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CURRENTS in theology and mission

Following More Nearly

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Following More Nearly

Day by day we pray for three things: seeing more clearly, loving more dearly, and following more nearly. In the Pentecost season we focus most on the discipline of following, though without seeing and loving God, our following would soon turn into aimless wandering.

Following often means to walk a fine line, not only between the gospel and legalism, but also between right and wrong. **Robert J. Ohrstedt** guides the careful follower through the thicket of the abortion question. The Supreme Court and traditional church teaching locate the beginning of life at animation rather than conception, but this question is unresolved for many and so is the moral status of the fetus. Does meaning in life consist only in existence, or is freedom more important to the quality of life than either existence or well-being? The contemporary emphasis on smaller families, redefined roles for parents, and the equal division of labor between women and men affect what we mean by a stable family environment. This balanced analysis seeks neither autonomy (we do what we want) nor heteronomy (someone else decides for us), but responsible freedom. Be sure to stress both words.

The book of Malachi opens with a declaration of Yahweh's love for people whose faithfulness leads them to expect more concrete evidence of that love. Sometimes we must follow nearly when we cannot see God at all clearly. **Ralph W. Klein** lures readers into the biblical text and encourages them to wrestle with Malachi about the nature of God's love and the balance between good and evil in the world. While God can never overlook failures in worship or in daily life, he also promises to recognize and honor those who fear him and think about his name. Those who know God loves them hope not only for divine justice toward the wicked, but also for healing and rejuvenation for themselves at God's appearing.

Herbert Anderson and **Robert W. Bertram** spoke to seminary graduates last year about the task of following. Anderson told Wartburg graduates a dream about ministry and of two companions they might meet along the way: a cheerleader/clown and an old woman. Both companions called out challenges and encouragement for those setting out, but neither promised escape from walking or an unambiguous journey. Bertram, on the other hand, "preached peace" to those at the graduation eucharist at LSTC. In the church we can see the world on its way to being pacified, that is, the church's preoccupation with Christ is the best view, for now, of how the world is scheduled to end. Since the world wants peace, we promise them justice, but give them mercy.

Norma Schmidt provides practical help for those considering buying a personal computer for the parish. She explains arcane terms like "K" and "RAM" and suggests criteria for evaluating software and hardware. Word processing, database management, and bookkeeping are the primary parish applications. If you want hundreds of extra hours for "following," you might want to start here.

Meinert Grumm notes how often some English Bible translations use the word "must" and suggests that it is a sign of a lack of trust in the power of the gospel to move people. **David C. Schroeder** muses poetically on why we ministers try to avoid ministry, but he also points the way to freedom from institutional security and legalistic obsessions.

Day by day we set out on a baptismal journey. Day by day we are faced with a host of challenges, perplexing questions, temptations, and discouragements. Yet day by day we live from the bread of heaven who gives life to the world. Dear Lord, give us this day that daily bread!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Abortion: Focus of Conflict

Robert J. Ohrstedt
Columbus, Ohio

Abortion is an issue which came to the foreground of American political life in the 1960s and has remained as a topic of intense debate to the present. In the last five years, as anti-abortion activists have become more vocal (if not more numerous), the debate has only intensified. It is a debate which promises to continue, despite our best efforts to resolve it, in large part because it also comprises a debate about conflicting values on a number of other issues.

These hidden agendas are, of course, not dealt with in the rhetoric of either pro-choice or anti-abortion advocates. I shall briefly examine some of the issues involved in the debate for purposes of clarifying just what is going on in the shifting values represented in the discussion of "the abortion issue." If we in the church are to speak to the American society of the 1980s, we must understand those values and value-systems which appear to be in conflict.

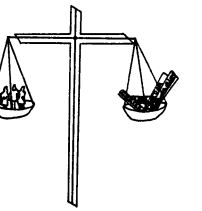
The values that seem to be most fundamental in the debate over abortion are: questions concerning when life begins, the quality of life, the shape of the family and the role of women in society. There are most certainly other issues involved; for example, to many involved in the debate the proper role of government is an issue. I will focus on only these four, however, as they seem to be the most fundamental and therefore the most divisive.

When Does Life Begin?

The question of when human life begins would seem to be the simplest and easiest to address, since one could assume medical science ought to be able to give us a definitive answer to this question. Such an assumption, however, misses the complexity of the debate itself. At issue is not simply when biological life begins, but, more importantly, the moral status of the fetus. In this way the discussion has moved away from being about "facts" and has become a debate about how to measure, weigh and assess facts.[1] The debate therefore has less to do with life than it has to do with personhood. Is the embryo a fetus or a baby? How one answers this question is crucial in determining which side of the debate will be joined, because everyone agrees that a baby is a person whose life should not be ended arbitrarily or unnecessarily. But at what point do the egg and the sperm develop into a baby? At conception? At twelve or twenty-four weeks? Or does the embryo only develop into that which we call "human" at birth, that is, when it is "viable" and can survive without the encompassing support of the mother's womb?

The way in which this question is posed reveals the fundamental reason the debate is so bitter: there are almost no

[1] Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 5.



common premises and very little language shared by both sides. Those who oppose abortion have as their starting point that the embryo is an unborn child and that abortion is murder. However, those who accept abortion reject just this stipulation. In their minds, the embryo has the capacity to become a child, but it is not yet a child. This places it in a different moral category than that which we call "human."

History tells us that the moral status of the fetus has always been in doubt. Ancient Greek physicians disputed the appropriateness of abortion. While Hippocrates promised never to give a woman "a pessary to cause abortion," Soranos of Ephesus discussed forms of abortion which were acceptable.[2] Abortion was common in the Roman Empire, as noted by Ovid, Juvenal and Seneca. Roman Law, in fact, explicitly stated that the "child in the belly of its mother" is not a person.[3] And while the Judeo-Christian tradition has always held life as sacred, it is significant that the major religious writings ignore the issue of abortion entirely.

Christians have historically denounced abortion, yet stumbled on the problem of defining abortion. The Didache, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian reject abortion, but only in connection with sexual crime such as adultery.[4] Ivo of Chartres condemned abortion but specified that abortion of the unformed embryo was not homicide. Gratian reiterated this stand and the distinction became a part of canon law.

The issue of "formation" is really the same question we grapple with today. Also known as "vivification" or "animation," the embryo was considered to be a person when movement occurred; a time specified as forty days for a male embryo and eighty days for a female. In instances of ambiguity, the embryo was considered to be female.[5] Because of the absence of modern gynecological techniques that make possible the early detection of pregnancy it can be seen that, until recently, apparently "strict" standards on abortion permitted much laxness in practice.

Even in the United States, the history of abortion laws is not so long and unbroken as those involved in the debate tend to believe. The first statute outlawing abortion in the United States was enacted by Connecticut in 1821. Ohio's statute did not become effective until 20 years later. Nor were the statutes designed to protect the life of the unborn;

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[2] John A. Rasmussen, "Abortion: Historical and Biblical Perspectives," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (January, 1979), p. 19.

[3] Luker, 19.

[4] Luker, 19.

[5] How could this be determined in Medieval Europe, with the absence of sonographs and genetic chemistry? The answer is unclear, and we may presume that ambiguity was the norm. Essentially, therefore, canon law permitted an abortion up to 80 days, or about the first trimester. It is important that we keep in mind that our vast store of knowledge concerning fetal developments has been collected over the last 25 years or so.

legislative history reveals that the stated purpose of 19th century abortion laws was the protection of the life and health of the mother, in a time when medical care was still primitive and any surgical procedure could be fatal.[6]

In spite of this history, those who engage in the current debate over abortion seem to assume a long history of unconditional rejection of abortion in western culture. Those who are against abortion, particularly, generally cast their opposition to the legalization of abortion in ways that hold the fetus to be a live human being; again, with the apparent assumption that the tradition of our culture is unbroken in this regard. As we have seen, it is not. It is ironic, then, that the well known Supreme Court ruling, *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), stands both closest to historical precedent and as near as we are likely to get to compromise on the issue.

That decision divided pregnancy into three trimesters. In each trimester the rights of the mother (to assure her health and quality of life) and the interest of the state (in providing protection for its citizens) are balanced. The first trimester, the period in which most abortions in the United Stats are performed,[7] is the time when the woman's rights hold sway. Abortion in this period is unrestricted by the state and is a matter for decision by the woman and her physician. In the second trimester, the rights of the state must be considered since the fetus may become "viable" or able to have "meaningful life outside the mother's womb."[8] In the third trimester the Supreme Court held that "the State in promoting its interest in the potentiality of human life may ... regulate, and even proscribe, abortion except where it is necessary, in appropriate medical judgement, for the preservation of the life or health of the mother." It is obvious this bears more resemblance to the church's traditional specification of animation as the beginning of life than to the ancient Roman position that life begins only at birth or the current pro-life view that life begins at conception.

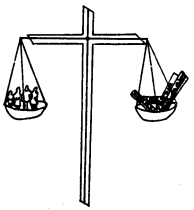
With the introduction of modern medical research, which has widened our knowledge of the human developmental process, this question has become even more difficult to answer. Biologically speaking, there is no point at which an embryo becomes a human fetus. Life in this sense exists along a spectrum, from the primitive chemical chains of DNA through the complex physical, psychological and emotional characteristics which make up the 45 year old who is a productive member of society.[9] Anti-abortionists assert that artificial

[6] United States Supreme Court, *Roe vs. Wade,* 93S.Ct705 (1973), p. 724.

[7] "Abortion," *Groliers Academic American Encyclopedia,* Electronic Edition (New York: Dow Jones News Service, 1984).

[8] *Roe vs. Wade,* p. 732. This portion of the decision becomes more problematic with each succeeding year, as neo-natal medical techniques push the point of "viability" back toward the first trimester.

[9] Claudia Wallis, "The New Origins of Life," *Time Magazine* (September 10, 1984), pp. 46-53.



interference at any point along the spectrum of reproductive development is morally reprehensible since it arbitrarily ends human life. Those who are pro-choice, on the other hand, point to this process of development to show that distinctions can and, indeed, must be made to assure the quality of life.

For the same reason, pro-life advocates usually (though not always) hold strong objections to artificial contraception, since such methods interfere with the natural reproductive process and hence interrupt the spectrum of life. The latter view sees no distinction between valuing self-fulfillment, and the potential for it, and valuing life itself. Birth control is seen as advance planning which obviates the need for abortions. As the director of a women's clinic said, "People have abortions for reasons that are very correct for them. Now they might not be correct for me. But for them they feel very appropriate. Almost every one of our patients wants to have a child. Not this one; not now."[10] Educational, career and life-planning are valued highly. Therefore, planning of pregnancy and child-rearing is valued as well.

Thus there is no common definition of life on which to base the discussion. That the "compromise" the Supreme Court attempted did not work, but only inflamed the discussion, is an indication of just how far apart on this most basic question the two sides are.

Quality of Life

It can be seen that the issue of quality of life is intimately connected to the question of abortion. There exists, on this level, a conflict between the duty of society to protect the lives of helpless citizens (and who is more helpless than a baby?) and the duty to address situations which are oppressive and harmful.[11]

Each side approaches these two questions in their own way, revealing a rift in the very basic understanding of the term "quality of life." For the pro-choice person, quality can only be achieved through freedom, which is autonomy. Such freedom allows the achievement of quality by minimizing external restraints on human action. Therefore, the way to good action for the pregnant woman lies through freedom to make a rational decision. Since a woman's body nurtures a fetus in a basically involuntary way, the decision consists in choosing whether to continue a pregnancy once begun (or to prevent a pregnancy through contraception). The choice imparts a moral character which is absent if alternatives (i.e., ending, preventing or timing the pregnancy) are not available. This is because pregnancy becomes a form of involuntary servitude unless there is opportunity for decision. The attempt here is

[10] Interview: Judy Hauser, Director Northwest Women's Center, November 8, 1984.

[11] John Badertscher, "Religious Dimensions of the Abortion Debate," *Studies in Religion* (Fall, 1976-77), p. 177.

to safeguard those very basic rights regarded by our society as essential to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness:" the right of individual conscience, the right of religious freedom, the preciousness of all of life. In short, liberals insist that a quality life is possible for both woman and child only if the rights of women as decision-makers before God are affirmed.[12]

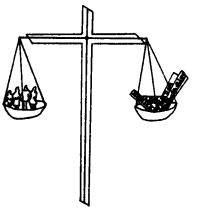
In the act of deciding, the woman will consider and weigh many factors: her health, the life situation into which the child would be born, obligations to which she is already committed, etc. Therefore, such concerns as standard of living, available financial and emotional resources and access to adequate medical care become crucial. The more resources a woman has, the more alternatives open to her and therefore the more her pregnancy becomes a choice and the greater the quality of life afforded to both woman and child.

Pro-life advocates, however, would argue that the freedom of the fetus also must be considered since it is an individual and entitled to protection of the law. Like infanticide, abortion is the deprivation of the right to life and is therefore murder. In any decision concerning pregnancy, the rights of the mother must be balanced against the rights of the child. Questions about quality of life are moot unless life itself is guaranteed. The issue here is that "human freedom goes beyond biological existence, but it does not go without it."[13] The pro-choice person is not necessarily advocating abortion but is defending the right of the one most intimately involved to make a choice. They question whether abortion, at least in the first trimester, should be a matter determined by law and not by individual choice. The pro-life person will question the shutting out from the protection of law the defenseless human residing in the womb. Since, they argue, any quality of life is impossible without life itself, abortion restricts the opportunity for the fetus to enjoy a "quality life."

The issue goes far beyond the legal opportunity for choice, however. Pro-choice people argue that because abundance of resources opens alternatives and provides for choosing, those who are wealthy will in any case be afforded a "quality" life. This is because, in all eras of history, those who could afford either to raise children or not could get an abortion—legal or otherwise.[14] Therefore, the very act of making abortion a crime forces some women into a lower level of living than others, by depriving them of the opportunity for choice, while the wealthy will have opportunity for choice in any case.

Also of concern is the level of opportunity for both the necessities of life and the possibility of self-fulfillment available to children born into under-

[12] Jessma O. Blockwick, "Pro-Choice Position Safeguards Basic and Treasured Values," *Engage-Social Action* (March, 1983), p. 15.
[13] Badertscher, 177.
[14] Luker, 104.



privileged families. This view is not confined to those who support unregulated abortion; most others also maintain that such issues need to be addressed by providing sufficient resources to make the choice real. As the director of an Abortion Alternatives program said, "People who are advocates of conservative laws have a responsibility to address the concerns of life."[15] Life itself is meaningless if quality is not available.

But this only begs the question of what level of quality is essential for life to have meaning. And what does quality consist of? If meaning in life consists only of existence, then the conservative position must be convincing, since banning abortions assures the continued existence of all involved.[16] But if meaningful life consists in something more than existence, then the pro-choice position calls us to define that and to try to assure it for all. It is tautalogical that meaningful life consists of more than just material well-being, yet adequate physical resources must be assured. For the pro-choice person, meaningful life consists in freedom more than in mere physical existence or even physical well-being. But this freedom itself can be defined in either secular or transcendant terms. For the most part, the pro-choice movement chooses to speak of freedom only in secular terms: freedom to choose life-style, occupations, even commitments and relationships. The freedom to choose, or choose not, to bear children is as important to a quality life as the freedom to choose careers and marriage partners.

Family Life

One point on which both sides seem to agree is that a quality life is possible only within the context of a stable family environment. Such agreement, however, is superficial, for there are extreme differences in what is conceived of as a stable family environment.

Pro-choicers insist their position is founded on "a concept of family based on love and respect of each member rather than on coerced relationships."[17] They point to the destructive consequences for all members of a family when the unit is forced to accept an unwanted pregnancy or a pregnancy that stretches the family's resources past the breaking point. Such coercion can result in family breakup and emotional or physical violence. In response to the position that forcing people to live with the consequences of their irresponsible sexual activity would create a more stable family life, they argue that the one who suffers is not the sexual partners, but the offspring.[18]

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[15] Inteview: Martha Armstrong, Director, Problem Pregnancy Services of Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Columbus, November 5, 1984.

[16] Even the laws banning abortions, for the most part, allowed them when the woman's physical life was endangered.

[17] Blockwick, 15.

[18] Dorothy Brown, "An Issue That Must Be Faced in an Adult Way," *Engage-Social Action* (March, 1983), p. 18.

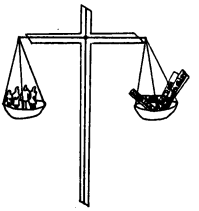
Inherent in this view is the assumption that changing family roles are good. The demise of the "typical" family in which the male is the breadwinner and the female the homemaker is not something to be bemoaned but is inherently good. This is because allowing the woman control over her own fertility opens up an entirely different world of opportunity for her. When women are allowed to pursue careers just as men are, they become equals and the partnership of the family is more complete and more fulfilling for all concerned.

Their opponents reject this trend and see abortion as contributing to it. From their point of view such changes in social relationship are a denial of the reality of nature: that men and women are uniquely suited to entirely different roles. The act of abortion is a denial of women's personhood because it takes a human life which it is the woman's special ability to nourish. It is a rejection of the woman's divinely given nature. Not only is she suited biologically to nourishment, but (unlike men) she is also emotionally equipped to be the nurturer in the home. It does violence to this unique nature for women to abandon the home and enter the competitive work-world of men.

Secondly, the act of giving women control over their own fertility breaks up that intricate set of social relationships between women and men that has traditionally protected women and children. The removal of this protection fosters and supports a worldview that deemphasizes (and therefore downgrades) the traditional roles of men and women. The traditional division of labor is appropriate and natural; abortion disrupts this arrangement.

Thus, there is a collision of worldviews, a collision in which there can be little compromise and almost no communication because of the vast differences in assumptions of the two sides. On the one side, the developments of the past twenty years that have radically altered the structure of family life: smaller families, redefined roles and a new equality in the division of labor between males and females. Availability of abortion, like contraception, relaxed sexual mores and opportunities for employment of women in "non-traditional" occupations, are seen as essential to supporting this new family structure, that promises greater human fulfillment and thus a higher quality of life.

On the other hand, abortion opponents challenge this very shift and, indeed, feel threatened by it. By and large, those who are pro-life feel satisfied with traditional roles and sense that the value and quality of their contributions are being downgraded by these new forms. In their view, everyone loses when women abandon their "natural" roles: women deny their unique God-given nature and lose the cherishing and protection men offer; men lose the nurturing that only women can offer, which moderates the potential for destruction and aggression



inherent in their nature; and children lose full-time loving and nourishment by one devoted parent.

Changing Roles For Women

Ultimately, the debate over abortion is a debate over the role of women in society. Are women to abandon those roles which have been traditionally defined as theirs, in order to seek greater fulfillment (and status) in the male world? Or will women be kept in the sphere to which they have been "confined" since the advent of the nuclear family? It is what Kristin Luker has called "a referendum on the place and meaning of motherhood."[19]

Motherhood is the issue because the debate has its roots in two opposing views of motherhood. These two groups are composed of women with different backgrounds, experiences, resources and expectations.

