandfather or grandmother—out of touch with day to day realities. Some picture God as controlling every aspect of our lives as if he were a puppetmaster—a God incapable of showing love or giving us freedom. Try thinking of God this week as loving parent. Our readings speak of Abba, children, heirs of God, fellow heirs with Christ. God is the keeper of promises. Those are pictures that help the rain of the gospel soak in.

When Jesus sent out his disciples on the great missionary journey, he knew it would not be easy. In fact, he told them that they went out like sheep among wolves (Matt 10:16). Still, it must have been exciting for them to be acting directly in Jesus' work. Like the farmer planting seed in the spring, they were going out to bring peace to a people who desperately needed peace. They were probably looking for an immediate, bumper crop, but we all know all too well from experience and from the parable of the Sower how few actually will hear.

Jesus in that situation had no false expectations. He knew he was acquainting his disciples with the possibility of rejection, persecution, and even death (10:17–23). Even John the Baptist, confined to Herod's prison, had begun to wonder about results. Jesus pointed to the healing and forgiving that were happening as signs that John's disciples need not look for another (11:2–6). He labeled some of the people as spoiled children who would not hear no matter what was said (11:16–17), but he pointed to those who did the will of his Father in heaven as sisters and brothers (12:50). In the parable of the Sower he reminds the disciples once again of the promise, of the odds against them in planting, and of the patience that is needed to wait for the harvest.

Of course, we should not too quickly identify the ground on which seed will not grow. That could too easily seal off the soil so that no rain could possibly soak in. The poor results of our sowing would be only self-fulfilling prophecy. We need to sow as if all the seed were fall-

ing on potentially good ground. A yield of a hundredfold (13:8) seems exaggerated, beyond any possible calculation. This should not mislead us into expecting instantaneous results; it also will not allow us to underestimate the power of the gospel.

Keep the reign of God in mind as you meditate on the parable of the Sower. Alas, we hear so many promises in our daily lives that we know were never intended to be kept, or were born out of good intentions but little more. In the face of the groaning of creation (Rom 8), which we hear loud and clear, we could easily be misled by the odds against the promises of God. Future hope is present reality in the promises of God. We are not proclaiming the promises of any old politician, but of God, the loving parent, whose desire to rule over and among his people led him to send his only Son. God's Spirit helps that good news sink in as we sow. Our divine parent wants to embrace us. God wants to be known as a promiser, and a keeper of promises. God assures us of our eternal inheritance and then reassures us of the same. The reign of God becomes known through cross and empty tomb. We are relaxed as we look forward to the harvest, but our mood is one of high expectation.

I once knew a Sunday School teacher, intent on emphasizing the grace of God, but resistant to any suggestion that he use new teaching methods. "All God tells us is to get the word out," he would say. How wrong he was! Our sowing through pulpit and classroom should employ whatever expertise in teaching and communication we can find. What excitement that good word offers us. We need to share in every possible way what we have been given—the love, the forgiveness, the patience of a fantastic God. He offers no unfit seed.

The hearing begins with ourselves. We can hear and then share the good news of a loving, concerned, embracing God, who has shown us the meaning of forgiveness. In the promise of our Baptism we can live as people who know that the seed will get through to the harvest, and who pray for it to find fertile ground.

Alfred Buls
Bethel Lutheran Church
University City, Missouri

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost August 9, 1987

Psalm 86:11–17
Isaiah 44:6–8
Romans 8:26–27
Matthew 13:24–30 (36–43)

How much does God know and when does he know it? That could be the form the question takes when the malignity of awful things makes us critical of the sovereignty of an awe-full God.

The lessons do not come right out and say it, but back of "tares" and underlying "weakness" and included in "what is yet to be" are all the horrible crimes people commit against people, not to mention dogs, and all the things which "nature" does to drown, to swallow up, to blow away, and to impoverish. Who is in charge? The hands-off policy God has practiced for so many generations is seriously questioned by all of us when the fan is hit in our front room.

Reginald Fuller in *Preaching the New Lectionary* presents a concise scan of three levels in the tradition which lies behind the gospel. 1. When Jesus is criticized for eating with outcasts "as an anticipation of God's salvation," he asserts by this parable that God decides who is who and God will do that only at the end time. 2. The allegorical interpretation describes how there are tares in the church right now, but that the wheat hands should not try to remove them. They could "tare" themselves—out by the roots. Leave it to the harvest boss. 3. The addition of intervening material between the para-

ble and the interpretation and the shifting of the scene in which it is laid from a public to a private teaching suggests Matthew has applied the parable to the failure of the church of his day to reach others of the people of Israel. What is to be said about those who know God but do not know God-in-Christ? "The tares are presently indistinguishable from the wheat but at the end God will separate them. The church must meanwhile be patient."