As Luker observes:

> It is obvious that a woman who does not work in the paid labor force, who does not have a college degree, whose religion is important to her, and who has already committed herself wholeheartedly to marriage and a large family is well equipped to believe that an unanticipated pregnancy usually becomes a loved child. Her life is arranged so that for her, this belief is true. This view is consistent not only with her values, which she has held from earliest childhood, but with her social resources as well. It should not be surprising, therefore, that her world view leads her to believe that everyone else can "make room for one more" as easily as she can and that therefore it supports her in her conviction that abortion is cruel, wicked, and self-indulgent.[20]

The realities of experiencing a pregnancy with inadequate financial or social resources, or a pregnancy which disrupts one's career, education or lifestyle are foreign to such a person. The conclusion is, then, that chosen lifestyles leave persons on both sides with different needs for abortion and different values regarding the morality of abortion, which are in turn defined by their differing needs.

Abortion is seen as a symbolic marker that separates the needs of homemakers and workers. As abortion supports the value of women getting a job, advancing or training for a job, it seems to emphasize economic considerations over moral ones. This symbolism is strengthened by the economic fact that only very wealthy families can afford to keep one of its earners off the labor market. Such families are in a position to be about the basically moral obligation of raising children and making a home.

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[19] Luker, 193.
[20] Luker, 198.

While feminists celebrate the new opportunities available to them to enlarge their world and experience, others see a profoundly disturbing shift in the way human life is valued. The perceived devaluing of the nurturing role indicates a move to value persons more for their economic contributions than for their personhood. Abortion brutalizes all of society, lessening the value of life across the board. As the director of one pro-life organization said, "The abortion mentality, by making it right to kill innocent unborn children, makes it right to kill infants, senior citizens, even the sick."[21]

The feminist position is that just the opposite is occurring: since women are no longer confined to a rigidly defined role, their personhood is enhanced more than it was in the basically economic arrangement whereby they were valued only as homemakers.

Speaking Gospel, Not Law

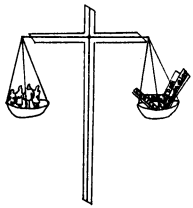
One theme that recurs in all the literature and is repeatedly mentioned in my conversations on this topic is that abortion is a religious issue. It is clear that, with or without awareness of the multi-layered nature of the debate, those engaged know that an ultimate solution will not come from medicine, law or sociology. There is a growing sense that something deeper is involved than we have yet been aware of in the discussion; yet most people would be hard put to define exactly in what way it is a religious issue. As we have seen, the question of whether, and under what circumstances, to allow abortions leads into the more encompassing questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life itself, but these deeper questions are submerged under much rhetoric.

Various church bodies have responded to this invitation to involvement in different ways. Some, such as the Roman Catholic Church, have restated their doctrine in a strict manner which condemns all abortions, including the action of contraceptives. While this witnesses clearly to the sacredness of life as a gift from God, it has come across as too legalistic. Such a stance seems to ignore the legitimate claims of those already living in difficult circumstances, or those whose entire lives might be crushed by an unwanted pregnancy; as, for example, in the cases of young teenagers, victims of rape, or incest.

While strict and authoritative stands support the plea for a ban on all abortions, it leaves the church in the position of not addressing the deeper issue of the abortion debate or the ambiguities of lives in which hard choices must be made. As John Badertscher has observed, "the law can only permit or deny abortions. That is, it either gives unqualified affirmation to the claim of the fetus or unqualified affirmation to the claim of the woman."[22] The law really is

[21] Interview: Stephanie Varga, Executive Director, Columbus Right to Life, November 5, 1984.

[22] Badertscher, 182.



incapable of recognizing and dealing with the gray areas of life which make up the arena of most decisions regarding abortion. But while it is the nature of the law to be limited to the ability to only permit or deny action, the church is not limited to such an option and ought not take it. It encourages people to believe the church does not take the exigencies of life seriously. Such a retreat to absolutist principles perpetuates the schism between sacred and secular already so pronounced in our society by encouraging the belief that the church, and its message, is "irrelevant." It need not be said that, beyond this, legalism violates the very message of the Gospel that our relationship with God and fellow humans, through Christ, transcends all law.

While the church is being invited to speak to the abortion issue, it will be ignored if its response overlooks the hard realities of life and seeks to impose authority with the force of law. In such a case, the church's message is lost because it has itself divorced its speaking to this issue from the heart of the Gospel message, which is a new creation propounded on love and not on law.

However, the response of the "moderate" churches (which includes the three uniting Lutheran church bodies), while more Gospel-oriented, cannot really be said to be sufficient. The American Lutheran Church's statement on abortion is representative of such denominational statements. It carefully affirms the sacredness of human life "from conception" but goes on to acknowledge "that there may be circumstances when, all pertinent factors responsibly considered, an induced abortion may be a tragic option."[23] Three things must be noted in connection with this statement.

First, while it is definitely pro-choice, it is not pro-abortion. What is being stressed here is the necessity of facing ambiguous circumstances in which rights and values of equal importance may conflict. We cannot predict all the individual circumstances and all the effects of a decision for or against abortion. This is a full recognition of free responsibility under the Gospel, a freedom that is only eroded when such important decisions are approached in a legalistic manner.

Secondly, this statement affirms the sacredness of all human life. This means that both fetal life and the fully developed life of the woman and her family are given equal weight, the proportionate importance of each to be decided on the basis of individual circumstances. Such an affirmation, if taken seriously, ought to guard against irresponsible use of abortion as primary birth control or as a device of convenience.

Thirdly, while this statement seeks to find a position of responsible freedom, it still appears to be a superficial answer to a complex series of issues. While the

[23] The American Lutheran Church, "Abortion: A Statement of Judgment and Conviction" (Minneapolis, 1980).

ALC and other church bodies have addressed some of these other issues in other position statements, it has not yet been communicated that we recognize they are units of a whole. Speaking to issues of family life, quality of life, the role of males and females in society and reproductive freedom are part and parcel of the proclamation of the Gospel message. Unless we demonstrate that we can bring an answer to the overriding question of the meaning of life, from which all decisions can emerge, we have missed both the point and a tremendous opportunity. We have missed the point of the debate entirely unless we recognize that the issue of abortion is only symbolic of these deeper questions of meaning and purpose. And we have missed a tremendous opportunity to overcome the modern schism which has relegated the church to a "spiritual realm" unrelated to the importance of everyday life.

This cannot really happen, of course, in denominational position papers voted on by conventions. It must occur in the statements and teaching of our church leaders. In classrooms and pulpits, we have an opening to overcome the segmentation of modern life by showing abortion as one side of the issue of values in conflict, and to show that the Gospel speaks to that conflict. Neither overriding dogmatism nor piece-meal skirmishing is an adequate response to the confusion and searching symbolized by this debate. We in the church must say clearly that responsible freedom under Christ is an adequate and transcendant response to the tragic element of life. Both authoritative legalism and lawless autonomy miss the boat.

As Paul Tillich puts it, "Autonomy asserts that man as the bearer of universal reason is the source and measure of culture and religion—that he is his own law." Authoritative legalism (heteronomy) "asserts that man, being unable to act according to universal reason, must be subjected to a law, strange and superior to him."[24] The Gospel, on the other hand, calls us to responsible freedom. Let this be our proclamation, for only then will we deserve to be heard.

[24] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), Abridged edition, p. 56.

A Valentine for those who Fear Yahweh: The Book of Malachi

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What does the proverbial "person in the pew" know about the book of Malachi or its message? At most, I think the stirring lines from chapter 3, sung in Handel's Messiah: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fine, and like fullers' soap."

Because of the arrangement of English Bibles, Malachi is known commonly in the church as the last book in the Old Testament. The Hebrew canon actually ends with the books of Chronicles, and they—plus at least Ezra, Nehemiah, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Daniel, and probably Proverbs, Song of Songs, Joel and Jonah—were written a century and more after Malachi. Our book was placed last in the prophetic canon because it is linked to the two immediately preceding prophetic units (Zech 9-11 and 12-14), each beginning with the word "oracle."

The average seminary graduate learns in addition that Malachi was a post-exilic prophet who criticized Israel for offering second-rate animals in their sacrifices, and who promised great material blessings to those who tithe. But the book is hardly a favorite, and full length commentaries on this book are rare indeed.[1]

Because of Malachi's unique question-answer format, many characterize it as a catechism or, perhaps better, a disputation, but there has been little attempt to follow the line of the book's argument from beginning to end. Through general inattention and exegesis by excision[2] scholars have missed the coherent rhetorical arrangement of the book. The following pages hope to redress this situation and rehabilitate the prophet Malachi as an important theological contributor to the faith of Israel. This essay is designed to lure readers into the biblical text and to encourage them to wrestle with Malachi about the nature of God's love and the balance between good and evil in the world. For each pericope we propose a narrative outline that puts emphasis on the rhetorical structure; this we follow with theological or explanatory comments of our own.

Outline of Malachi

1:1 Superscription: The Word of Yahweh concerning Israel by the hand of "Malachi"

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1 The best available commentaries: Rex Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1977); Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai-Sacharia 1-8—Sacharia 9-14—Maleachi,* Kommentar zum Alten Testament 13, 4 (Gütersloh; Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1976); Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi,* Word Biblical Commentary 32 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984). David L. Petersen is preparing what promises to be an outstanding commentary for the Old Testament Library (Westminster Press).

2 Almost all modern scholars, correctly in my judgment, identify 4:4-6 as a secondary appendix. What we call 4:1-6 is numbered 3:19-24 in the Hebrew Bible. 3:13-4:3 is identified as secondary by Seven L. McKenzie and Howard N. Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," *CBQ* 45 (1983), p. 562.

1:2-5 Yahweh's Reliable Love

Yahweh says: I have loved you.

You say: How have you loved us?

Yahweh says: I have loved Jacob and hated Esau and have permanently destroyed Edom to prove the point. The Edomites will be called the wicked territory, the people with whom Yahweh is angry forever.

You will say: Great is Yahweh over the territory of Israel!

For a book that criticizes sharply both priests and laity, it begins strangely, with Yahweh affirming his love. Who is the audience identified as "you"? Is it the priests that cheat on their offerings, or the wicked whose misdeeds are catalogued in 2:10-16 and 3:5? Are they people whose faithfulness leads them to expect more concrete evidence of God's love?

God's reply focuses on his preference for Jacob over his brother Esau as proof of his love. Esau is the ancestor of Edom, the archetype of national evil. Such divine hatred is not questioned as unfair or ungodlike;[3] we too can accept it as a hyperbolic way of underlining God's positive love for the people addressed as "you," who seem to have had trouble believing that they were loved. Since wicked Edom will never be rebuilt, why are the people unclear about whether Yahweh loves Jacob rather than Esau?

Someday the people addressed as "you" will join in an eschatological cheer: Yahweh is great!

So the author has posed the thesis (Yahweh loves you) that will be debated—and resolved—in the rest of his book.

1:6-14 Indictment of the Priests for Despising the Altar

Yahweh says: A son honors his father and a servant his master. Yet I am father and master and am neither honored nor feared. Yahweh accuses priests of despising his name.

You priests say: How have we despised you?

Yahweh says: By offering polluted food upon my altar.

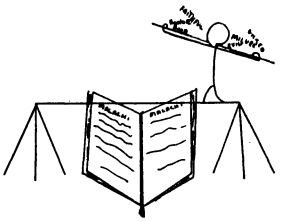
You say: How have we polluted it?

Yahweh says: By thinking that Yahweh's table may be despised. Or by offering blind, lame, and sick animals.

Present such a gift to the governor. Would he receive it or show you favor?

With such a gift from your hand, will God show favor to any of you? Better

[3] In Gen 29:30-31 Leah is designated as "less loved" in the first verse, but this is interpreted as "hated" in the second.



to close the doors of the forecourt of the temple than to light vain fires. I will not accept an offering from your hand.

My name is great among the nations and everywhere outside Jerusalem pure offerings are made to my name.

But you defile Yahweh's name in Jerusalem when you say the table of the Lord is defiled and the food destined for him can be despised. Sacrificing is a weariness to you and you offer animals taken by violence. Cursed be the cheat who sacrifices a blemished animal when there is a whole animal in his flock. After all, Yahweh is a great king, whose name is feared among the nations.

In this rare Old Testament reference to the fatherhood of God (outside of Malachi only clearly in Isaiah 63-64), Yahweh notes that he lacks a father's expected honor and reverence (fear). He accuses the priests of despising him by offering shoddy animals as sacrifices. He ironically suggests that they give their Persian governor such a present to see how he would react. No sacrifices would be better than such sacrifices!

Pagan worship is deemed better than what goes on in the Jerusalem temple. Does superior worship among the nations refer to recent converts to Judaism (cf. Jonah 1), or to Jewish synagogue worship in the dispersion? Does the writer believe that since pagan gods do not exist, those who sacrifice with sincerity to these gods are worshipping Yahweh unawares? Whatever its precise meaning, the intention of this sentence is clear: Worship in Gentile territory is much superior to that going on at Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem.

With the words *But you* (stressed by the word order of the Hebrew text of v. 12) the prophet contrasts the corrupt priesthood to their pagan counterparts. By mentioning animals taken by violence the author refers either to the fact that they were stolen or to the fact that they had been killed by wild beasts and then "given" to Yahweh. Such carcasses were not even proper for human consumption (cf. Lev 7:24; 17:15; Deut 14:21; Ezek 4:14).

Though someday Yahweh will be hailed as great in Israel (cf. 1:5) and even now he is feared among the nations, neither his greatness nor his reverence is affirmed by the present cultus in Jerusalem.

2:1-9 Priests Unworthy of their Namessake Levi

Yahweh says: If you priests will not listen or honor my name, I will lay a curse upon you. I will cut off your arm, fling offal resulting from sacrificial preparations in your face, and banish you from my presence.

My covenant was with Levi. It included life and peace—and also the need

to fear, and he did fear me. True instruction was in his mouth and he turned many away from iniquity. A priest's lips keep knowledge and people seek instruction from his mouth for he is the messenger of Yahweh of hosts.

But you have turned aside from the way and have caused many to stumble by instruction. You have corrupted the covenant with Levi.

Hence I make you despised. You acted against God's greatness and now you will be made small in the eyes of all the people. You have shown partiality in your instruction.

The priests' failure to honor Yahweh's name (cf. 1:6) will result in curses appropriate to their office. A person without an arm would be ineligible to serve (cf. 1 Sam 2:30-31). All the gore and viscera connected with the slaughter of sacrificial animals, including the contents of the animals' stomachs (offal; cf. Exod 29:14), would be hurled in their faces, and they would be banished from access to God, or, as some scholars read this line, people would treat them as a curse.

A covenant with the Levitical priests is mentioned in Jer. 33:21 (cf. Neh 13:29).[4] In Jeremiah that covenant is viewed as unbreakable as God's covenant with the day and the night, which follow each other in an unstoppable progression. But Malachi understands this covenant as two-sided and capable of breach: it offered life and peace as a gift from Yahweh, but it also contained the expectation that Levi would reverence or fear God—which he carried out in exemplary fashion. Instruction or torah was found in his mouth and he turned people away from sin. You priests—the words again are given special emphasis in Hebrew—are counter images of your ancestor. You have turned yourselves away from God and caused others to stumble.

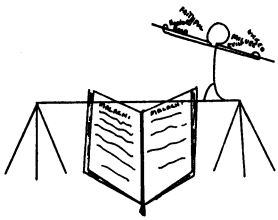
The result: punishment to fit the crime. The great despisers (cf. 1:6, 7, 12) will be themselves despised; those who acted against God's greatness (cf. 1:5, 14) by playing favorites with the torah will be diminished.

2:10-16 The People are Faithless to *their* Covenant

The prophet says: We all stem from one father and we should be one family. But people are faithless to the covenant of our fathers. Judah has married the daughter of a foreign god. May all who do this be without support in the community.

You ask: Why does he not accept our offerings?

[4] The Bible actually reports no covenant with the patriarch Levi himself though the prophet may have been thinking of Deut 33:8-11 or Num 25:11-13.



The prophet says: Yahweh is witness to the covenant between you and your wife. You have been faithless to her despite her companionship and her role as your covenant wife. The marital bond is traced back theologically to creation.

Yahweh says: I hate divorce. It is just like violent acts. Do not be faithless.

The prophet indicts lay Israel for violating the covenant made with their ancestors. Two sins dealing with marriage are cited as illustrative of this faithlessness (cf. 3:5 for other instances of sins by the laity). Judah's marriage to the daughter of a foreign god is usually understood to refer to intermarriage with a foreign woman who is not part of the covenant community, a sin committed by their ancestor Judah himself (cf. Gen 38:2). Some scholars understand this "marriage" as a syncretistic tie of Judahites with a pagan goddess (= the daughter of a foreign god).

A second offense has also triggered God's refusal to accept the people's sacrifices. They have violated another covenant, that with their spouse, despite her faithfulness and partnership in the faith. Many read between the lines here to discover a great social problem dealing with broken marriages.[5] In any case, Yahweh's hard-line position—I hate divorce—is in sharp distinction to the permissive legislation in the Torah, which merely requires that a man divorcing his wife give her a written certificate (Deut 24:1). It may be that Jesus' own harsh words about divorce find here their Scriptural base (Matt 19:6, 9).

2:17 Is God Fair?

The prophet says: You have wearied Yahweh.

You say: How have we wearied him?

The prophet says: By saying every evildoer is good in the eyes of Yahweh. Where is the God of justice?

Who is addressed by these accusations? Surely not the corrupt priests of 1:6-2:9 or the lay people indicted in 2:10-16! Note how the speakers (you) distinguish themselves from evildoers. Is their self-defense not an echo of the question with which the book begins: How do you, Yahweh, love us? Before we can nail down the identity of these speakers we need to consider God's initial response to their challenges.

3:1-12 God's Fairness Demonstrated

A. By his purifying of priests 3:1b-4 (cf. 1:6-2:9)

[5] Are the sins of 2:11-12 and 13-16 more closely related than we have indicated? Did men get divorces from their Israelite wives (vv. 13-16) so that they could marry Canaanite women (vv. 11-12) to improve their economic or social condition?

Yahweh says: I am coming in an awe-inspiring way, preceded by "my messenger." I will purify Levites, so that the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing as in days of old.

B. By his executing justice against the wicked 3:5 (cf. 2:10-16)

Yahweh says: Then I will draw near for justice toward you who are gross sinners and do not fear me.

C. By Yahweh's affirming his own and the people's unchanging behavior, and the continued possibility for them to change in order to receive blessings (3:6-12)

Yahweh says: I am unchanging and so you are also still children of Jacob! You have always turned aside since the time of your ancestors. Return to me and I will return to you.