Any of those—or all three—will "preach." But that presentation will shift the focus of attention away from "Who is in charge?" The "liturgical exegesis" provided by the selection of the first lesson suggests rather the question of why God doesn't do the up-tareing right now.

The Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "Be ye lifted up, ye everlasting tares!"

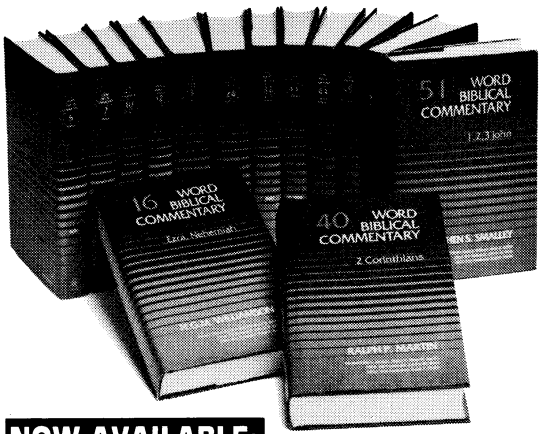
He could do it, this King of Glory, do it without destroying the wheat, for none shall pluck them out of his furrows, and the Lord knoweth them that are his. So why the forbearance? Why the long-suffering? Is it the same motivation which kept God from moving against those "who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved?" (1 Pet 3:20). There has been a great deal of measuring of square footage to determine how many animals can stand on the deck of an ark, but has anyone counted the number of cabins? Was God's optimism operating before his patience, and did God hope that more than eight would get on board?

All of the radicality of God's decision to create in us not only a clean heart but a free will is involved here. In doing that, God limited the divine sovereignty. Even the causer and the causes of sin were tolerated. Reflected here as well is the strange intertwining of God's foreknowledge and his predestinating. The hymn describes God as "never grudging for the lost ones that tremendous sacrifice." That was not an attempt to put on a mask of universal grace in order to disguise the face of eternal punishment until the midnight hour. It was the gamble of "so loving" the world, the bet on the number "whosoever," the hope that "all Israel would be saved." God lets us know—in our manner of speaking and understanding—that he doesn't even "know" who will be saved. God hopes, not against, but in favor of hope, that the house will be filled, the banquet chairs all taken, everyone wearing a wedding garment, all eating and satisfied. God yearns like a mother to gather all the children of creation under protecting wings. God delays until the last possible moment sending the angels to do the gathering of all causes of sin and all evildoers. And before that day of wrath, that day of mourning, God spared not his only-begotten Son, but delivered him up for us all—all of us, all of *them,* too.

If God so loved the world, if God was so long-suffering and patient, ought not we too show love to all its tareable people? Since God loved the church and gave himself for it, this "thing of shreds and patches" and tares, this *corpus permixtum,* ought we not forbear to separate the church and the state it is in, and work for full citizenship for all its wetbacks and undesirable aliens? And don't we all, each one of us, need a little loving—from those we should be loving as ourselves, yes, but also from our own selves. And should not our self-love result in patience with ourselves when we see ourselves taring up good resolutions and producing more weed seed than wheat?

When we are impatient with ourselves, are we not in a sense being impatient with God? The Spirit is helping us in our weakness. Not enough, we say. We are the temple of the Spirit. The Spirit is what we have of God, within us. God loves us, and with the Son, makes us his "abode." Why then doesn't God help with the dusting and the vacuuming? Is he sitting out there with Mary? Perhaps this is what we need to address more than any cleansing of the church or changing of the world. What is happening in us, in our living, is that the God who came in Christ Jesus in the fullness of time, is

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still in these last days helping us in our weakness. The Holy Spirit, "according to the will of God," has come to us, is taking our side in our desperate attempt to pray, interceding for us about our needs which are too agonizingly deep for us even to comprehend much less to vocalize. And God, who knows our hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit. God is in complete agreement with God that our situation is normal and is not at all going to the devil. There are tares, yes, God knows—but that is the point—God does know. But—how sweet it is!—wheat we *are*! And we are growing toward harvest—and a crop, perhaps even a bumper crop, or at least a "not bad, considering."

Simul justus et peccator yes. But "tell it not in Gath, how the mighty are fallen"; "tell it not in Gath—weep not at all." (2 Sam 1:20 and Mic 1:19) At the same time saint and sinner, yes—but *et semper poenitans*! We are always repenting! We are always being righted after the storms, turning toward the sun. That's the Spirit!

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Tenth Sunday after Pentecost August 16, 1987

Psalm 119:129–136
1 Kings 3:5–12
Romans 8:28–30
Matthew 13:44–52

In the First Lesson God is seen seeking Solomon. God appears to Solomon in a dream and gives him a variation of the "three wishes" fairy tale: "Ask what I shall give you." The difference, of course, is that this revelation is real, and there is no limitation to it. Solomon answers with proper humility, and is granted his wish. God loves to be generous.

Paul picks up on this generosity in the Second Lesson in which he points out God's delight in giving—to those who love him—a call (here issued to all those who love him, not just restricted to the ordained), justification, and glorification. God really delights in giving good things to those who love him.

So far, these lessons emphasize God's role in the relationship he has with his creation. This is the correct place to start.

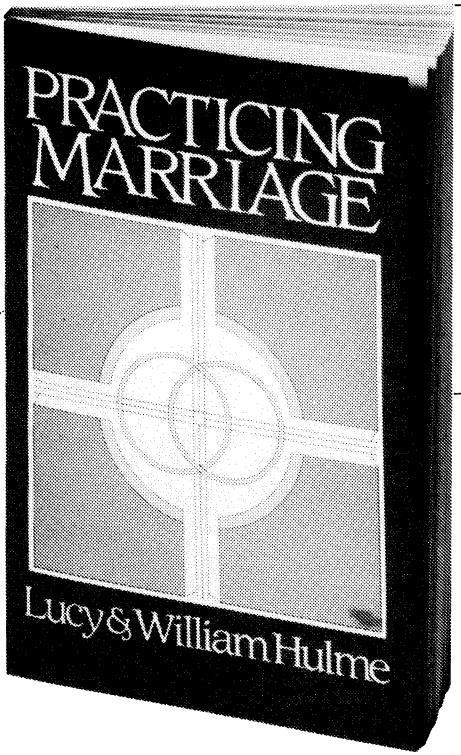
The Psalm gives us the clue to what could be a good theme for this Sunday: Delight in exploring God's Spirit. The Psalm begins: "Thy testimonies are wonderful. . . ." And, in imagery that today's readers might consider excessive, the poet continues: "With open mouth I pant, because I long for thy commandments." The poet even asks for God's protection so "that I may keep thy precepts."

In twentieth century America, with its fears and cynical views of contemporary life, this sunny delight in exploring God's Word may seem slightly off-cue. In a day when so many are exploring the Scriptures in order to discover more snippets of moralistic non-acceptance, when the "Bible Answer Man"—apparently a nation-wide radio broadcast—deals with questions concerning single verses scattered throughout Scripture in ways which leave little doubt that the verses in question are to be used to win arguments, the image of open-mouthed panting may seem silly. But the psalmist only begins what Jesus continues in the Gospel for the day.

Here Jesus rolls off three little *similes* of what it may mean to delight in exploring God's Spirit. The first one tells of a man who "bought the whole thing" in his joy at discovering a treasure. No piker here, who might have haggled until he could have got the best price. "In his joy he . . . sells all that he has."

The second simile also speaks of a person who "sold all he had" in order to get his hands on the one pearl "of great value." The point is

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the utter abandon with which these fictitious people pursue their goals.

The third simile is a surprise. Gone is the joy of the man who found treasure in a field or the pearl of great price. The point of the parable is that God will eventually sort out the good from the bad; the situation at the coming of the kingdom resembles the sorting of a catch of fish. Until God does such sorting, false zeal to rid the church of "undesirables" must be checked and the net of the gospel must be cast very widely (David Hill).

Robinson suggests that in the final two verses Jesus is recommending that the disciples use not only the Old Testament (the old treasure) but also their own contemporary experience of the Lord Jesus (the new treasure) himself (The Moffatt Commentary, *Matthew,* p. 124ff.). Thus, it may be suggested that the *delight* might include both Testaments' treasures and contemporary experiences of God's Spirit.

A proper balance is maintained in this Sunday's texts: God does, indeed, pursue his people. But there is a necessary human response to God's lavishness and delight that can be emphasized from the Psalm and the Gospel. The call is not to a *joie de vivre,* but to a *joie de Dieu,* a response that is as lavish, delightful, and reckless as God's.