And yet you say: Why should we return?

Yahweh says: You are robbing me.

You say: How have we robbed you?

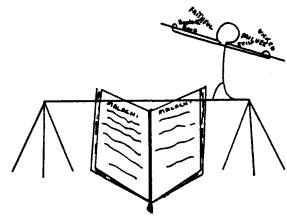
Yahweh says: By cheating on your tithes. Pay your tithes and test me out to see if I will bless you and rebuke the "devourer." All nations will call you blessed.

Where is the God of justice? The answer: he is coming to purify and judge. Just as a modern politician is preceded by an advance team, so king Yahweh will have an angelic messenger go before him to prepare his way. Yahweh is "The Lord whom you seek" and "the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight."[6] Every theophany is awe-inspiring, but the advent here announced is of the one who cleanses with fire and powerful soap.

He will move against the modern-day Levites who have cheated the sacrificial system; he will purify them so that they can offer once more sacrifices with righteousness. A purified priesthood will be matched by God-pleasing sacrifices from the whole community of Judah and Jerusalem.

The God of Justice will also come to judge those evildoers who prospered un-

[6] There is wide agreement on the identity of "my messenger" and "the Lord whom you seek," but references to Yahweh in the first and third person and the mysterious "messenger of the covenant" have called forth an unending stream of interpretations. Recently, Bruce V. Malchow, "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," *JBL* 103 (1984): 252-255, identified this figure with the coming Levitical messiah, but to do so he considers vv. 1b-4 as secondary. Many follow Karl Marti in seeing the "messenger of the covenant" as a dogmatic correction designed to protect the transcendence of God by having him represented by an angelic representative. In this case the covenant referred to would be that of Sinai (cf. Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2; Acts 7:38, 53).



fairly:[7] the sorcerers (Deut 18:10), adulterers (Exod 20:14), false swearers (Zech 5:4), those who oppress hirelings, widows and orphans, and those who thrust aside the resident aliens (Zech 7:10). Their root sin: they do not *fear* me (cf. 1:6; 2:5).

Where is the God of justice? was the charge. In part C of his response Yahweh affirms that he acts no differently than in the past, just as Israel still continues in the model of its deceitful ancestor Jacob. (cf. Gen 27) The Jacob he loves (1:2) is a person only a gracious God could love. Their long pattern of backsliding is capped by a contemporary, insensitive question: Why should we return?

The reply to this complaint makes clear that Yahweh is not addressing common thieves, but those who rob him in tithes and offerings. And still his love shines through: Test me out, pay your tithes. See if I won't pour out limitless blessings in response, protect you from devouring threats, (like the locusts of the book of Joel?), and change the ridicule of the nations (Deut 33:29; Zech 8:13) into their recognition of your blessedness.

3:13-18; 4:1-3 Reaffirmation of love toward those who fear Yahweh

3:13-15 A Dialogue with those who fear Yahweh.

Yahweh says: Your words have been hard against me.

You say: How have we spoken against you?

Yahweh says: You have said: It is useless to serve God. From now on we too will consider the arrogant blessed just as Yahweh apparently does. (cf. 2:17) Evildoers prosper and they escape even when they test God.

3:16-18; 4:1-3 Yahweh recognizes the fidelity of those who fear him

At that time when those who feared Yahweh spoke with one another, Yahweh heard and a book of remembrance was written listing those who feared him and thought on his name.

Yahweh says: They shall be my prized possession on the day when I act. Once more you will be able to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked (cf. 3:15). Arrogant evildoers will become stubble, but God-fearers will be healed by the sun of righteousness and will romp like calves released from the stall. You will tread down the wicked on the day when I act.

Now Yahweh voices his own complaint. The people with whom he is speaking have not only asked about the whereabouts of the God of justice (cf. 2:17), but they still believe serving God

[7] In the view of those who complained in 2:17, these evildoers seemed to enjoy God's favor.

is without benefit. If the evildoers are good in Yahweh's eyes, they affirm, that's the way we will consider them as well. Not only do the wicked prosper; they even escape all punishment when they put God to the test.

Who rasies this complaint? The same people who asked at the beginning of the book: How have you loved us? and who complained in 2:17 that the God of justice is absent. As far as they are concerned, God's three-fold defense of himself in 3:1-12 is good but beside the point, or at least only a partial solution. The people who raise this complaint are righteous. They are latter-day Jobs who find that their own fate in life does not correspond to their fidelity to God.

As these Yahweh-fearers spoke in bitterness to one another, Yahweh finally paid attention and recorded their names in a book of remembrance. Elsewhere the Old Testament knows of a heavenly list of names (Exod 32:33-34; Isa 4:3; Ezek 13:9; Ps 69:29; 87:6) or of books in which the deeds of pious people are recorded (Neh 13:14; Ps 139:16; Dan 7:10; 10:21; 12:1). Apparently the second type of book is meant here. These people are those who in fact fear, not those about whom God had complained that they did not fear him or reverence his name (1:6). These are people who are mirror images of that great ancestor Levi (2:5) who both feared Yahweh and honored his name.

On that great coming day, when Yahweh will purify the Levites and act in judgment against the gross sinners, he will declare these people who fear him his prized possession. The present inequity will be overturned. No longer will they say that serving Yahweh makes no difference (3:15). Their present wounds will be healed by the "sun of righteousness," with healing in its wings. The winged sun disk, an ancient Near Eastern emblem for a pagan deity like Ashur, is transformed into a symbol of God's great eschatological reversal. Then those who fear Yahweh will leap and dance like calves on a Spring day, and they will trample on the wicked in Israel about whom they have complained bitterly. This is a gospel for a people in conflict. It answers their complaint about God's apparently unfair retribution even if it leaves us—and the ancient reader?—uneasy about their vindictive attitude toward the faithless within Israel.

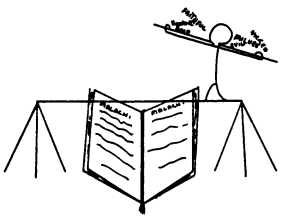
Later Supplements

Yahweh says:

4:4 Remember the statutes of Moses

4:5-6 I will send Elijah the prophet. He will reconcile the generations of Israel to one another so that I will not have to smite the land with a curse.

It is a common judgment today that both of these comments come from a later hand, from that inspired body of



tradents who preserved and shaped the prophet's words and lent them such authority that we, both Jews and Christians, consider them canonical.

The first supplement takes account of the fact that we are at the end of the prophetic canon. In the Hebrew Bible the "Prophets" consist of Joshua, Judges, the books of Samuel and Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets. At the end of this canonical unit the text urges us to remember Moses and his law, thus tying together the law and the prophets as co-authorities in the community. Specifically, the fourth commandment revealed through Moses, requiring honor for parents, anticipates the content of the next two verses.

The second supplement interprets a pair of riddles from the original book: Who is "my messenger" in 3:1? Who is "the messenger of the covenant whom you desire"? (cf. footnote 6) One answer to these questions is provided by the superscription in 1:1: "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi." "Malachi" is Hebrew for "my messenger." According to this verse, the messenger who is to prepare the way for God' own coming is the prophet himself and his message to Israel.

In 4:5-6 that coming messenger is identified as Elijah, the prophet who left this world without dying and thus was available as God's heavenly advance man. This supplement proposes that Elijah will reconcile the generations to one another. Many have seen this as particularly necessary in the Hellenistic period when the generations' loyalty was getting pulled in different directions. However that may be, Elijah is to play a far different role than the way-preparing-messenger of 3:1. His ministry of reconciliation will make unnecessary God's own coming to curse his people. Just as many of us wince at the judgmental words of 4:3 that breathe vindictiveness towards members of the community, so the editors responsible for the canonical shape of the text indicate that all Israel will finally be saved at the great and terrible day of the Lord. The Bible never fully resolves this debate: On the one hand God's wrath will be poured out against all wicked, within and outside of Israel; on the other hand, God's final word to his people is always "yes." Note that those who supplemented the text did not eradicate the words of purification and judgment in 3:1-12 and in 4:1-3. But they urged that all those who raise words of judgment about individual or communal behavior do so in the knowledge that God's ultimate and final word to his people is that all Israel will be saved. In the ancient Greek translation of Malachi, the final verses appear in the order 4:2, 4:3, and 4:1.[8] In this way the translators made sure that the last word of the prophetic canon would not be the word "curse." After all, that never is God's last word.

[8] In the Jewish synagogue the reading of 4:4-6 is followed by the rereading of v. 4.

The book of Malachi begins and ends with unconditional statements of God's love. Those addressed include those who corrupt the worship of God and those whose moral actions reveal their own infidelity, as well as those who fear God and who puzzle over his strange ways with the human family. For the latter group the burning theological issue is one of theodicy, the attempt to reconcile the *ways* of God with the *character* of God. A just and loving God does not tolerate shoddy worship or lives lived in contradiction to his holiness. But such a God cannot ignore those who fear him. Whatever their lot in this life they are to be reassured that they ultimately are God's prized possessions. Their present grievances will be healed by and at God's coming.

Our reading of the book of Malachi makes the prophet more complex than one who criticizes cost-cutting in worship or who harps on the sins of the wicked. Even his critical paragraphs are prefixed by Yahweh's assurance, "I love you." That love does not mean overlooking failures in worship or daily life, but that love, too, finally recognizes and honors those who fear Yahweh and who think about his name.

With whom should readers identify as they study the book? With the prophet who castigates those clergy and laity who sin? With those called to a more sincere worship life and to higher ethical standards? Or with those who are loved by Yahweh and yet find that love hard to believe, especially when the wicked prosper and their own words seem only to weary God? I propose the latter. Such loved ones are urged to hope not only for justice toward the wicked, but also for healing and rejuvenation for themselves at God's appearing. They know God loves them.

From beginning to end, the Christian gospel tells of God's love for his children. It is not a love that overlooks sin or brooks service of self, but it is a love that promises final and full deliverance for people who cling to God in faith. This reassurance reverses and contradicts judgments others make of sinners, or that they make of themselves.

The reconciling work of Christ, that sought-for-prophet-of-God who has already come, offers salvation to all. He purifies our worship and judges those who sin, but he also breaks down the dividing wall of partition between our generations, nations, sexes, and races. "I love you," he says, "by my life, death, and resurrection." The one whose traditional birthday corresponds with the Winter solstice, the festival of the unconquered sun, offers us righteousness and healing. He is the son of righteousness. Because of this sun/son, God no longer has to smite the land with a curse.

Safe on the Way

Herbert Anderson

Baccalaureate Sermon, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, May, 1985

And now I am coming to you: I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world ... I sent them into the world just as you sent me into the world. And for their sake, I dedicate myself to you, in order that they too many be truly dedicated to you. (John 17)

As many of you are no doubt discovering, one of the advantages of moving is that you find things you forgot you had or did not know you had. The other day I found some notes on a series of dreams that a graduating senior told me some years ago. The notes were very sketchy—so the dream becomes a composite of many dreams—including my own. We will call it simply the graduating seminarian dream.

In the beginning of the dream, it is not clear whether or not the seminarian was on a short trip—or a long journey. Nor was it fully clear whether the seminarian went voluntarily or was being sent. In any event, in the dream, the seminarian was in a strange and familiar place. In the center of that place was the largest Hi Vee grocery store that the seminarian had ever seen. The store was surrounded by a thick grove of trees that formed a protective ring.

The only way into the store was to bend low and the only way out of the store was to spend everything you had. The store was filled with infinite varieties of merchandise—most of which were unfamiliar. The language was strange also. Even so, it became perfectly clear what the people were saying. Although everything was just a little odd—it seemed like a safe place to be—particularly because of the people in the store.

In the middle of the store was a small white frame church. The church had no name. There was a sign outside the church that said—"If you are not having a good day, maybe God is still making you a new one." The language in the church was strange and familiar.

The area outside the store was cluttered with cardboard boxes. Some were marked fragile and some were marked books. Some were very large and some were small. Some were empty and some were full. Some were sturdy and some were no use at all. It was difficult to tell which boxes were valuable and which were junk.

Throughout the dream the thick grove of trees that ringed the store was receding. As the grove receded the space around the store became larger and less inviting and the light beyond the trees became more foreboding. There were safe corners for children here and there but there was no place to belong as an adult.

The seminarian woke up from the dream a little disoriented because everything in the dream had been so clear. After a while the seminarian went back to sleep and the dream resumed. Only this time, the huge Hi Vee grocery store was gone. There was a 7-11 instead. The church was still there and it seemed a little larger but the sign was gone. The

billboard simply said: A Church. And the doors were locked.

The ring of trees was now hardly visible in the distance—but it seemed to have stopped receding. There was a vast expanse instead. There were clusters of people here and there in this vast expanse. Some seemed familiar—some were clearly unfamiliar. Some were sad and crying and some were angry. Some were puffy fat—some were walking skeletons. They were silent except for the muzzled sound of sadness. No one seemed to be bothered by the fact that the seminarian was naked.

Beyond the ring of trees there was a bright light. It was both frightening and illuminating. Inside the ring of trees there were scattered clusters of people in odd shapes. Here and there were patches of light—more than many shades of grey—and then patches of thick darkness like fog.

The cardboard boxes had become a moving walkway from the church into the vast expanse. Some portions of the walkway were more stable than others, but always the walkway was moving out into the vast expanse of light and darkness and clusters of people and shapes. The seminarian started walking on the cardboard path toward the ring of trees, far, far in the distance—into a vast, terrifying expanse of familiarity and unfamiliarity. As the seminarian walked past the church, the seminarian was joined by two people. One was a familiar figure who looked like a combination of cheerleader and clown. Sometimes the cheerleader/clown would carry the seminarian when the cardboard walkway was unsteady. Most of the time, however, the cheerleader/clown would run ahead—turn and shout—

> Hey, hey what do you say. Tomorrow begins another day. Hurry up and don't delay. Be of courage on the way.

Then the cheerleader/clown would wait for the seminarian to catch up. The other companion was an old woman who walked slowly with great dignity and with great pain. And as she walked the old woman said over and over again as if it were a litany:

> Bent and sent
> Sent and bent
> Came and went
> All is spent
> God's content.

May the peace of the God which passes all human understanding keep you safe on the way.

Preaching Peace

Robert W. Bertram

Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of History and Systematic Theology.
Preached at the Graduation Eucharist, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, June 9, 1985

Peace be with you!

The graduating class has requested that the sermon this morning should preach "peace." That is the theme of today's Second Lesson, Ephesians 2:13-18.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ.
For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility,
by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, so making peace,
and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting the hostility to death.
And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,
for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

I.

1. There used to be a T-shirt walking around these halls imprinted with a catchy slogan about Des Moines, Iowa. It read, "Des Moines is not the end of the world, but you can see it from there." You might wonder at my reasons for quoting that T-shirt on the occasion of this service. You might suppose that what the T-shirt quipped about Des Moines I am now going to quip about those obscure, faraway villages and hamlets to which some of you graduates have been called as pastors—Latrobe, Pennsylvania; Mohawk, Michigan; Louisville, Nebraska—as if those localities were afterthoughts stranded on the edge of civilization. No, that would be a cheap shot, and terribly parochial. That would imply that places like that are ecclesiastically "far off" and places like this are ecclesiastically "near." That is exactly the snooty misconception about "far off" and "near" which our text is meant to overcome with its own straight talk about peace.

2. Return to the T-shirt for a moment and imagine that "T" stands for "theology:" a theological shirt, a sort of revealing liturgical vestment. To accomplish the revealing, the only adjustment we would need to make in the original slogan is to substitute for the name "Des Moines" the word "church." Thus, "the church is not the end of the world but you can see it from there." The one place in the world from which to see how the world finally ends is that place where Jesus the Christ gathers his believers, the church.

3. Isn't that in effect what our text from Ephesians is saying in the way it locates "peace?" If you want to see a world which ends in peace, come look at the world at that point where it is becoming the church. Not that the church already is the world at peace. It is and it isn't. But there in the church you

can see the world on its way to being pacified before your eyes. How you see that is not by staring at the church directly but rather by looking to Christ Jesus, to whom the church also looks, and then first looking back at the church to watch it watching Christ. The church is that much of the world which comes to its end where it sees Christ came to his end—as Ephesians says, "in his body on the cross." And what it sees, in him, is what it gets: peace. The church's Cross-eyed preoccupation with Christ is the best view you can get, for now, of how the world is scheduled to end—peaceably.

II.

1. What is the alternative? Unfortunately there is a non-peaceable alternative fate of the world, though that is deeply unpleasant to talk about. It is almost too grim to contemplate. If earlier this week you saw ABC's documentary on the nuclear future, "The Fire Unleashed," you have an inkling, but even then, at worst, only an inkling. Ephesians' alternative to peace, its alternative *un*happy ending, is summed up in its single word, "hostility." In order for the world to end in "peace" it first has to be rescued from its opposite, its otherwise certain doom, "hostility." At first that may sound simplistic. Our activist generation has learned to say, "Peace is more than the absence of hostility," "If you want peace, work for justice." Yet in the Scripture lesson before us the diametric antithesis of peace is said to be, quite straightforwardly, "hostility," "enmity."

2. That does sound too simple until we notice what all Ephesians means by hostility. The secret of the world's hostility, what really promotes its divisions and apartheids and antagonisms, or at least exacerbates them by seeming to legitimate them, is something for which the Creator is responsible, namely, "the law of commandments and ordinances." There is no breaking down "the dividing wall of hostility" except by "abolishing ... the law of commandments and ordinances." And you know very well who is the Creator of that law. Abolish that? Even to say that takes theological daring, and anyone who does say it either is risking blasphemy or must be awfully sure of a way out. Let's hope our epistle belongs to the latter.

3. The hostility which divides people is of course all too human, but what reenforces human beings' hostility, what seems to justify it is something quite divine, the law of God. The deepest division between people is not the gap between races and nationalities (in Ephesians, between Jews and Gentiles) nor the gap between the sexes or between age-groups or between rich and poor, powerful and powerless. The deepest division is between those who do justice and those who do injustice, the right-minded and the wrong-minded, those who respect the Creator's creation and



those who don't, the lawful and the lawless. That most basic division is created and emphasized, not just by human beings but by the biblical God. That prior distinction between the just and the unjust permeates all the other lesser divisions between genders and classes and races, it stiffens and strengthens those divisions into hostilities and gives them a show of right.

4. For example, racism. Racism is not just calling attention to our ethnic differences of skin color and culture. By themselves those differences are grounds for rejoicing, part of the very richness and elegance of the creation. What sours those ethnic differences into hostile divisions is the added implication that, down deep, they are really differences between superior and inferior, between the morally better and the morally worse, between the somebodies and the nobodies. Racism smuggles into ethnicity the secret weapon of the divine law, the element of passing judgment upon human worth. To recognize that she is black could well be a compliment, but to keep her at a distance socially or geographically because she is black is to imply the law's kind of judgment about her worthiness. If she for the same reason, or because she is a woman, *keeps* her distance, on the grounds that that must be her place as an inferior, then she likewise is betraying how browbeaten she is not merely by her ethnicity or her sex but by the power of the law of God to evaluate persons, its power to judge them and to assign them to their appropriate outer circles. "The law of commandments and ordinances," though admittedly it is God's law, is what provides the dividing walls of hostility with their hidden power to wall people off.

5. Nowadays of course we are all savvy enough about bigotry, "hostility," to be able to see that bigots don't really respect God's law but merely manipulate it to their own ends. They are not lawful at all, they are legalists. Their dividing walls of hostility are a violation of "the law of commandments and ordinances." Obviously. So then, what do we do about them? Obviously, we invoke God's law all over again, this time against the bigots and this time justly. With the help of that law we brand the sexists and the oppressors for what they are, as we must. Their divisive practices and institutions we publicly deplore, as we must. The bigots themselves we try to remove from centers of influence, as we must. We invoke God as well, as we must, warning the bigoted world that such intra-human hostility vexes and angers the Creator and that there is hell to pay for that kind of divisiveness amongst us. In other words, God too can be hostile and divisive, and for good and lawful reasons.

6. So in the end, one way or the other, unjustly or justly, the divine "law of commandments and ordinances" keeps erecting always new dividing walls of hostility, if only by the way it sets itself

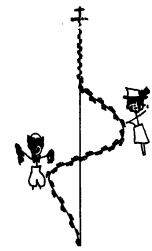
righteously against the existing unrighteous hostilities. Even the doing of justice creates new divisions. Like a black hole in the universe, human society seems infinitely fissionable, thanks of course to its own petty bigotries, but mightily compounded by the Creator's incessant, indignant critique of these bigotries. Whether it is the oppressors who abuse the law to rationalize their own cruelty or their courageous critics who expose the cruelty by means of that same law, whether it is unjust war or just war, persecution or righteous schism, it is still war, schism, hostility—not peace. If you want peace, work for justice? Right. But if you do work for justice, as you must, you will not really get peace either, but new divisions. There is no place in the world where this hostility really ends; or almost no place. There is no place from which even to *see* the end of it; or almost none.

III.

1. Almost no place. But there is one place. It is that strange and desolate place which Ephesians locates by such graphic terms as "in Christ Jesus" (v. 13), "in the blood of Christ" (v. 13), "in his flesh" (v. 15), "in one body through the cross" (v. 16). You cannot help but notice, sisters and brothers, that also that place of "cross" and "blood" and "flesh," situated so deep within the world, is itself a scene of worldly hostility. This cruciform place where the world ends, though it ends there in peace, is no escape from the world. It is not a place for those who flee reality, those who shrug off the hostilities, those who cannot stand the sight of blood. It is the place where the righteous and the ungodly, the legitimate and the illegitimate, the lawful and the lawless finally clash.

2. But at this place of the cross their clash is with him, Jesus, no longer with one another. For he dares to deny the difference between them. He challenges whether in fact they are all that different from one another, first of all as sinners but more than that, as precious and righteous. Exasperated, they demand of him, Well, then, are we somebodies or nobodies? Yes, he answers, disarming them. Not some of you somebodies and others of you nobodies nor each of you a little of both, but all of you nobodies are, through me, one great somebody. Isn't that something!

3. By challenging the differences between them Jesus challenges whether the law of God really has the last word after all, now that he has come along. Without ever demeaning that law of commandments and ordinances but on the contrary promoting it, he does nevertheless demote it. And for that there was hell to pay. That is why there was a "cross" and "blood" and a "body." He suffered the indignation himself, and suffered it out of existence. The black hole is closed. And out puffs Pentecost. Jesus the Christ presumed to bring home



with him not only the highborn from the suburbs but the riffraff and the bastards from the barrios and the underworld. He had the audacity, the sheer naive chutzpah to palm them all off on God, his motherly Father, as though these tagalongs were all one and the same—not merely equal (for which the world would be willing to settle) but rather *one*, "one new humanity in place of the two."

4. In response to this preposterous homecoming, would you believe it, the Creator throws open the doors of home, rolls back the stone, raises the dead Jew and seats him and his whole dubious following (including us) in a place of cosmic favor forever, and entrusts to us the administration of this hostile world during this its final phase, "... So making peace." And to think that the cunning old Creator had been in on this whole magnificent scam from the very beginning. It is difficult even to tell that hilarious story without cracking up. But cracking up is what the wall of hostility is doing. Can't you see it from here?

5. Is the end of the world far off? Or is it near? Sisters and brothers, you know I don't know the answer to that. But I do know that you and I have been far off, on the yon side, the wrong side of the Creator's law of commandments and ordinances—again and again we have been—and that we as well "have been brought near in the blood of Christ." I also know that far-offs like ourselves who are continually being brought near have a special feel for the world's other far-offs: the warmongers (not only their victims but the damnable warmongers themselves), a special feel for the sexists (not only those they abuse and demean but the abusers themselves), a special feel for the gluttons (not only the bloated children whom they starve but the bloated gluttons and the greedy), a special feel for the bureaucrats and intellectuals (not only for the illiterates whom they scorn but for the pathetic scorners themselves). It takes one to know one. It takes one far-off to know another far-off.

6. And it may well take you, take you to a cross, to bring other far-offs near. Why else do you keep looking to that One who majored in those who were far off, the One who refused to be deterred even by "the law of commandments and ordinances?" My friend, Ed Lisson—big Father Ed Lisson—works with the dying, the dying young and dying elderly. As he chuckles, all 300 pounds of him, he observes, "The young insist on justice, the old settle for mercy." You, sisters, and brothers, can give them both. If you want peace, work for justice—mercifully. The world wants peace, so promise them justice but give them mercy. Why else do you insist on covering yourself with the sign of Christ, scarcely counting the cost for the joy that is set before you? Why else do you keep tasting him week-in, week-out? Why else are you splashed with his spirit spanking wet? It must take one to know that One. Spanking wet,

what a revealing theological shirt you are. You may not be the end of the world, but I can see it from where you're looking.

Peace!

Not for Mission and Ministry?

David C. Schroeder
Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Boise, Idaho

I am *not* for mission and ministry!
Ministry means service.
I'm not so sure I want to be a servant!
Mission means reaching out to others.
I'd much rather others reached out to me.
Ministry is at odds with security.
I'd prefer to remain secure.
Mission is at odds with my comfort.
I'd really prefer to remain comfortable.
Mission and ministry are at odds.
  with the status quo.
"Come weal or come woe,
  my status is quo!"
Ministry involves risk.
I'd prefer no risk.
Mission involves giving of self
  with no assurance of returns
  on my investment.
I'd prefer something far safer!
Ministry involves me.
I'm not sure I'm ready for that.
This timidity is part of my bondage.
This need for institutional security
  is part of my slavery.
Only the love of Christ,
  my suffering Servant Lord,
can free me from this bondage.
Christ alone can free me.
Christ alone will free me.
  for mission and ministry,
  for his mission
  and his ministry.
No one else.
Nothing else.
I am to be faithful to my calling.
I am to be faithful to my Lord.
I am being called to die with him,
  to selfishness and sin,
  and to my obsession with security.
Then he *can* raise me.
Then he *will* raise me
  to newness of life
  to his glory
  and his alone.
Then I will be freed from the "gotta's."
Then I will be free for the "get to's."
Freed.
Yes.
Now.
And forever.
AMEN.

A Personal Computer for the Parish?

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The personal computer is a tremendous resource for parish ministry. But care must be taken in deciding whether and how to purchase and use a personal computer for the parish. This paper provides basic information for the parish that is considering obtaining a personal computer. It is not an introduction to computer technology, but will explain any technical terms used. The first part of the paper will identify helpful steps in investigating personal computers for parish use. The second part will briefly identify ways in which the personal computer can enhance parish ministry. All future references to "computers" will denote *personal* computers, also called *microcomputers,* rather than the larger *minicomputers* or the still larger *mainframes.*

My comments in this paper will draw on my readings during the past three years about computers, programs and the computer industry. It will also draw on my husband's and my experience as owners of two personal computers and on insights we have gained from helping family members and friends to choose computers and programs.

Learning about and Shopping for a Computer

The Computer Committee

It's advisable to form a committee to investigate the possibility of purchasing a computer for the parish. If possible, the committee should include some members who have experience with computers. But persons with no background in computers should also be included. The pastor and secretary would probably use a computer most heavily and should be ex officio members. Once formed, the committee should take the following steps.

The committee must first learn about computers. Basic terms and applications must be understood before one can begin to imagine possible uses for a computer in the parish. The rudiments of both hardware and software should be studied. *Hardware* refers to main computers, video displays, printers, and any other devices attached to main computers. *Software* refers to programs that enable the computer to carry out specific tasks. Committee members should gain a basic understanding of the most useful types of software for the parish: *word processing* software, which enables the computer to manipulate text quickly and efficiently; and information management. The committee need not learn computer programming. The committee should also learn the basic environmental requirements of healthy computer-functioning, e.g., proper temperature and humidity, cleanliness, and a line-protector to guard the computer against electrical surges.

Instruction for the computer committee might come from one of its members. Other sources of information include books and magazines about

computers; staff members of neighboring parishes that use computers; and local computer professionals who might give a one- or two- evening crash course on computers. A combination of printed and verbal instruction could help accommodate various styles of learning among the committee members. I would strongly discourage going to computer stores for basic instruction. Uninformed persons who venture into computer stores frequently find that the salespeople lack the time and skill to explain anything, and they may steer the unwary customer into an unwise choice. Salespeople should be approached only later in the research process.

Next, the committee should study the parish's programs to see where a computer might help. The second part of this paper offers some possibilities. Persons involved in all aspects of program ministry should be asked what sort of information they use, how they get it and how they use it. They should also be asked what additional information they might like to have or to be able to keep track of more easily. The committee should also try to elicit feelings about having various tasks computerized. Volunteers whose contributions to the parish might be taken over by a computer should be consulted, as should employees whose jobs would be affected. Objections to the use of a computer should be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively.

After the study of the parish's needs is completed, the committee should decide whether the possible advantages of having a computer warrant further research. At this point, the committee may begin investigating means of financing the purchase of the computer. Of course, the price will not be known until the computer, program(s), vendor and/or dealer have been selected. But brainstorming about possibilities can begin now. Perhaps a vendor or a group of interested (and affluent) congregation members might simply donate the computer and/or programs. Computer manufacturers or vendors might be willing to offer an educational discount to churches that operate schools or day-care centers. Perhaps a computer could be leased with an option to buy. However the initial cost is met, churches should remember also to budget for computer supplies.

Picking the Right Software

If the committee decides that further research is warranted, the committee should begin to study software. A fundamental rule in buying a computer is that software should be selected first. Only then should hardware be considered. Once the software is chosen, the committee should find a computer that will run it.

Sources of information about software include books, magazines, computer users and vendors. It may be helpful to ask a vendor for a list of local churches using particular software items. Computer users and magazines should be consulted about the reputation of any software item being considered for purchase. Software that hasn't been on the market long enough to acquire a reputation should be approached with caution.

Software should be evaluated in terms of the following characteristics:

(1) Suitability to the needs of the parish.

(2) *User friendliness,* which is the ease with which one can learn and use the software. User-friendly software will have easy-to-understand prompts that appear onscreen to help the user through the program. Much user-friendly software employs a "help" command to which the user can resort at any time. Truly user-

friendly software comes with concise, easy-to-follow printed instructions. The instructions that come with software—and hardware—are called the *documentation.* Committee members should inspect the documentation if at all possible and should ask for a demonstration of the software. Hands-on experience can be particularly helpful.

(3) Linkage from one software application to another. This feature is called *software interface,* which refers to the ease with which programs written for different purposes can access common data files. The question of software interface has importance for the parish. Good interface capability reduces duplication of the parish staff's efforts. In a properly interfaced system, the pledge accounting system automatically totals each Sunday's offering and credits the appropriate general ledger account. In addition, the membership data base links with the pledge accounting system, so that the information common to the membership data base and the pledge accounting system needs to be entered only once. Any change in the common information is entered only once, and both systems are updated. The computer committee should identify bodies of information that have multiple uses so that software interface can be properly evaluated.

A trend in software development is to combine the various applications into a single package called *integrated software.* This development is an alternative to buying separate wordprocessing, database, spreadsheet and communications software. This alternative provides (sometimes) easier transfer of data between programs, but usually the individual components of an integrated package are not as powerful as their stand-alone counterparts. Thus if one's purpose is primarily word processing, it might be better to select a stand-alone word processing package. However, new developments are becoming available and significant improvements are being made in integrated programs.

Many programs are "blind" to the specific situation of the user, which means that a word processing program can be used equally well in different practical situations. The leading software can be used without modification for parish-related work. However, some programs are written for use in a specific industry or professional setting. These usually require less initial "setting up" but sometimes are more difficult to modify should the parish develop special computing needs.

(4) Long-term support. To whom can the church turn if there is an error in the program, or if questions need to be answered? Will the software vendor provide free or reduced-rate updates of the software as improved versions are developed?

(5) Cost. In comparing costs, note that software is discounted heavily through large mail-order firms. If a popular, generally available software program will do the job, it would make sense to order it by mail at savings of up to 60 percent off the list price. Mail-order houses are advertised in computer magazines. Friends may be able to provide names of reliable companies.

Picking the Right Hardware

A rule of thumb for selecting hardware: Stay with the major brands. Given the volatile computer market, many current companies will probably be out of business in the near future. Buying one of their computers could leave one without future support. I doubt, for example, that many dealers will continue

to spend time supporting the now-defunct Osborne computer, and certainly no more software will be developed and marketed for it. IBM is clearly the market standard for computers and represents a safe option. Non-IBM computers should at least be "IBM compatible" to take advantage of the existing software—although not all computers claiming compatibility are worthy of the name. Apple computers are the only serious alternative to the IBM-type computer. To summarize: Stay with the leaders of the industry. Currently the top leaders are IBM and Apple, in that order.

As with any major capital expense, some research will contribute to a good decision. Before buying any particular computer, find out as much as possible by reading computer magazines and books on computers. Better still, seek advice from friends and other parishes that already have computers. Don't overlook members of the congregation who might have substantial expertise and experience with computers of their own. By shopping around, identify reputable and helpful dealers.

Signficant discounts are available for computers. Generally speaking, it is a good idea to establish a relationship with a local computer dealer, who will be an important source of further information and support. Especially for one's first computer purchase, it is probably wiser to make the purchase through a reputable local dealer than by mail.

The precise hardware configuration will vary according to the needs of the parish, but the following is a preliminary estimate of what might be needed for a typical, single station system:

— At least 128K RAM. *K* is a unit of storage. *RAM* refers to *random-access memory,* which is the computer's core memory. This memory is accessible to the user. It cannot be used for permanent storage of information because its contents vanish when the computer is turned off. The software requirements determine how much RAM is needed.

— A monochrome video display is best for word processing because it gives the sharpest image and is therefore easiest on the eye. A color display is useful for some business graphics or educational programs, but probably has little or no use in parish application. I strongly recommend that the people who will be spending the most time using the computer try out any display before a decision is made to purchase it. A display that strains the eyes and/or causes headaches can severely hamper the use of a computer in any setting. On the other hand, one should bear in mind that even the best displays can be connected with eyestrain if the lighting in the room produces glare on the video screen.

— At least two floppy-disk drives. *Disks,* which may be floppy or hard, permanently store software and data. For many parishes, a hard disk may be warranted. A hard disk is permanently enclosed in its drive. It provides greater storage capacity, ease of use and increased speed. A hard disk should be accompanied by a floppy-disk drive for making backups of files from the hard disk.

— A printer. Fully formed characters (i.e., "daisy wheel" printers) are important for high quality correspondence. Dot matrix printers produce an inferior print (although the quality is improving) but are less expensive and run more quickly. Depending on the volume of printing, certain printer enhancements are desirable, such as individual sheet feeders, continuous paper tractor drives, and special forms handlers.

These are only the basic features, and are subject to change as parish needs increase and as prices of more expensive

options go down. It is wise to purchase a system that allows for expansion at a later date. The better computers permit extra expansion boards to be added later to the main system unit for an easy upgrade of the computer's capabilities. Beware of so-called "bargain" computers that cannot be expanded in this way.

Uses of the Computer in the Parish

The uses of a computer for parish ministry are probably limited only by the human imagination. At the outset, however, there are several established applications that would assist in typical administrative and pastoral duties. The following brief survey of the uses of the computer in the parish begins with some of the more common applications available today. The most frequently used software programs are word processing, database management and spreadsheets. Communications software is rapidly becoming more common. These will be discussed in turn.

Word Processing. This software brings the power of the computer to one of the most time-consuming tasks of the pastor: writing. The pastor who also serves as secretary may find word-processing a special boon. A powerful program will allow quick entry, editing and printing of text, with standard features such as automatic word wrap, the ability to search for words in the text, and electronic cut and paste. More advanced features include spelling checking and the ability to merge standardized letters with lists of names and addresses. Word processing can help with preparation of sermons, office correspondence, and even preparation of special printed materials such as the weekly bulletin. This use in itself may justify the purchase of a computer system.

Database Management. Very simply, this kind of software can create a computerized filing system. Any information that can be organized into records can be managed with ease by a good database program. Perhaps the most common application would be a mailing list. A mailing list database would consist of many **records**, each of which would represent a different mailing address. Each record is made up of several **fields** that can be defined by the user. A typical mailing list record would look like this:

Field	Sample Content
SALUTATION	Dear Marty,
NAME	Luther, Martin
STREET	4455 Rose Road
TOWN	Churchville
CITY	Heavensgate
STATE	IL
ZIP	60000

Using a computer database, records can be kept of congregational members and used for mailings in conjunction with the word processing program. Using a sort function, it is easy to locate key records according to the value of a certain field. For example, the above record could be expanded to include additional information on each parish member. A field could be added for "time of next house call" which would create an automatic tickler-system for when to visit certain parish members. It might alert the pastor to the anniversary of the death of a member's loved one. Another possibility is to add fields that would track the monetary contributions of each parish member. This financial information could be used in conjunction with a spreadsheet program to help plan the church's finances.

There are many other uses for database management besides tracking the members of the congregation. A database can organize all kinds of infor-

mation, such as references for sermons. Rather than jotting down sermon ideas or quotes on pieces of paper (that usually get lost or are hard to organize), a database system could be set up to keep information "on line" and ready for quick retrieval. (The power of this is enhanced by use of large computer banks of information, to be described in the section of telecommunications.) There are commercially available database programs that help with biblical scholarship i.e., a computerized concordance of the Bible.