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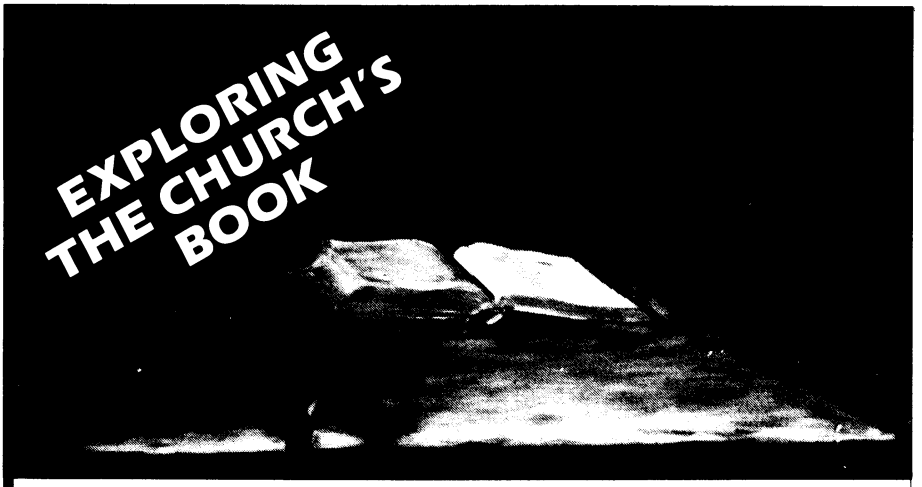
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost August 23, 1987

Psalm 104:25–31
Isaiah 55:1–5
Romans 8:35–39
Matthew 14:13–21

This may be a day to focus on "eating disorders," whether individual or local or national or global. The prophet proclaims, "Come, buy and eat—for free," and the gospel conveys our Lord's command, "Give them something to eat," and reports that "they all ate and were satisfied." Is there a message here for anorexics and bulemics, those who starve themselves and those who gorge themselves only to purge? Is there a word of hope here for the hungry and the homeless, the street people as well as the famine-stricken? Do the prophet's oracle and the Lord's miracle mean anything for farmers who've overproduced or for commodities dealers and politicians who've skewed or skewered the elementary principles of supply and demand?

Eating disorders, even those classified as diseases requiring intervention and therapeutic treatment, are signs of a more profound disordering and disfiguring of our universe, in which we unwittingly participate. They are, perhaps, contemporary versions of "all these things" which try to separate us from God and to wedge us apart from each other. St. Paul saw the enemies in cosmic terms—death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, and depth. Who can really say what astrological powers or sinister forces he had in mind? But are they any less threatening than economic forces which lie beyond our control, than nationalistic zealotry, than "New Age" religiosity, than our baser urges and impulses to trample over others? Indeed, there are "things" which seek to separate us from God, to wrench us from God's grasp and the transforming experience of his love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus himself had just experienced a tragic disfigurement of his universe. Matthew says that when he heard "this," he withdrew. What he had heard, of course, was a report about the brutal, senseless murder of his cousin, John the baptizer. That caused him to seek "a lonely place apart" for quiet reflection and sober assessment of how profoundly life had altered. Jesus was no different from us in this respect, for he knew that nothing changes life like



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death. John's death was an ominous portent of things to come, even though it was ultimately Jesus' claim to kingship and not his kinship that caused his crucifixion (see Matt 27:11, 37). And what was that, if not the ultimate sign of how deeply disordered and disfigured human beings are, in their essence and behavior, when separated from the love of God?

Jesus withdrew, but the crowds followed. Merely to hear him? One hopes they wanted to share his bereavement, to console him. Yet the tables turned. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. And when the disciples opted for privacy, solitude, and isolation, Jesus said instead, "Give them something to eat." Six times this story and its variants appear within the New Testament. Its central, perhaps centripetal, importance cannot be ignored, for here we are forced to compare God's new food with the manna of old. Which endures, and which can be garnered for a rainy day?

One can and should be impressed by the dimensions of the miracle—so little food fed so many. God can indeed meet human need in lonely places where huddled masses gather, yearning to be fed if not be free. But in the telling of the story Matthew wants us to see more: To see in Jesus' action of taking and looking up and blessing and breaking and giving a foreshadowing of another series of similar actions on the night in which he was betrayed; to see the taking, breaking, blessing, and giving of bread, along with a sacred cup, as strangely but mysteriously linking those who eat with the very source of life and ground of being. The results should be the same: "And they all ate and were satisfied."

Surely this episode recalls the past—the wilderness wanderings of God's ancient people and God's miraculous provisions for their sustenance. Just as surely it relates an incident in our Lord's ministry which was proleptic, anticipating a new meal for a new people who recognize their dependence on God. And just as surely it summons all of us as we eat and drink at his table—men, women, and children (utterly inclusive!)—to bring our disgruntlements, our disorders, our disfigurements, and all other signs of our disrupted lives to the only one who can make them whole and give us a sense of satisfaction—peace (shalom) that passes all understanding.