The following is but a partial overview of other possible database applications:

— Schedule church facilities and organizations

— Schedule all those involved in ministries

— Schedule and follow up on those involved in baptismal preparation

— Organize and retrieve miscellaneous information such as minutes of meetings, homilies, confidential letters, etc.

— Schedule follow-up letters that pertain to anniversaries, reminders or continuing education.

— Maintain talent/time/interest inventories for recruiting leaders and identifying groups with common needs or gifts.

Spreadsheets. This kind of program is basically an electronic ledger sheet. Its chief advantage over the traditional pen and paper approach is that it painlessly allows recalculations of vast amounts of figures. If some figures in a lengthy calculation need to be changed, the spreadsheet will automatically make all the necessary recalculations.

The spreadsheet is also an excellent planning tool that quickly answers "what if?" questions. Suppose that the church's financial plan assumes a certain level of income during the coming year. If an unexpected windfall comes from an anonymous donor, this new information could be entered into the spreadsheet, which would automatically calculate the effect of this gift on all the pertinent budget figures. A spreadsheet could help estimate the long-term budgetary impact of adding another salary for a new assistant pastor or replacing the old water boiler.

Compared to word processing programs, spreadsheets are relatively unfamiliar to most people. Everyone knows how to write, but few know how to set up accounting systems. Fortunately there are plenty of good books and training programs on this topic that can help the uninitiated. Moreover, it is likely that some parish members are already using these programs at their jobs and could help set up a spreadsheet for the church budget. At the very least, the discipline involved in conceiving and setting up a spreadsheet can have a positive impact on managing church finances.

Telecommunications. Computers linked together are capable of truly astonishing feats. Several of these feats are directly pertinent to the parish situation.

Telecommunications refers to communications by computers over telephone lines. Two things are required for this in addition to the computer itself: communications software and a modem. The communications software, like all software, instructs the computer how to do certain things—in this case, sending and receiving signals over telephone lines. The modem is a piece of hardware that connects the computer to the telephone and lets the computer call up other computers.

The most obvious benefit is increased computer power. Telecommunications permits tapping the power of much larger computers that can provide greater

storage, faster processing for large jobs, and access to sophisticated programs. But perhaps the most important, telecommunications makes available a variety of information, and lots of it.

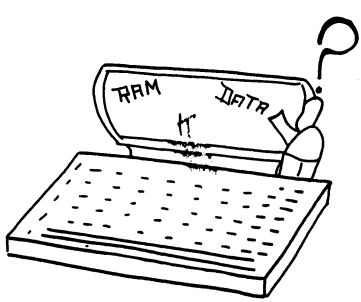
There are many computerized database services which, for a fee, will provide all kinds of information at the blink of an eye. Available "on line" are many major encyclopedias and journals. These can be searched automatically for articles on key subjects or for works by certain authors. This marks great advance in research methodology and should be invaluable for all kinds of parish-related informational needs.

Telecommunications provides companionship for people of similar interests. Many centralized computer services, such as CompuServe, provide national electronic bulletin boards on specific subject areas. These allow people from all over the country to exchange ideas and information on matters of shared interest. Many subjects are discussed in these computerized forums.

One especially pertinent example would be the Religion Forum, available on Compuserve. People from all over the country post and read public messages, share articles and send private electronic mail on a number of topics concerning religion. Seminary graduates are often unprepared for the isolation of a rural (or even not-so-rural) placement. Telecommunications provides an effective means of staying in touch with the community of pastors, educated laypersons and religious scholars across the country. All it takes is a modem, the right software and a phone.

Areas Under Development. Some researchers are developing software that aids in constructing psychological profiles or in diagnosing psychological problems. Such software will have to be evaluated carefully for its theoretical soundness. In addition, pastors will have to scrutinize it for its appropriateness in pastoral care and counseling. Clearly, the computer is no substitute for pastoral care. But pastoral care might someday include gathering and storing information by means of computer. A couple at Southern Methodist University has developed a program for computer-assisted marital counseling.

As the cost of computers falls and new software is developed, at least some parishes may use computers to help youth learn at a more individualized pace or to play simulation games that help clarify moral values. Of course, computers cannot meet students' emotional, spiritual and social needs in the same way as interaction with teachers and other students can. Hence the use of computers in Christian education will have to be evaluated with great care.



Annotated Bibliography

Bedell, Kenneth, and Parker Rossman. *Computers: New Opportunities for Personalized Ministry.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. 1984. Paper.

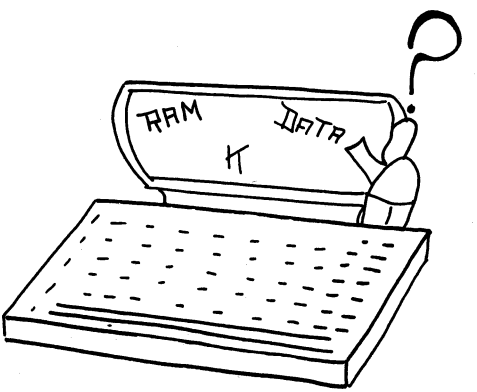
Bedell and Rossman address some theological and ethical objections to the use of computers by churches and show how computers can enhance ministry in such areas as sermon preparation, worship preparation and evangelism.

Johnson, William R. *Selecting the Church Computer.* Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1984. Paper.

This book is a must. It provides step-by-step, detailed instructions for making a sound decision about purchasing a computer. In addition, the book helps "demythologize" the computer and raises issues related to managing a computer once it is in place. Includes glossary of computer terms and an index.

Zaks, Rodney. *Don't! Or, How to Care for Your Computer.* Berkeley: Sybex. 1981. Paper.

Zaks provides detailed instructions for creating a hospitable environment for computers. He explains how to avoid unwitting damage to disks, disk drives, video displays and printers. Persons interested in buying a computer should read *Don't!* to learn whether they have a proper environment and, if not, what they need to do to create one.



Why So Many "Musts"?

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There is a disturbing trend in modern translations of the New Testament to bring in the word "must" where it has not been indicated in the Greek. The Greek word usually rendered by the English "must" is *dei,* normally with a following verb in the infinitive, as is also true in English if the *dei* is translated "it is necessary." If one checks down the list of NT passages in Crudens Concordance under the word "MUST," it will be found that each of them has in the Greek a *dei* or similar word behind it. So the KJ version must be given the credit for never using "must" without textual justification.

A similar run-down in the concordance for the RSV brings to light the fact that there are about 35 verses in the RSV in which "must" is used without such a supporting word in the Greek. In half of these cases the Greek verb is in the imperative mood, and in many of the rest the verb is in the future tense, probably taken as a Semitism.

We are here on the borderland of style and theology. A case may be argued, on the basis of changing English style or of "equivalent dynamic effect," for the use of "must" in many of these cases. But the fact that subsequent translation like NEB and TEV have used "must" in only half of these places (JB and NIV have more), would seem to indicate that the use of "must" is really quite arbitrary and haphazard.

This is further underscored if we dip into the other translations here and there (without benefit of complete concordances for them). Here is a revealing score of various versions in several samples:

	KJ	RSV	NIV	NEB	TEV	JB
Rom. 6, 11-19	0	1	0	4	4	4
Eph. 4-6	0	2	7	10	12	14
Col. 2-3	0	1	1	2	6	6
	0	4	8	16	22	24*

Arbitrariness is further illustrated if we take I Thess 4 and 5: NEB has seven "musts," TEV has one, RSV, JB and NIV have none. Other samplings would probably yield similar unpredictable results.

But the point is that, whichever the recent translation, "must" has invaded the English text. What to do about it? Personally, in my RSV working Bible I have marked out the "musts" in Matt 5, 48; 6,5; Luke 12,40; 17,4; Rom 6,11; II Cor 9,7; Eph 4, 17; Col 3, 13. The simple explanation for that (apart from any kind of argument against further impoverishing the word by unnecessary and promiscuous use) is that in these verses we have a gospel call, and the word "must" does not fit into that kind of context. It is true that in many cases there is no neat inclusion of the expressed gospel in the immediate context. But if anyone fails to see verses like this as embedded in a wider gospel context and so reads them as anything less than gospel calls, that person has missed the point and the opportunity, for no external push-word like "must" can be a substitute for the internal pressure of the gospel call.

There is a rational justification for us-

ing "must" in cases where a certain condition is taken for granted. In Mark 10,17/Matt 19,16, and in John 6,28, if the implied condition that "we must do something" is accepted, then the future tense can be understood as "must." But a question arises in verses like Mark 9,35; 10,43-44/Matt 20,26-27, whether Jesus means the third person singular future of "to be" to be taken literally, or whether it is a Semitism-type command, that is, a demand required in line with the condition, "If you wish to be first, greatest ... then you must ... ." Put another way: is Jesus accommodating himself to their way of thinking and showing them the paradoxical demand needed to fulfil their condition? or, following the hint of the peremptory present tense reading of Mark 10,43, "not thus is it among you," is he stating more literally as fact and declaration, "This is the way it shall be in the kingdom"? The latter is the more fitting form for an effective gospel call.

The suspicion that arises about the increased use of "must" in contexts of gospel motivation, both in Bible translations and in sermons, is that it is a sign of the weakening use of the gospel call, a lack of understanding of and trust in the power of the gospel to move people. Whenever there is a resort to additional pressure-words like "must" or "Christian duty" (TEV Eph 6,1; Col 3,20; NEB Col 3,18), we are moving in the direction of the legalism of natural religion. Let us hope that this new style will not tend to encourage teachers and preachers to let their level of motivation get stuck at the discipline-training stage Paul speaks of at the beginning of Galatians 4. It's a different story in chapter 5.

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*The total of 24 drops to 14 in the New Jerusalem Bible recently issued. It's an interesting question: how many more, not just of these 14, but of uses in all other versions, might be cut down with a purposeful run through asking the question, Must this "must" be here?

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

A Book Worth Discussing: Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life.*

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This book was written by social scientists from a unique point of view and with a passionate sense of mission. Robert Bellah, the senior author, says the team wanted to break down boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities in order to carry out the "calling" of the social scientist, the forging of a public philosophy. This point of view will surely be challenged by those who believe that the social scientist should be a scientific specialist unengaged in social self-understanding of interpretation. The team's mission will also be challenged, since it is nothing less than the transformation of American society. They contend that American individualism undermines the nation's existence. Their mission is to help Americans recover the insights of an older biblical and republican tradition that calls citizens to responsibility for the common good. The book shows how individualism undermines the existence of the nation and what the team proposes to transform our social understanding.

In the early years of the nation, individualism was countered by other points of view. People like John Winthrop, first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, held a biblically-based point of view about how to create a community that would foster spiritual and ethical life. Thomas Jefferson held a view of the republic in which citizens participated in its formation and maintenance. These points of view were superceded by individualism in both its utilitarian and expressive forms. Benjamin Franklin represents an utilitarian individualism: out of each person's pursuit of personal interest, the social good will emerge. Walt Whitman represents expressive individualism in which personal experience and feelings are paramount. The heirs of Franklin are the modern managers and the heirs of Whitman are the therapists. For the Bellah team, Alexis de Tocqueville's fears (as expressed in his two-part book on American society, 1835 and 1840) that "habits of the heart" like individualism would undermine American society have come true.

Individualism influences the private sphere of life because it affects the person, love and marriage, our relations with others and our sense of community. Individualism assets that a person should be self-reliant and, in order to do so, must leave home and church to make his or her own choices. It also makes the person view work as a segmented, self-interested activity with no relation to the larger whole. By contrast, work could be seen as a calling which anchors the self in community and serves the common good. Love and marriage are also af-

* *By Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. 355 Pages. Cloth. $16.95.*

fected; this institution, which formerly related a person to the larger public, is now the core of the private sector. In marriage, one avoids the public sphere as much as possible. In addition, the relation between persons in marriage is now governed by a therapeutic point of view which says that what is most important is the sharing of feelings between similar, authentic, expressive selves. This, the authors contend, is antithetical to forms of responsibility or commitment.

Relations with others outside marriage are also affected by the therapeutic ideal. The authors speak of "therapeutic contractualism" in which interpersonal relations center on an agreed-upon exchange of benefits carried out through communication and negotiation, grounded in each person's ultimate responsibility to himself or herself alone. Such a point of view leaves every commitment unstable. On the other hand, they contend, it is the moral content of relationships that allows them to persist with some certainty on the basis of agreed upon standards of right and wrong. More is needed than communication between self-actualizing persons. A sense of community is needed. And more than that, it needs to be a "community of memory" with "practices of commitment." In these communities people have a sense of relatedness to each other and the larger whole. One of the "communities of memory," the Christian community, has a way of expressing the relation of persons to God and each other in Jesus Christ. It is an example of the "second language" of a community of memory, a language that is necessary and yet a contradiction of the "first language" of individualism that most Americans use. Because of their memory and language, such communities make possible an individualism that is fulfilled in the community rather than apart from it.

In the public sphere, individualism makes a difference in the way people relate to local community, political activity, religion and the nation. On the local level people prefer to live in enclaves of like-minded individuals. They may become involved as "concerned citizens" when their rights are threatened. Or they may react as "civic-minded professionals" who believe that education is the best way to manage the community and that expertise is the best qualification for leadership. Or some may become "professional activists" who want each group to have an equal chance to get what they want. However, none of these persons has a grasp of the larger whole and the common good. What is needed is a concept of the "politics of the nation," a politics that transcends local interests in the way that a "politics of community" or "politics of interest" do not. Local participation needs to be linked to national dialogue so that persons can grasp other possibilities for the way in which a complex society can work.

Religion has been affected by individualism in that it has become segmented and privatized. Its "second language," a language that speaks forcefully of commitment to community, is being lost. Some communities of Christians have chosen a peculiar form of expressive individualism through their emphasis on internal freedom. Others resist that form by emphasizing external control, but they have fallen prey to a religious tribalism which isolates them from public concern. Needed is a church that occupies the religious center, one that focuses on worship as that which empowers people to carry out their callings in the public sphere.

The church is challenged to help bring cohesion to a fragmented society. American society has been torn between several polarities in its past and also in its

present. In the Nineteenth Century it was the polarity of the Establishment versus Populism. In the early Twentieth Century arose the polarity of Neocapitalism versus Welfare Liberalism, a polarity still in force. Most recently, the polarity of an Administered Society versus an Economic Democracy has emerged. All six of the visions involved in these polarities are incomplete; they lack a vision of the common good. The authors call for a concerted effort to forge a culture of cohesion to replace the fragmentation that inadequate forms of society have caused.

The authors offer several proposals for the transformation of American culture. They call for a "social ecology" in which all resources of the society are brought to bear on the problem. Communities of memory are called upon to use their resources for the common good. Also called for is a new social movement that goes beyond the Civil Rights movement in shaping social mores. Government is challenged to change its relationship to business so that corporations are encouraged to take social responsibility. A restoration of the dignity of politics is called for so that politicians will act for the common good. And, finally, there must be a renewal of the concept of work as a calling, that is, work as a civic virtue that contributes to the good of all. In all of this, the authors are calling for a reappropriation of the biblical and republican tradition in a way that applies it actively and creatively to present social realities.

There is much in this book to challenge almost everyone. Some social scientists may take exception to the application of their craft to the forming of public philosophy. Some historians may argue that individualism was present in the very beginning of the nation and was, indeed, the prevailing sentiment of those who settled these shores. Therefore, it is difficult to reappropriate a biblical and republican tradition that played only a minor part in the formation of the nation. Therapists will certainly assert the validity of their profession. Theologians may argue that the church does not exist only for the "common good" of the public and that to reduce it to that runs the risk of making the church merely a utilitarian tool of the social order. On the other hand, the challenge to the church cannot be ignored. It has too often retreated to the private sphere and used its resources only for private comfort rather than public good. Bellah and the others rightly point out the resources the church has in its memory and language for aiding in the transformation of American society. They invite all of us into the discussion of the ways such transformation can be accomplished. It is an invitation the church cannot refuse.

Book Reviews



THE HEBREW BIBLE: A SOCIO-LITERARY INTRODUCTION. By Norman Gottwald. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. xxx and 702 pages. Cloth. $34.95; Paper. $19.95.

Norman Gottwald is known for his use of social-scientific tools of research in evaluating the conquest and settlement of Palestine (most notably his book, *The Tribes of Yahweh).* Now he offers a general introduction to the Old Testament which seeks to combine the three current methodologies in vogue among biblical scholars: historical-criticism, new literary criticism (including structuralism), and socio-historic methodology. As a result the Bible is approached with a broad perspective, and the reader gains a good familiarity with all three methods. He integrates literary and archaeological research with great sensitivity on many issues, and his research is quite recent on most aspects of study.

The book advances some ideas about which the author feels very strongly. Above all Gottwald affirms that the equal use of historical-critical, literary, and sociological methodologies is essential to the theological task. The bold contribution of the work is the integration of these three methods. The author endorses his own view of the conquest as a "social revolution" and the settlement process as "socio-religious retribalization." He believes that Israelites were constituted primarily from an alienated Canaanite peasantry who withdrew to the highlands to regroup as a new people.

His own political and theological agenda appears in the three basic divisions in the book: 1) Intertribal Confederacy: Israel's Revolutionary Beginnings, 2) Monarchy: Israel's Counter-revolutionary Establishment, and 3) Home Rule under Great Empires: Israel's Colonial Recovery. Israelites are perceived as great social revolutionaries from earliest times who would struggle throughout their history to maintain social and democratic ideals. Despite the occasional use of rhetoric peculiar to his ideological persuasion, the author does present an objective evaluation of most of the material.

It is difficult to synthesize three disparate methodological approaches. Sometimes Gottwald must provide three separate discussions for each literary section, because the insights obtained from the respective methods are in tension. On occasion, the author appears to be committed to older theories which may be in decline among scholars: use of literary covenant formulas prior to the Deuteronomist, the precipitation of epic traditions such as the Yahwist and Elohist into fixed form prior to the exile, and the attribution of early wisdom literature (Proverbs 10-31) to the court of Solomon. But these deficiencies do not mar the book as a whole.

Gottwald provides a fresh, exciting, and provocative introduction to the Old Testament. His evaluation of the ancestors (the non-sexist reference to patriarchs), conquest, settlement, and monarchic traditions from his socio-historic perspective will be of great value. His view of the post-exilic period creatively describes it as an era of "home rule" (the theocratic Jewish community in Judah) and "colonial recovery" (diaspora). He contributes to the current discussion of canonical development by describing the Old Testament as a "consensus canon" created by a compromise between priests (Tetrateuch) and levites (Deuteronomistic History and Prophets). Though some of his ideas may diverge from traditional presentations in other introductions, they may well repre-

sent the shape of future Old Testament studies.

The text should serve well as an introduction for advanced undergraduates or graduate level students. Though Gottwald is committed to the social-scientific method, he fairly presents alternative views on the different issues of Old Testament study. The frequent use of sociological jargon found in other works by this author is held to a minimum here. Excellent charts and diagrams are found throughout the work, and the text is organized nicely for classroom use.