It is ultimately a eucharistic story being told here, ours for the enacting. Perhaps we might be inspired to join Bread for the World or some other citizens' lobby. Perhaps we might be impelled to modify our own diets and reassess our use of earth's resources and find fresh ways to insure that the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the homeless are housed, the illiterate are educated, the depressed are encouraged. Against all odds, against all the forces, within and without, that try to separate us from the love of God in Christ, this gospel asserts that God will overcome when the places are lonely and day is over and things threaten to go bump in the night.

To be sure, we live in a world beset by eating disorders. Some don't eat enough, and others eat too much. What we need is a miracle to change all that. What we have is a miracle who did change all that. At least that's what the gospel offers us—one who no longer orders us to sit down on the grass, but who invites us to "take and eat." And when joined with him and nourished by him, whose body was broken for us, then glorified again for us, we find that all brokenness can be mended, all relationships restored, and all disorders relieved. The modern day miracle happens in our response to an ongoing gracious invitation: "Take and eat. . . ." Something old makes all things very new!

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Hospitality

Roger W. Fjeld
President, Wartburg Theological Seminary

Last summer I traveled to Papua New Guinea to celebrate with The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea the 100th anniversary of the Church's work there. Our common roots back to Neuendettelsau (Wartburg Seminary and the ELCPNG) originated in the same mission movement started by Wilhelm Loehe late in the 19th century.

Hospitality in Papua New Guinea is remarkable! I was welcomed into homes, offices, conferences, classrooms, worship services with a hospitality I'd not known before. The village elders, stacks of food around an open pit, speeches, tours of village and cemetery, a gathering in the thatched roof church to exchange greetings and gifts while the stories of early mission work were retold . . . I was at home!

Hospitality in the United States—or at least on busy days at the seminary—is less elaborate. "Hello. We start in 6 minutes. Coffee's in the refectory. When does your plane leave? The meeting is called to order." No flowers, speeches, slow walks, no easy graceful moments to quietly celebrate God's gift of bringing us together.

Henri Nouwen: "Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where strangers can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place. Hospitality wants to offer friendship without binding the guest and freedom without leaving the guests alone."

On our family farm in Iowa, hospitality was often our social life, a time for doing farm business with a neighbor and for mending fences. "The coffee's always on, you know." "Your cows were in my west pasture again last week." Rural hospitality warmed the days, and created "free space" where neighbors became family, or close to it.

We have quotas for the new offices of the ELCA, as well as for the synods and regions. It's just a matter of hospitality. "Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place." Change taking place . . . not so much in "them" but in the whole church. We practice hospitality in the new church, hoping the church will change.

In *The Ten Faces of Ministry,* by Brekke, Strommen, and Williams, we discover that congregations want pastors and lay leaders who are able to practice the art of Christian hospitality. Namely, be there to greet us, remember our names, include us in, sing tunes we've at least heard before, be ready with sacraments and flowers and sermon so we'll know that we've been expected, and that we are welcome. Seminaries are places where people are training in hospitality. To be hospitable a church leader is to create a space and time in which one may "enter and become a friend instead of an enemy." Seminaries *can* teach rigidity, propriety and formality by what we do in the classrooms, chapel, and at coffee. Wooden, busy seminaries create wooden, busy leaders for the church.

Hospitality in the classroom happens when faculty and students create an atmosphere where any and all questions are acceptable. We are blessed with a diverse student body: teachers, psychologists, pharmacists, smoke jumpers, butchers, and college graduates straight from the university. Quickly they learn whether or not this is an hospitable place. "Can I say what I'm thinking here or is this one of those classes where I should be quiet?" When it's all lecture and a whiff of discussion, hospitality may be missing. While class format can kill hospitality, death comes more quickly from judgmental students or teachers who pounce on unsuspecting prey ("another fundy").

Hospitality creates space for a student from India to try curry on lefse followed by Ethiopian Chicken Watt, washed down by a Brazilian hot tea tasting mostly like alfalfa. The presence on our campuses and in our congregations of international students creates a joyful occasion to experience hospitality. They have much to teach us. The simple sharing of the gospel in a country where religion is outlawed finds good results when tea is served first. We should learn. The wealth of the West makes it nearly impossible for us to experience the gentle, spiritual hospitality of non-westerners, when we are invited to be with them. In those times, simple gospel graces beome clear when the television is not rerunning John Madden's football commentary. Hospitality from the poor to the "rich" is a soul-sensitizing experience. It is grace.

We all look forward to a new Lutheran Church where hospitality among the seminaries is a daily reality as well. In the rush, let us have time to sit in the front room where the coffee's always on, and where free space allows strangers to become friends.

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