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A THEOLOGY FOR MINISTRY. By George H. Tavard. Theology and Life Series 6. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983. 164 Pages. Paper. $6.95.

Like other books in the Theology and Life Series, this one is marked by clarity, simplicity and balance in its presentation. Father Tavard expresses his own positions where he disagrees with official and traditional positions. Thus he insists that the question of ordination of women has not yet been faced adequately by Roman Catholic theologians, and outlines the questions that must be answered before a satisfying position can be established. He does not believe that the function of the bishop belongs to the essence of the church. His argument is based largely on historical development. He pleads for collegiality at every level of the church's life.

He wants to define catholicism in such a way that it includes Eastern Orthodoxy and Anglicanism, but is not yet ready to include most Protestant churches under this banner.

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PAUL: RABBI AND APOSTLE. By Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher. Translated by Lawrence W. Denef. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. 77 pages. Paper. $5.95.

This is a contribution to the Christian-Jewish dialogue, using as a subject Paul as Rabbi and Apostle. The book does not appear as a dialogue but rather as two essays with concluding remarks by both authors about how they perceived a daylong discussion held at Pforzheim.

Instead of "Paul: Rabbi and Apostle" Stuhlmacher entitles his essay "Paul: Apostate or Apostle?" He concludes that precisely in his capacity as an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul appeared as the betrayer of his ancestral faith, not only to the Pharisees ... and to many law-keeping Jews, but also to those Jewish Christians ... who continued to be devoted to "the traditions of the fathers." (This is seen in the fact that neither the Jerusalem nor the Roman congregation seems to have supported him when he was in custody.) Paul is very close to Jesus with his gospel of justification. We must allow the apostle to lead us back to the initial beginnings of our faith in the election of Israel, and in the promises given to the patriarchs. However, it is not at all clear what Stuhlmacher means by such statements.

While Stuhlmacher and Lapide do not state their exact presuppositions about the reliability of the biblical record, they generally accept the report of Acts as trustworthy (Stuhlmacher refers to Paul witnessing Stephen's death and the letters of authority for Damascus, something which most commentators on Acts consider as unhistorical). They agree that Paul is not and never was an antinomian. Lapide states that for Paul the law has come to an end *only* for those who believe in Christ, and only as a modality of justification, or as a way of salvation. But Lapide also asserts that the rabbinate has never considered the Torah as a way of salvation and that therefore Paul cannot be understood when he says that Christ has replaced the Torah as the way of salvation. Only Gal. 2:21 is given as a reference. Lapide claims, "We Jews are the advocates of 'pure grace,' perhaps even more than those who have the words

sola gratia emblazoned on their banners." But why then does he say that human beings must choose between good and evil and that no Paul, no Son of God, no Holy Spirit is able to free them from this personal responsibility which can become their heaven or their hell? Where is the grace of God in that? I am always amazed when critics state that Paul did not know what Torah meant; after all, he was a Pharisee!

Lapide states that Paul opposes the imposition of the Torah on non-Jews because it was given only to Israel. Lapide repeats his thesis that Jesus was not the Messiah of Israel but became the Savior of the Gentile church, the Redeemer from idolatry and faithlessness. Lapide says that "We (Jews) have to thank Paul for having made monotheism's conquest of the Western world possible." According to Lapide, Paul's concern is not for his brothers according to the flesh. But why does Paul suffer so much disappointment about the fact that his fellow-Jews do not believe in Christ (See Romans 9-11)? It seems to me that this is damning Paul with faint praise.

Lapide sees Paul's main concern in the unification of that division of humanity: Jews and Gentiles. It seems to me that he is reading quite a bit of Ephesians into the historical Paul.

The book is interesting in showing two viewpoints. It would be even more interesting if these two representatives had listened to each other and replied more directly to each other's essays.

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JESUS AND COMMUNITY: THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH. By Gerhard Lohfink. Trans. by John P. Galvin. Philadelphia: Fortress and New York: Paulist, 1984. xii and 211 pages. Paper. $9.95.

This book could be studied with real profit by any parish council prior to setting goals for the parish. The points are made clearly and are substantiated adequately from Scripture. It's the type of Bible study that lay people are hungry for but which many pastors judge to be too demanding.

Lohfink's central thesis is that Jesus came only to the house of Israel to give them one more and final opportunity to repent and to learn what it meant to be God's people. This is a chilling thesis because the alert reader cannot help but wonder whether history may repeat itself and that God, the Author of all history, may again be prepared to send a final word to the contemporary church, giving it one more and final opportunity to repent.

His second point is that Jesus' mission was to create a renewed community that would be as clearly God's sign to the world as Jesus himself was. He traces this idea in four chapters with eight subdivisions in each chapter. In the first chapter, he analyzes and scores what he calls the heritage of Harnackian individualism, which he finds present in all strata of society, including the church.

Chapter 2 is entitled "Jesus and his Disciples." In this chapter he develops the thesis that Jesus came only to Israel and that the disciples emerged as the new Israel. Chapter 3 is entitled "The New Testament Communities in the Discipleship of Jesus" and Chapter 4 bears the title, "The Ancient Church in the Discipleship of Jesus."

In a postscript, he traces the long non-historical understanding of the church to Augustine's *City of God.*

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THE PASSION OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK. By Donald Senior, C.P. The Passion Series, no. 2. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984. 173 pages. Paper. $8.95.

This is a model of what a literary and redactional study should look like, especially if it is to be both pastoral and scholarly. Senior's review of Mark 14-15 is based on the latest in biblical scholarship; yet it is free of aggravating jargon.

He argues that the climax of Mark's story depicts the two-fold aspect of Jesus' "passion:" Not only does he endure suffering and death, but he does it with intense commitment ("with a passion," as we might put it).

In a quick review of Mark's first 13 chapters, Senior summarizes how the evangelist prepares his readers for the Passion Story: There are plots against Jesus' life almost from the beginning in Galilee (Mk 3:6) as well as shortly after his arrival in Jerusalem (11:8). Furthermore, Jesus' own itinerary is thrice detailed as a journey to rejection and death (8:31, 9:31, 10:33).

Thus Jesus' Passion comes as no surprise. "The Marcan Jesus moves unerringly toward the cross," says Senior, "a cross that is both the full expression of his mission of giving life to all in need and the gauge of how deeply the Gospel clashes with the values and assumptions of the world (p. 39)."

Senior's 100-page running commentary on Mark 14-15 is a pleasure to read. He correctly measures Mark's ironic intent. For example, he juxtaposes the note about the two thieves strung up at Jesus' right and left (15:27) with the Zebedee boys' petition to sit on either side of the throne (10:37-39).

And there are some surprises. Consider the suggestion that the person who cut off the ear of the high priest's slave (14:37) was not Peter or another disciple, but some anonymous member of the arresting mob.

In sum, Mark's narrative throws its weight on the passion, not the victory, of Jesus. "By ending his narrative with the discovery of the empty tomb rather than with the resurrection appearance stories," contends Senior, "Mark has shifted the weight of his Gospel in the direction of Jesus' *dying*." (p. 143)

Ditto for Jesus' people. The life-long journey of an authentic follower of Jesus is echoed by participation in a non-triumphant church. Both failure and reconciliation are hard to accept. But that's the way it is in the story of Jesus and his people.

As a resource for Lententide this volume or one of its companions on the other gospels will prove inspiring. It works as well in a Bible class as it does in a pastor's study. Here's one place where current scholarship pays off for the practicing preacher.

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FREEDOM WITH JUSTICE: CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT AND LIBERAL INSTITUTIONS. By Michael Novak. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984. xiv and 253 pages. Cloth. $17.95.

The book is an attempt to show how papal social thought, and Catholic social thought in general, went wrong in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and what resources it has to offer to social thought today when it correctly understands its own heritage. But another important theme also emerges in the book, and that is Novak's insistence that Catholic, and for that matter Christian, social thought consistently fails to develop institutional forms for the theories that are developed.

Novak argues that Catholic social thought is always social in nature and that because of this central conviction, nineteenth and twentieth century Catholic writers felt an instinctive suspicion of British and American liberalism because of what they judged to be its strong emphasis on individualism. This suspicion led them to reject all of British liberalism because, unfortunately, they knew only that segment known as Manchester liberalism. This section of the book is rewarding and provides an excellent example of the proper use of historical research to create freedom for further research and understanding.

In the last part of the book he offers his own reconstruction of Catholic social thought for the future. He argues, against both Marxists and western capitalists, that the key to wealth is the human mind and that the secrets of producing wealth are always spiritual. With that observation, he levels a devastating criticism against Catholic social thought if it is to be judged chiefly by the fruit that it has brought forth in Catholic lands. This section also contains an excellent critique of liberation theology.

Novak predicts that Catholic social thought has already set in place "the basic liberal benchmarks: the dignity of the human person, the interdependence of all people, the economic development of all nations, institutions of human rights, the communitarian personality, and the vocation of each human being to become a co-creator with God in unlocking the secrets

so lovingly hidden in nature by nature's God." This summary sentence also points to a serious weakness that this reviewer found in all of Novak's reconstruction. After warning several times against taking social sin lightly, he appears to do so in his own efforts to chart the right direction for Catholic social thought.

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SON OF MAN AND SON OF GOD: A NEW LANGUAGE FOR FAITH. By John C. Dwyer. New York: Paulist, 1983. 220 pages. Paper. $7.95.

This volume would make an excellent text for a graduate seminar in Christology and might help some brighter undergraduates. It might also be useful to a small group of pastors who were prepared to wrestle with the christological problems that the author addresses.

He states that the Chalcedonian formulations were the only ones that could deal with the christological problems of the third and fourth centuries, while at the same time he observes that these formulations became the source of major problems in the following centuries. His purpose is to affirm the validity of Chalcedon for its own period and to show how the formulators' solutions are still the correct solutions, although scarcely understandable in our age.

He begins with a chapter in which he states the issues and the problems of language with which he intends to deal. Two chapters that are primarily historical in nature follow. The fourth chapter focuses on the problem of Jesus today, and the final chapter treats the cross of Christ.

No sentence in the book is easy reading, but each one will repay careful study. It is impossible to state his central thesis in a sentence for each word that would be used has been redefined by the author. His own personal faith helps the reader to work through the book.

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A HISTORY OF ISRAEL. By J. Alberto Soggin. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985. xxvii and 436 pages. Cloth. $29.95.

This book is the most recent contestant in the search for a history of Israel that will attain the stature of Noth and Bright's. Soggin is a highly competent scholar who teaches at the Waldensian Faculty in Rome. His commentaries on Joshua and Judges in the Old Testament Library series have been well received and his *Introduction to the Old Testament* in the same series is now available in a second edition. This book extends my respect for both his thoroughness and incisive, critical judgment. Nevertheless, this is not a good history book.

Soggin divides his work into four major parts. He begins with a review of the context of Israel, issues of method and sources and, in two chapters, the reigns of David and Solomon. The tone of the volume is set in these pages. The existence of the Davidic empire is not confirmed from sources outside the Bible and, therefore, the most that one can assert is the "possibility" of an Israelite empire. The historian is "forced" to refer exclusively to the biblical texts and, seemingly, most of that material is fictional, novelistic or legendary.

I would prefer to read Soggin's (even minimal) account of the history rather than paragraph after paragraph about why one narrative after the other will not stand up to the scrutiny of the historian. There is too much sorting of the evidence in front of the reader and not enough direct telling of the story he has reconstructed. At the end of reading the section on David, I longed to reread Joseph Heller's *God Knows*—a foulmouthed and blasphemous novel about David—for there the character is at least a human being. Even if the only history one can be certain of is that of the writer or redactor of a story, at least that history should be told with some sense of cohesive liveliness.

The second part deals with the patriarchs, Egypt and the exodus, the conquest, and the judges. The title for the section ("Traditions about the Proto-history of the People") indicates that there is little history writing in these chapters. Instead one again finds much about what one

cannot know. Large portions of each chapter are devoted to the critique of the work of other scholars—most of it quite telling. Soggin's own reconstruction is lost in between all of this, perhaps in part because he finds no reconstructable story.

Repeatedly Soggin pleads that he has not assumed *a priori* a sceptical attitude, but he nonetheless drives a very sharp wedge between "what Israel thought of its own past" and what the historian can reconstruct with "scientific critical-historical methods." For example, the biblical assertion that the 'spirit of YHWH' came upon the person of the judges is, for Soggin, only a theological explanation. The "secular fact" is assumed to be something else. While it is absolutely necessary for students of the Bible to confront "secular fact," theological explanation can be too readily dismissed as without fact.

Parts three ("A House Divided") and four ("Under the Empires of East and West") read more smoothly because Soggin is more certain of the historical trustworthiness of the sources, both biblical and extra-biblical. Occasionally, however, long paragraphs introduce the views of others only to have Soggin dispose of them.

Soggin is a scholar's scholar. His knowledge is encyclopedic. He is rigorous in his demand for supporting data for any argument, his own included. His book removes much chaff from the journals of scholarship. For that reason this book is necessary reading for Old Testament scholars and teachers. Others should perhaps spend their time reading Siegfried Hermann's *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times.* Hermann's history is no less "secular" than Soggin's, but he engages in less talk about historical scholarship and simply relates the history he has reconstructed.

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JESUS: THE EVIDENCE. By Ian Wilson. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. 207 pages. Cloth. $17.26.

Ian Wilson has previously published books on the Shroud of Turin and on reincarnation. He has written for newspapers and television, and in this volume brings to bear considerable skill as a communicator. He knows how to write a sentence, and he also knows how to jerk the reader along with regular doses of sensationalism.

In that last category are his many references to Morton Smith's reading of homosexual activities into apocryphal reports of initiation rituals allegedly practiced by Jesus. Or take the example of a picture of a tombstone of a Roman legionnaire named Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera with the caption, "Jesus' real father?" Or how about this old one: Wilson suggests that the earliest testimony to Jesus' resurrection was the result of post-hypnotic suggestion.

Scholars have seen all these guesses before and written them off as aberrations, but Wilson reports them as though for the first time, breathlessly, like bulletins from the front lines.

I was annoyed to see clear prose, intriguing photographs, and high quality print and paper supporting such claims. I was saddened as I thought of the book which Wilson and his team might have produced.

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NEW SYNOPTIC STUDIES. Edited by William R. Farmer. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983. 533 pages. Cloth. $32.95.

The "new" in the title refers to the fact that all these studies take a new look at the old solution to the Synoptic Problem. Albert Outler writes that the two-document theory has developed from a hypothesis into a dogma, and he is happy to lend his support to the effort to shake up the status quo. The chief shaker for a number of years has been William Farmer, editor of these essays.

In his introductory essay, Farmer sketches the history of the shaking over the past 35 years, from the publication of Butler's *The Originality of Matthew* and Parker's *The Gospel Before Mark* down to the present. These essays formally close the Cambridge Gospel Conference (1979), which at the time of publication was the latest in a series of Gospel conferences at which the two-source hypothesis has been increasingly under fire.

Instead of viewing Mark as the first gospel with Q as a second early documentary source, both of which were used by Matthew and Luke, working independently of one another, the Owen-Griesbach hypothesis or two-gospel hypothesis proposes that Matthew and Luke wrote first and that Mark used both of them in composing his gospel.

Besides the editor, essayists include D. Peabody, G.G. Gamba, P. Parker, L. Cope, G.W. Buchanan, P. Sigal, B. Reicke, J.G.F. Collison, W.O. Walker, Jr., J.B. Tyson, T.R.W. Longstaff, J.B. Orchard, D.L. Dungan, C.T. Davis, P. Shuler, and P.W. Agnew.

Farmer and company are out of step with the mainstream, but in an impressive fashion this volume makes the point that it is now respectable to question the usual solution (Marcan priority) of the Synoptic Problem. And it illustrates the kinds of shifts in perception of the thinking of the Evangelists likely to occur, if the Gospels are approached from the new perspective.

Whatever one thinks about the order of the composition of the Gospels, the advocacy of the Griesbach hypothesis should at least have the salutary effect of reinforcing the challenge to read all of the Gospels as narratives and not as redactions.

Robert H. Smith

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL. By Robert Gnuse. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985. ix and 162 pages. Paperback. $9.95.

Rock stars do it. Country and western singers do it. The church has done it even before the government did it. Concern for the poor has spanned a broad spectrum of people but on a sporadic level. In this book, Robert Gnuse brings this concern to the forefront not as an optional, occasional activity, but as a standard for life. He calmly builds his case that the intent of this commandment is to reinforce the God-given right of access by all to land, produce, and the rudiments of life itself. The author bridges between the intellectual types who theorize but do not act and those activists who are so radicalized by their vision of justice that they cease to think. Gnuse has penned a good, solid book.

Part One of this book is definitely the better of two units. Here Gnuse reveals his strength as an Old Testament scholar by winding the reader through the sense of the Scripture's commitment to the rights of the poor. He discusses both apodictic and casuistic laws about theft, usury, slavery, Sabbath Year, and Jubilee Year and convinces the reader that the thrust and intention of these laws are to equate "You shall not steal" with "You shall care for the poor." One comes away from this book with the heightened feeling that what is protected in this commandment is not property but people. As Gnuse writes: "The Ancient Israelite legislator realized what too few of our contemporaries are willing to acknowledge: if a healthy society prioritizes the economic integrity of its citizens, it will stay a healthy society. The maintenance of property and possessions must come second to human need."

In the second part the author turns from the theology of this ideal to a tracing of how it was realized in the history of Israel and of the church. He begins at the conquest of Canaan and sketches it through our present day. This is a heady task for only 60 pages of text, forcing it to be the weaker of the two units. The insightful portion of this part is excellent when focused on Israel's history and the book would have been better had the author limited himself to this timeframe.

The implications of which Gnuse writes could be pivotal in regaining a proper, basic understanding of our functioning as a society. It is a book which will instruct you powerfully.

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STUDIES ON THE FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS. By Raymond F. Collins. *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* LXVI. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters; University Press, 1984, ii and 415 pages. Paper. FB 1500.00.

This collection of seventeen articles, the fruit of fifteen years of teaching 1 Thessalonians, is the most signficant single piece of publication on the letter in recent years. A number of facts will justify this assessment.

1. The introductory article (73 pages long) surveys the work on the letter since the publication of Béda Rigaux's massive commentary in *Etudes bibliques* (1956), a generation of scholarship. Little has escaped Collins' bibliographic eye; he organizes the research by categories, passes the theories in review, and evaluates them. (I confess, to my chagrin, that he has even noted an unpublished paper I read at a Society of Biblical Literature meeting—and impelled me to revise it for publication.) The only gap in this survey is a final, comprehensive statement of Collins' own opinions as to how the book is to be approached.

2. Four articles under the heading "The Text and its Provenance" evaluate the text-critical work in Aland's 26th edition, discuss theories of textual integrity (Collins has little patience with theories of interpretation, even in 2:13-16), consider the influence of early Christian worship on the text of the epistle, and review the traditions that Paul uses in 4:13-5:11.

3. Seven articles discuss aspects of the thought of the letter under the heading "Reflections on 1 Thessalonians:" Paul's presentation of his own ministry in 1 Thessalonians; the faith of the Thessalonians; Paul's view of God and Christ; ecclesiology; and sanctification in the parenetic sections.

4. The last five essays are more slight, though devoted to significant topics: earliest credal statements, love in Paul's first letter, prayer in 1 Thessalonians, the subscription to the letter, and the like.

5. The book concludes with a seventeen page bibliography of recent publications, an index locorum, and an index of persons.

Collin's opening paper is a good point of departure for all study of the letter since it summarizes and evaluates current discussion. The other sixteen papers make significant contributions to our understanding of 1 Thessalonians. These essays stimulate the reader to revise one's tendency to overlook Paul's earliest letter, and aid in interpreting it. I learned much from it and will refer to it frequently.

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ANTE PACEM. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF CHURCH LIFE BEFORE CONSTANTINE. By Graydon F. Snyder. Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1985. xiv and 173 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

What type of Christianity can be inferred from the earliest physical remains of Christianity (some recovered by archaeologists)? That is the question Graydon Snyder, Prof. of New Testament at Bethany Theological Seminary in Oak Brook, Illinois, seeks to answer. It is a very valuable goal; if the book is a bit less than satisfying, that is caused more by the character of the presumed "Christian" remains than by Snyder's scholarship. Much of the material studied was recovered long ago, without any archaeological context being recorded.

Snyder discusses method in his first chapter. He then examines six types of evidence: Christian symbolism, pictorial representations in frescoes, mosaics, and on sarcophagi; biblical narratives in pictorial interpretation; early church structures (places of worship, baptistries, cemetery structures, etc.); inscriptions and graffiti; and papyri. He presents the material clearly, with excellent bibliographic references. If the discussion at times is not persuasive, that comes from the material itself.

No clearly Christian remains come earlier than the third century. For that reason the bulk of the book is concentrated on the third century as it "faces the fourth century."

Snyder faults G. Marchi and G.B. de Rossi, the founders of the "Roman School," and their students for interpreting the archaeological data in the light of patristic evidence. His critique is fitting and sharply formulated. He correctly insists that scientific dating must precede interpretation, citing Paul Styger. But the difficulties of dating this material are much greater than either the Roman School or Snyder suggest. Stylistic dating of art objects is notoriously difficult; dated Christian inscriptions are almost nonexistent before Constantine; and most of the material that Snyder uses was not recovered in scientifically documented excavations. (The exception may well be Dura Europus. And it is culturally different from the West!)

There is no reference to stratigraphy in the presentation. Thus archaeological context for the artifacts is not given. Where pottery dating might have been significant, as in the vessels from Tunis pictured on page 91, no parallels are cited. The fish-plate at least ought to be rather precisely datable. It would have been useful to follow the method of Palestinian archaeology, which Snyder praises on p. 7, more carefully. (Snyder's comment that biblical archaeology "is based on an ideological intent: to prove or illustrate the validity and/or accuracy of the Bible" is a radical over-statement that disregards recent discussion.) Snyder apparently did not consider beginning with material that can be archaeologically dated and proceeding from it to the archaeologically unknown. As a result his book is more a discussion of religious iconography and art than of archaeological data. A notable example is the discussion of the excavation under St. Peter's. The excavators' publications do not give the necessary archaeological data; hence the claims about the "Tomb of St. Peter" must remain within the category of the unknown or the possible. No archaeological dating is possible—thanks to its not being recorded or published. It is a fascinating example of unscientific excavation.

Snyder holds that Rome determined the culture of the East. However, a study of material remains in general, i.e. without concentrating on self-consciously Christian artifacts, suggest that postulate is an oversimplification. In Syria (Dura Europus) or Asia the Roman form of the temple with engaged columns on all sides except for the porch did not become the standard. The temples in Palmyra, Dura Europus, and other cities of the East show that "Western" religiosity did not triumph in the East over indigenous religion; indeed, Dionysus came out of the East to triumph also in Italy. The *via columniata* of the East (Damascus, Gerasas, Jerusalem, Caesarea, etc.) did not become prevalent in the West. The pottery imported into Palestine in the third and fourth centuries was not primarily from Italy, but fine ware from Cyprus, Asia Minor, Syria, and North Africa. One should not use a time lag, as Snyder does, to account for the differences between Rome and Salona.

Snyder's conclusions are clearly presented. He argues that Christian culture does not begin till 180 C.E. At that point Christians invented their first few symbols. In my opinion that raises questions about the adequacy of his statements that "Christianity relativized all past social and ethnic particularities." (p. 1) Snyder interprets the process of assimilation and differentiation as a debate between urban and extra-urban Christian groups. Asssimilation and differentiation both occurred about 180, when the Christian subculture "was willing to say to the majority culture that it existed and had a right to exist." "The city church leaders" (flexible in personal morality and in attitudes to the state, e.g. Callistus) battle the "cemetery leaders" (inflexible, e.g. Hippolytus); the election of Callistus as bishop is therefore a crucial event in church history. Is this a case of Snyder using texts to support his view of archaeological data? In Christology Jesus is portrayed as an heroic figure, but not in terms of a self-giving sacrifice; his suffering is little portrayed. Snyder argues that the agape feast derived in practice from the meal for (with?) the dead; it is so pictured in cemetery art. The only structures for its celebration are martyria, catacombs, and covered cemeteries. The development in cities of structure-like covered cemeteries argues that the house church combines with the cemetery practice in observance of the eucharist. The development of the basilical church must

then be regarded as a major diversion from the dominant architectural mode of earlier Christianity. Here the conclusions outrun the evidence—though I hasten to add that conclusions that differ from Synder's would fall under the same verdict. Yet he is certainly on the right track in seeking to describe the social context in which this pre-Constantinian art originated and to evaluate it for its historical significance.

I have questions about particular items. Plate 45 is certainly printed upside down (to make the chalice appear to stand upright); the strange perspective makes the picture hard to conceptualize in an architectural context. Snyder does not consider the option that the "fish" in the chalice might be a dolphin—in which case there are (inter alia) massive parallels with the iconography of the Nabataeans. He did not note on p. 119 that Orazio Marucchi's *Epigrafia cristiana* appeared in English translation in 1912 (Cambridge University Press). It is difficult to see why some of the inscriptions (pp. 120-133) or papyri cited (pp. 149-162) must be Christian, especially when they are compared to texts given in J.B. Frey's *Corpus of Jewish Inscriptions* and the *Corpus papyrorum iudaicarum.* Jewish inscriptions and papyri also substitute reference to god (*deus* or *theos*) for the D.(is) M.(anibus) of pagan inscriptions, and make reference to peace.

This review may come off more critical than intended or necessary. Snyder has produced a valuable collection of material, provided a reconstructed context within which to interpret it, and given the bibliographic references to enable the reader to pursue the subject further. I like the book.

Edgar Krentz

THE INTERPRETATION OF MARK. Edited by William Telford. Issues in Religion and Theology 7. Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SPCK, 1985. xi and 180 pages. Paper. $6.95.

During the past twenty years, studies of Mark's gospel have sprouted almost indiscriminately. Building on the results of the source- and form-critical studies of the past generation, the more recent investigations have used redactional, rhetorical, sociological, and literary criteria.

This collection of eight essays dating from 1964 to 1977 is an adequate sampling of the new wave. Eduard Schweizer's contention that Mark's Jesus is a case of God having "to give himself over completely into solidarity with mankind" stands in tension with Siegfried Schulz's insistance that Mark's "is a deeply anti-apocalyptic and anti-Torah conception" based on a "divine man" or *theios aner* Christology.

Schulz's position is also countered by Theodore Weeden, who holds that Mark is a polemic against the *theios aner* heresy which was espoused by Jesus' original disciples and their descendants. This is not far from Norman Perrin's suggestion that Mark developed a "Son of Man" motif in order to correct an erroneous "Son of God" Christology.

Articles by Ernest Best and Karl Kertelge focus on the ways Mark selected and adapted traditional materials for his innovative literary genre *euangellion.* The former reminds us that "Mark appears to have had a positive respect for the material which he used;" the latter holds that "the Gospel composed from the perspective of Easter thus becomes the medium of the epiphany of God's Son, Jesus."

The two studies which use distinctively literary categories are by Joanna Dewey and Robert Tannehill. Dewey concentrates on the controversy stories in Mk 2:1-3:6. She notes the chiastic structure of this section and concludes that "it is due to Mark" himself.

Tannehill's is perhaps the most ambitious study in this collection. He intends to show how the disciples (whether defined as "the Twelve," as a larger group of followers, or as a narrower sampling of one or two) function in the narrative as the role through which readers identify their place in Jesus' story. "The 'implied author' of Mark," maintains Tannehill, "communicates and recommends his norms and values to the reader by the way in which he narrates the disciples' story." Thus the readers of Mark's gospel are to identify with the disciples, emulate their good qualities, and reject their failings.

Equally valuable is editor William Telford's 40-page introduction to this volume; it is one of the best summaries in print of the course of recent Marcan scholarship. Any student who wants to catch up on the current state of this corner of biblical studies should start with his opening summary.

Mark I. Wegener

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF VIRTUE. By Gilbert C. Meilaender. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984. xi and 191 pages. Paper. $8.95.

The teacher of ethics will find comfort, discomfort, and certain delight in Gilbert Meilaender's new book. Meilaender acknowledges the difficulties of teaching ethics in a world that knows no right and wrong, only moral opinion. This acknowledgement is comforting. Then, Meilaender exposes so clearly the roots of moral relativism, that teaching anything seems impossible. This analysis is discomforting. Finally, in the midst of virtuous words from Josef Pieper, Lawrence Kohlberg, and values clarifiers Simon and de Sherbinin, two voices dominate discussion: those of Socrates and Luther. The book is a dialogue between these two men. For both, being is prior to doing. And yet for Socrates, truth is a matter of ascending from the cave of ignorance. For Luther truth has entered the darkness. Socrates and Luther: every ethicist has secretly wished to be party to conversation between two men who had such insight into the perils of the moral life.

Meilaender elaborates an ethics of virtue. Virtue and character have re-entered discussion of ethics. Situation and contextual ethics posed the question of continuity: did anything remain constant from one constellation of circumstances to the next? An ethics of virtue answers: *the agent.* Ethics of problem-solving, decision-making, crisis-confrontation, and quandary-resolution posed the question of the grey area: what happens in those moments when there is no problem, no decision, no crisis, no quandary? Are we then morally neutral, ethically disengaged? An ethics of virtue answers: *no!* Not *doing* but *being* is the focus of moral investigation from an aretaic perspective. What we *do* follows from who we *are.* An ethics of virtue attends to who we are and who we could be. Not the act, nor the recipient of action, nor the consequences of action, nor the context of action, but the agent is the center of moral attention. Attention to the agent raises corollary questions about the nature of virtue itself and the unity of the virtues, instruction in virtue, and specific virtues and vices that mark the moral life.

Certain key thinkers organize the book, and these critical questions get buried. It is nonetheless important and interesting to compare Roman Catholic moral theologian Josef Pieper (chapter 2) and Martin Luther (chapter 5) on the question of the nature of virtue and the unity of the virtues, to contrast Plato (chapter 3) and his self-acclaimed disciple Lawrence Kohlberg (chapter 4) on moral education. Chapters on the vice of curiosity (chapter 6) and the virtue of gratitude (chapter 7) conclude the book.

Mailaender's focus on Great Thinkers makes his book helpful to those well-acquainted with their works. This book would be an excellent textbook for the teacher in a course where the students would be reading the Great Works.

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BETWEEN THE SEXES: FOUNDATIONS FOR A CHRISTIAN ETHICS OF SEXUALITY. By Lisa Sowle Cahill. Philadelphia: Fortress; New York: Paulist, 1985. x and 166 pages. Paper. $7.95.

Between the Sexes is a critical contribution to Roman Catholic thinking on sexual ethics for two reasons. First, the argument appeals carefully and self-consciously to scripture as one of four sources for moral reflection. The move is unusual in a tradition that has based its moral theology on natural law, but it is not unprecedented. The recent pastoral letters on peace and the economy from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have used scripture heavily. Cahill, however, lays the

hermeneutical groundwork for making any appeal to scripture: what does it mean to call these texts "scripture?" what is the "canon" within scripture? what is the community for which these texts are "scripture?" Second, the argument places sexual ethics within a communal, social context. This is unique in a tradition that has distinguished between personal and social ethics and located sexual ethics within the realm of personal ethics. Cahill's conclusions are that sexuality cannot be considered outside the context of a community.

An appeal to scripture and a communal, social context are not unrelated. Cahill locates sexual ethics within a social framework precisely because she feels the biblical texts demand it. Her reading of the Genesis narratives reveals a threefold purpose of sexuality: unity, procreation, and stewardship. "Community" here extends beyond the creatures into all of creation. The political, economic, and environmental implications of this exegetical insight are more radical than a cautious author dare acknowledge. Community is key in interpreting 1 Corinthians 7. A "communal criterion" discerns application of scripture. Paul adjusts Jesus' clear prohibition of divorce to fit the needs of his community. In understanding how and why Paul makes the adjustment, we understand something about Paul's community and we understand something about how scripture speaks in and to our own communities. An appeal to scripture and a communal, social context: the methodological move has direct implications for moral decision-making.

Indeed, Cahill intends her work to be both an exercise in method and a study in applied ethics. She identifies four sources for moral reflection: scripture, tradition, descriptive accounts of humanity, and normative accounts of humanity. She brings these sources to bear on the issue of Christian sexuality. Explication of *those* sources on *this* problem gives the broad outline for the book. After a general chapter on using scripture morally (Chapter 2), Cahill investigates biblical perspectives on sexuality from Genesis 1-2 (Chapter 3) and 1 Corinthians 7 (Chapter 4). A discussion of gender roles offers a descriptive account of humanity (Chapter 5). Thomas Aquinas (Chapter 6) and Martin Luther (Chapter 7) present two traditional accounts of Christian sexuality, but each serves another purpose. In addition, Thomas gives a normative account of humanity from a natural law perspective; Luther embodies a theologian and ethicist who is unabashedly scripturally based.

Between the Sexes is a critical contribution to Roman Catholic thinking on sexual ethics. But Cahill's attention to using scripture and her insistence on community as the only proper locus for understanding sexuality make her book required reading for theologians and ethicists in other traditions as well. She is required reading for two reasons. First, she challenges and informs those traditions which are so used to thinking scripturally that they do not often pause to examine *how* one thinks scripturally. Then, she both challenges and informs the traditions which, in matters of sexuality, are not used to thinking beyond the dictates of one's own conscience.

Martha Ellen Stortz

RESURRECTION: NEW TESTAMENT WITNESS AND CONTEMPORARY REFLECTION. By Pheme Perkins. Garden City: Doubleday, 1984. 504 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

This is a big book, wide-ranging and rich. Pheme Perkins is an exegete and the bulk of her study is devoted to historical interpretation of biblical texts ("New Testament Witness"). The final chapters especially focus on "Contemporary Reflection" but she recognizes very clearly how inextricably "what happened" and "what it means" are interwoven and struggles with that connection from beginning to end.

Readers will be disappointed if they come to these pages seeking primarily a clear and concise statement by Perkins of what she thinks actually happened to Jesus in the days immediately following Good Friday. She hastens to say that the documents of primitive Christianity are not simple historical records which recite for us what occurred in plain, unvarnished terms, and it is a mistake for us to read them as if they did. Many books start off that way and then proceed to tell us what

did really happen, which usually turns out to be something quite different from what the gospels say. Perkins begins (and ends) her book with thoughtful statements about the rich metaphorical traditions of the Bible, the metaphysical inheritance of Platonism, and the modern view of language as description of the world and as a tool for the manipulation of the material cosmos. Her analysis is both a help and a warning (ch. 1).

Resurrection language is decisively present everywhere in the New Testament. Where does all this resurrection talk come from? Her very extensive notes demonstrate that she has read nearly everything ever written on the resurrection and pondered it critically. From people like U. Wilckens she has learned that Christianity created a hope and does not merely represent a natural development out of existing Jewish expectation regarding resurrection (ch. 2). Nor can all the Easter traditions be traced back (as W. Marxsen thinks they can) to the conviction born in a single heart (perhaps Peter's) that in spite of crucifixion the cause of Jesus continues. Perkins offers a list of items named by J. Jeremias as core elements: 1) on the third day after crucifixion, 2) women found the tomb empty, 3) and Peter also did. 4) Some were commissioned and 5) Peter had a vision, 6) followed by other Christophanies.

That set of items (pp. 86-87) is as close as Perkins gets to attempting a description of events behind the documents. She says it is perhaps impossible to describe the historical nucleus but one must be presupposed, she says, if we are to account for the explosive power of the resurrection as a way of understanding Jesus' fate (ch. 3).

So if we ask what happened after the crucifixion, different kinds of answers are possible: 1) Jesus was exalted or resurrected, 2) the church happened, 3) the New Testament writings happened.

Perkins explores with great learning and sensitivity the narrative tradition of the gospels (ch. 4-5) and then the commissions of individual leaders (ch. 6), kerygmatic and hymnic traditions (ch. 7), the early Christian experience of the presence of Jesus in organization and authority, in ethics, and in worship (ch. 8), and the fresh view of the future which Christians came to hold (ch. 9).

She deals with second-century Christianity (ch. 10) in order to show the fate of resurrection faith as it encountered platonic metaphysics and she moves quickly to exploring (in ch. 11-12) a variety of ways in which modern interpreters are approaching the tradition of the resurrection in Jesus.

It would be easy to argue about the rationale behind the outline of her book or to say that her approach is not sufficiently informed by sociological or liberationist insights on the one hand or narrative (or literary-critical or rhetorical) perspectives on the other. But if any critics would say such things we would have to call them ungrateful or color them green.

This big book is not easy, but it is brimming with riches, and all serious students of the New Testament must be thankful for it.

Robert H. Smith

AMERICA II. By Richard Louv. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. 304 pages. Paper. $6.95.

Richard Louv is not a theologian, and *America II* is not intended as a theological work; but its object, an America transformed by the inescapable juxtaposition of "home" and "pain" in nostalgia, is of profound theological and pastoral significance.

This is a passion story, complete with death and resurrection. "The America we know is dying," Louv writes, "but a second America is rising from the body of the first. This second nation ... has a physical form: a very different kind of city; a radically changed rural and small-town life; a revolution in shelter; a new workplace. But the second America is also a state of mind: a powerful yearning for opportunity, for old values and new technologies, for refuge and escape." Louv says his book is about "people trying to go home; and trying to go home means pain, not only for the seeker but also for those left behind. It is the pain of a shattered culture, a culture that is more and more two cultures that speak radically different languages. This passion story, like Mark's, seems destined to end in silence.

Home is always an "image of elsewhere." Americanism is a religion, and nostalgia is its liturgy. Louv's analysis is important and perceptive to the extent that it describes the shape this nostalgia takes in the dispersal of America. He quotes Pierre Trudeau as saying that Canada is becoming "a loose confederation of shopping centers." The shape of America II is a kind of "counter-cultural/libertarian movement;" increasingly, the shopping mall is the image of American culture. All of this is significant because the "cities" we shape come to shape us. The dispersal of America has a direct impact on the shape of Americans and the shape of American cities. Cities without centers seem destined to shape citizens without centers: "Things fall apart/ The center does not hold/ Mere anarchy is unleashed upon the world" (Wm. Butler Yeats).

One of the people Louv interviews speaks with great insight of the relationship between person and place: "You know, we don't know everything about how places affect us. This is good land, healing land. There are bands of good land and bands of bad land. The Celts knew this. Just over the ridge is a band of bad land. Been that way as long as my family's been here. People move in over there and something always goes wrong: divorce, poverty, murder. You have to be careful where you settle, because where you settle can become what you are." Pastors and theologians would do well to take a careful look at the relationship between this "place"—at once physical and mental—that seems to be where we are settling and who we are. If where we "settle" is in an "image of elsewhere," what are we to become?

For Louv, the answer includes a diminishing distinction between "rural" and "urban," a scattering that seeks personal control and ends in the sameness of a "national hometown," a longing for security transformed into security systems that are virtual fortresses. Decentralization and libertarian rejection of control result in a shocking degree of uniformity.

The "final secret," Louv says, "of America II is simple and discomforting. There isn't any place to hide." That is a pervasive passion, and it is a pastoral challenge: to embody the good news of resurrection for those who are dying with what Louv calls America I and to speak a word of prophecy for the eager pilgrims to America II involves a betrayal of the religion of Americanism and its liturgy of nostalgia. That is a theological task, and it is likely to be made more effective by a careful reading of Louv's book.

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BONHOEFFER AND SOUTH AFRICA: THEOLOGY IN DIALOGUE. By John W. de Gruchy. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984. 152 pages. Paper, $9.95.

SHAPING THE FUTURE: THE ETHICS OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER. By James H. Burtness. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. 183 pages. Paper, $16.95.

John de Gruchy, professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Capetown, South Africa, served as co-editor of the noted, or notorious, volume *Apartheid is a Heresy* (Eerdmans, 1983), and has an earlier volume to his credit on *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (also Eerdmans, 1979). (Good for Eerdmans!—they are really trying to keep up with the doings, good and bad, of their Dutch Reformed cousins in South Africa.)

The book titles make plain the analogy de Gruchy draws between the situation in South Africa today and that which Bonhoeffer faced in the Germany of the 1930's, vis-a-vis not only Nazism as such, but also its theologized form in the "German Christian" movement. The analogy is not at all far-fetched. Eberhard Bethge, the premier interpreter of Bonhoeffer, came to the same conclusion during his visit to South Africa more than a decade ago, as may be seen in the book reflecting his lectures there, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr* (Seabury, 1975).

The de Gruchy volume contains five essays, the first of which offers an attractive introduction to Bonhoeffer's life and witness as a whole and an assessment of his significance for theology. Following this are essays on special themes, such as Bonhoeffer's view of Providence. Who acts in history? God or we humans? Or: the former through the latter? How could

Bonhoeffer assert so confidently, "I believe that God can and will bring good out of evil, even out of the greatest evil"? A clue is given in one of de Gruchy's sub-titles in this chapter: "The Wrath of God as a Sign of Grace."

The book is very readable, and very reliable; de Gruchy has a good reputation as a Bonhoeffer scholar. Perhaps the most significant chapter for most Americans is the one entitled "The Liberation of the Privileged," which deals with the plight of *white* South Africans. "Plight" in this sense: that even those who have no desire to be oppressors and do not see themselves as such, in fact are living in a society in which all power and privilege is concentrated in their hands. To these very things they are in bondage, and thus unable to move forward into the future. De Gruchy reviews in this connection Bonhoeffer's move from his own aristocratic origins to an identification with the dispossessed, most especially with the Jews. Again, the sub-titles say it all: "The Bondage of Privilege;" "Set Free in Christ for Others;" and finally, the ecclesiastical implication—"A Church without Privilege."

Jim Burtness, my own disciplinary colleague at Luther Northwestern Seminary, where he teaches Systematic Theology and Ethics, presents in his volume *Shaping the Future* the results of his effort over many years to grapple with the specifically ethical dimension of Bonhoeffer's thought. This means not only the book bearing this title, Bonhoeffer's *Ethics,* though the task of deciphering this work and finding its inner principle of coherence is formidable, since it was composed from disconnected fragments. The inquiry must take into consideration also the ethical or ethics-related themes running throughout Bonhoeffer's writings. Indeed, Burtness maintains that Bonhoeffer's theology as a whole can properly be characterized as "ethical theology," i.e., "a theology that at every point is penetrated by ethical concerns and questions."

Burtness would emphasize the continuity in Bonhoeffer's thought rather than any sharp break between an earlier, more conservative thinker and scholar and a later, "radical" Bonhoeffer of the prison letters. He sees Bonhoeffer's ethics as decidedly teleological or consequentialist in nature; it is the end that matters, not the purity of one's actions here and now. A statement from Bonhoeffer's Christmas letter of 1942 is pivotal for Burtness' interpretation: "The ultimate question for a responsible person to ask is how the coming generation is to live." Thus, a sacrifice of one's own moral integrity (lying, subversion, false identities in the resistance movement, etc.) may be an act of highest faithfulness for the Christian, especially one who has a theology of the cross and understands how "God acts through contraries."

On the other hand, Burtness doesn't see Bonhoeffer as a pure situation ethicist: and in this judgment he is quite correct, I believe. He expounds various categories of Bonhoeffer's thought that provide elements of continuity between, before, and behind situations: notions such as "orders of preservation," "mandates," "vocation," and even "law," together with his distinctive emphasis on recovering a concept of "the natural" in Protestant thought, i.e., some equivalent of the Thomistic concept of natural law. Burtness shows how these concepts, in Bonhoeffer's hands, become thoroughly Christological.

The book is technical for the general reader, and might best be used by those who want to "bone up" on Bonhoeffer's thought in a systematic way. The best parts, Burtness suggests, are the often lengthy quotations from Bonhoeffer which are ingeniously brought together from diverse sources. These in themselves are "worth the price of admission." The book ends with an extended study of Bonhoeffer's essay "What is Meant by Telling the Truth," which presents the problematic of ethical consequentialism in a nutshell. The book is a valuable addition to the Bonhoeffer literature.

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THE BIBLE CAME FROM ARABIA. By Kamal Salibi. London: Jonathan Cape, 1985, xvi and 223 pages. Cloth. $21.95.

When was the last time you consulted a map of Saudi Arabia? To begin to

assimilate the radical thesis of this book, do so *now*. With atlas in hand, locate the western province of Asir, to the north of Yemen. This fertile coastal area, 600 kilometres long by 200 kilometres wide, bordering the Red Sea, to the south of Mecca, is at the heart of this book.

Its author makes one astounding assertion after another: the *Tehom* of the Hebrew Bible was the present Tihamah coastal desert of Western Arabia, not a common noun referring to the mysterious primeval ocean or deep; the Biblical Garden of Eden was once located in the Wadi Bishah basin, a region of well-watered oases located between the land of Judah, in coastal Asir, and an inland area called *nwd* (= Nod); Biblical Gerar of Genesis 20 and 26 and 2 Chronicles 14 is not near Gaza in Palestine, but is probably al-Qararah in Asir; the name "Pharaoh" refers not to a ruler in Egypt but to a West Arabian god associated with the places Misramah an Masr; Biblical Mount Horeb is not to be found in the Sinaitic peninsula but rather on an isolated ridge on the maritime side of Asir, at Jabal Hadi near the village Harib; the people of Israel were originally a confederation of tribes living in the West Arabian highlands; the Biblical Jordan was not a river but a name for the mountain escarpment or ridge in Asir and southern Hijaz, and accordingly this was the "Jordan" which Israel crossed under Joshua, from Jabal Shattim (= Biblical Shittim), on the east of the West Arabian water divide, to Dhi Ghulf (= Biblical Gibeath-haaroloth), on the other side [Note that the arrow indicating the "crossing" of the Israelites at 21° N by 40° 30E on map 8, p. 84, should be directed south, not north!]; the Biblical Philistines came to Palestine from West Arabia, not from Crete; the activities of Saul, David, and Solomon took place on the maritime slopes of Asir; the City of David and Solomon's Jerusalem were two different places, about 80/90 kilometres distant from one another, i.e., Umm Samdah in Rijal Alma' and Al Sharim, today an obscure village near the town of Nimas, along the crest of the West Arabian Sarat; the campaign of the Egyptian king Sheshonq I (XXII Dynasty) against Judah, as related in the Hebrew Bible and substantiated by Egyptian records, was directed against West Arabia, not against Palestine/Syria; Biblical Tyre was not a city by the sea in Phoenicia but thé present major oasis of Zur in the Najran region; Samaria, capital city of northern Israel, is to be identified today with the village of Shimran, in the lowlands of the Qunfudhah region, downhill from the Sarat; the famous battle of Qarqar (853 B.C.E.), fought by the Assyrians against a coalition of kings including Ahab of Israel, was actually fought in West Arabia, not along the Orontes river in northern Syria, as is generally assumed; the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.E.), fought between the Egyptians and the Neo-Babylonians, took place near Taif, in the southern Hijaz, and not on the northern Euphrates river; Nabodinus (sic!), Nebuchadnezzar's successor (?), moved his capital from Babylon to Teima, in the northern Hijaz, to maintain control of West Arabia and to preempt any further Egyptian interference in this area; and finally, the Song of Songs and Korahite Psalms originated in the hills and mountains of the Jizan hinterland.

The common denominator for all these assertions is this: the Hebrew Bible came from West Arabia, and not from Palestine, as generations of scholars have supposed. The author claims that the Old Testament is principally the record of the Jewish historical experience in one and the same place, West Arabia. The author writes that while examining a gazetteer of Saudi Arabia for place-names of non-Arabic origin in West Arabia, it dawned on him that he was looking not just at place-names in West Arabia but also at those of the Biblical Old Testament.

This short review offers no detailed refutation. Two examples illustrate how fragile the West Arabian hypothesis is: 1) When the author says that the Hebrew Bible tells us that the twelve tribes of Israel eventually settled in the land of Judah (i.e., in his mind, on the maritime side of geographic Asir), he distorts the facts. What the Bible says is that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh settled into their territorial inheritance on one side of the Jordan (in my mind, on the eastern side), while the remaining tribes (Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, etc.) crossed the Jordan river to their allotments on the other side. Were the "Jordan crossing" a crossing of the Sarat escarpment, as the author conjectures, one would expect the tribes

of Reuben, Gad, and half-Manassah to remain behind on the former side of the escarpment. Such is not, however, the location given to all these tribes by the author (See "Appendix: Onomastic Evidence relating to the Twelve Tribes of Israel in West Arabia," pp. 191-195). 2) While it is true that many Palestine inscriptions (e.g. Siloam Inscription, Samaria and Lachish ostraca, etc.) do not absolutely pinpoint a specific time, situation, or site, the author's handling of the one inscription which comes close, the Moabite Stele, is particularly reprehensible. Professor Salibi, to support his West Arabian hypothesis, claims that Mesha, having been repeatedly worsted in war by Omri and Ahab of Israel in West Arabia, had to abandon his original homeland of Moab to move northward to establish a new Transjordanian kingdom and a new capital city at Qarhoh. But the inscription itself says nothing about any exodus from Moab, but rather that King Mesha overcame and expelled Israel from his present lands.

The thesis of this book, though intriguing, is not credible. The book does not explain how or why Israel would have come to transfer its supposed center from West Arabia to Palestine, which is true, even by the author's reckoning, from the second century B.C.E. One would expect so momentous a Jewish movement to be reflected at least vestigially in the Jewish tradition. The book brings a welcome focus to a geographical area not so familiar to us but important to the Arab world. There is a subtle political undercurrent here: if it were true that Judaism originated not in Palestine but in West Arabia, contemporary Israeli Jews would now not be living in the land actually promised to Abraham. Dr. Kamal Salibi, the author, is professor of history at the American University of Beirut, and is, of course, at home in the Lebanese dialect of the Arabic language. This explains both the author's interest in and aptitude for working through so many common Semitic consonantal transformations between Hebrew and Arabic place-names so necessary to his thesis.

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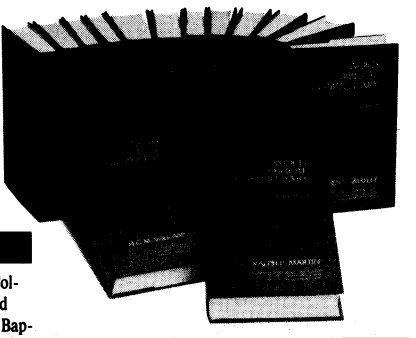
Briefly Noted

Christianity in Today's World. Edited by Robin Keeley (Eerdman's, $29.95). This colorful handbook, written by 63 different persons, displays the variety and vitality of contemporary Christianity. In Part I the focus is on the mainline churches and major modern movements (e.g. charismatics and evangelicals). Part II surveys Christian life on all six continents. Part III analyzes the theological scene, mission and apologetics, and societal questions (world hunger, war and peace, equality of women and men, gay rights, racism). The authors try to identify dispassionately divergent positions. At times, one would like to ask them to slow down and go a bit deeper. Helpful charts, general graphic excellence, and a no-nonsense writing style make the wide-ranging contents accessible to all.

1 Kings. Word Biblical Commentary 12. By Simon J. DeVries (Word Books, $22.95). D. believes that the Deuteronomistic Historian, the author of Kings, was a contemporary of Josiah, and that his work was revised during the Babylonian exile. He faults other, particularly European, scholars, who begin their study of Kings with the end-product rather than with more elemental oral and written units. Only by reconstructing primitive units and their original structure, setting, and intention, according to D., is it possible to perceive an "authentic word of God within the words of men." This "primitivism" strikes me as theologically wrong-headed. It ignores the way in which God's Spirit spoke and speaks through the series of writers and editors who assembled the books of the canon. D.'s pursuit of precanonical units, such as his Narratives A and B (subjected to three redactions) in 1 Kgs 22, is also not likely to win wide acceptance on literary grounds. Nevertheless, there is much to be praised about this commentary — bibliographically, philologically, historically, and text critically. The author and his editors in this commentary series need to strive for more inclusive language. Not all students of the Bible, for example are men! (p. 121).

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What's In a Name—Revisited

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Previous "presidents' columns" have included reflections on choosing a name and a location of the headquarters for the new Lutheran church. Now that the CNLC's choices of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Milwaukee have been announced, some additional reflections may be in order.

The decision to locate the new church's headquarters in Milwaukee may or may not be a popular one. But the truth of the matter is that most church members' experience with the location will be limited to the return address on what is sent out from headquarters to the congregations. For those of us in the West, whether the city is named Milwaukee, Chicago, or Minneapolis, it is still upper Midwest, a place we try to avoid in the winter time. Likewise, if the cities were San Francisco, Los Angeles, or Sacramento, it would all mean California to Midwesterners, with its attendant connotations.

What about the convenience and cost of access to Milwaukee? Well, haven't we decided that we want to focus our attention on mission rather than maintenance, and our resources on regions, synods, and congregations rather than on national headquarters? And shouldn't we be testing available alternatives to hauling people in from all over in order to conduct the church's business? (My spouse certainly thinks so!)

The issue of "meaning" attached to a particular location is a legitimate one, but, it seems to me the issue is whether the office and staff located in the city can relate to that city in ways consistent with the church's understanding of mission. Is there a mission field in the city; is there an openness in the city to receiving the church's ministry as well as its business; will the church bring resources for ministry to the city that are not already there? All of this is to say that if money has to be a consideration—and it does, why not Milwaukee?

Of much greater moment is the name for the church itself. I am pleased with the decision to include "evangelical". I hope we don't immediately start referring to our church only in terms of its initials—ELCA. I hope we regularly write out and say at least the "evangelical" part. Because, with "evangelical" the name will remind us of our commitment as well as our roots, that we are a movement as well as an institution and that we have mission as well as a territory.

Perhaps we should go one step further and make it the "Good News" Lutheran Church in America, GNLCA (or Lutheran Church of the "Good News," LCGN). Then we would have a name that would say something to outsiders as well as insiders. It might evoke interest, even hope, rather than curiosity. Instead of defining "evangelical" for people, we would be telling them what our good news is. Or better, *how* it is good news to all the people who are looking for good news in a generally bad news, or ambiguous news world.

Jesus Christ and the love of God that prompted this supreme gift to humanity *are* the good news. For those who are seeking the Messiah, nothing further need be said to qualify it as good news. But perhaps the quest is for connectedness with a context which is larger and more meaningful than one's self and one's day-to-day tasks and associations; or for the character or principles or vision that will move one toward a more fulfilling personal life or a more just communal life; or for something as uncomplicated as enough food to survive the day. *How* is Jesus good news for these people?

The quest for the Messiah is a very focused occupation of a limited number of people. It is a soteriological quest—the quest to be saved from the consequences of one's own disobedience to God. Except for the few into whose culture the quest for the Messiah is integrated, the quest itself must be taught if the message is to be heard as good news.

The other quests are more "generic" to the human condition, responses to life situations which cut across racial, religious and cultural boundaries. They could all be interpreted, from the "evangelical" perspective, in soteriological terms; but from their own perspective are likely to be perceived in more general spiritual, ethical, or material terms. Is Jesus Christ "good" news to folks who understand their quests in these terms also? As an evangelical church, we hold that Jesus Christ is good news to *all* people, in *all* situations—that is the proper meaning of universalism as applied to the Gospel.

The mission of an evangelical church is to proclaim the Good News to *all* people, in *all* situations. But not solely in Messianic or soteriological language. That forces people to learn the language before they are ready to receive the Good News. The Good News should come to people in their own language—not just the vernacular of the particular culture, but the vocabulary of the particular quest, which emerges out of particular life situations.

Thus truly to be an evangelical church is to be concerned with the *how* as well as the *what* of the good news. That means being sensitive to the language and languaging of the people—their languaging of their needs, their aspirations, and their understandings. And then making the Good News available to them in their language. That is a challenge, whether the headquarters of the evangelical church is in Chicago, Milwaukee, or Minneapolis. But really to meet the challenge, it must also be picked up in San Francisco, Des Moines, Richmond, San Antonio and every small town and crossroads, in all the places where the working headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are located.

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