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# CURRENTS in theology and mission

The Succession of St. Luke

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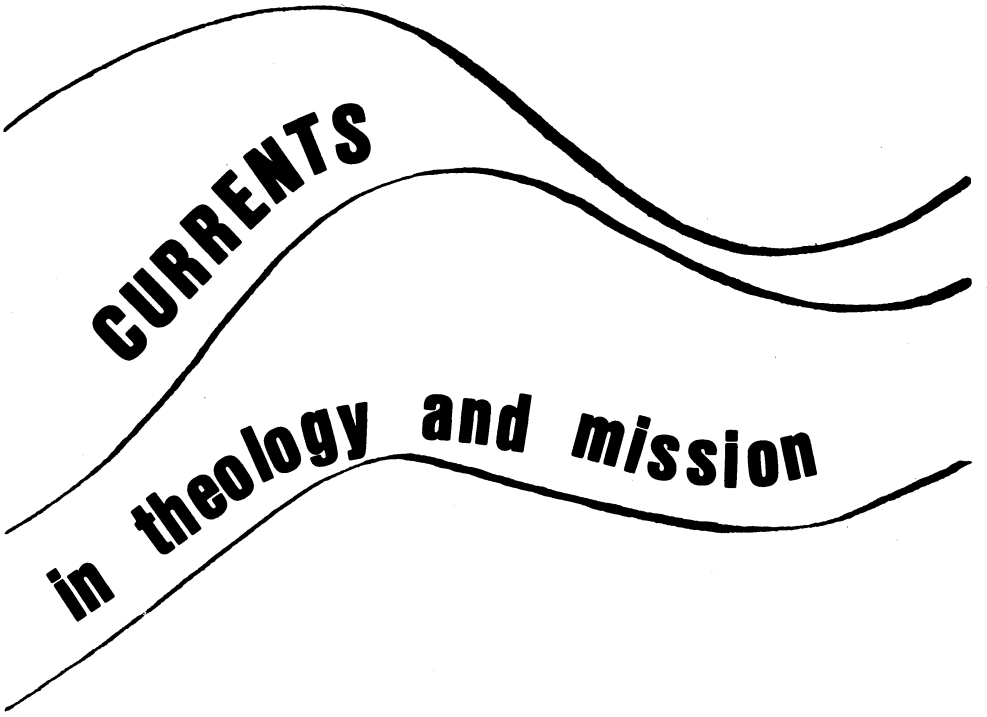
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# The Succession of St. Luke

All Luke had to do was to discern the times and let the Jesus-tradition speak its prophetic word to the people of God. His orderly account seemed good to him and (following two Old Latin manuscripts) to the Holy Spirit; it no doubt also seemed good to Theophilus, not to mention the millions of subsequent readers. So this year it's our turn, not just to hear the third evangelist on most Sundays of the church year, but to imitate him, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in discerning the times and in helping the Jesus-tradition to be the prophetic word to the people of God. We thought you might need a little help.

Starting off with **James L. Bailey,** we read about new methods for understanding Luke: literary or narrative criticism; socio-cultural criticism; and canonical criticism. Here is a scholarly update illustrated with clear and startling examples. He uses canonical criticism to show what made Jesus' first sermon (Luke 4:16-30) so terribly offensive to his first audience and, potentially, to our audiences today. After tracing redactional and literary insights on Luke 6:27-38, he links Luke's message about God's overflowing mercy to the strategy of Martin Luther King, Jr. Finally, he employs literary and cultural studies to find new roles for the three characters in the story of the prodigal son.

**Frederick W. Danker** writes about Luke the astute political writer and Jesus, the Great Politician, who, together with his Father, the Supreme Politician, overcomes the Great Usurper. Just listen to the ipsissima verba: Jesus had an annoying propensity for quick solutions and encouraged the use of a loose-leaf agenda. Only one thing Jesus requires: Let those who prefer the old not stand in the way of those who prefer the new. Repentance is a renunciation of the very political devices that led to the crucifixion and that also lead to the exploitation of the poor and outsider. Peter waffled at Antioch. One day at the Swine-and-Dine with the gentiles. The next day Kosher, when V. I. P.s came from Jerusalem.

**Robert J. Karris** begins: Luke presents his unique soteriology of with-ness by literary means. Jesus' eating habits, for example, symbolize God's will to save all by being with them. In his union at table with society's and religion's disabled Jesus incarnates the messianic banquet. Through Jesus, God empowers people to move from destructive isolation to communion with their fellow women and men. God is with Jesus, the innocently suffering righteous one, and thus with all creation, even in its darkest hour. In his passion Jesus is on trial to see if he will maintain his integrity. But God is also on trial then: Will God be faithful to the righteous one? Jesus confides his life into the hands of a faithful God who desires to be with God's creation to the last.

Just as there are four evangelists, so we have four studies of Luke. **Robert F. O'Toole, S.J.** sounds the main theme: God who brought salvation to Israel of old continues his saving work in the lives of Christians. The salvation Luke describes is universal and Jesus is the savior of the weak, the downtrodden, and the despised. Christians create no difficulty for a sensible, reasonable government and should enjoy all the consequent rights and privileges of that situation. Everyone who is receptive to God's salvation will find that it brings joy, wonder, blessing, and praise. Our calling: to imitate Jesus.

**Gregory Paul Fryer** finds an analogy between Mary and the church, that makes it possible for a Lutheran to use the Magnificat as the canticle at Vespers. From Luther, and even more from Ambrose, he learns that Mary makes the church picturable as a reality in the world. Mary is the one to whom the church looks to see what she is about in the world. Mary is the moral example for the church in humility, gratitude, Christian sacrifice, boldness in approaching God, and Christ-centeredness. When we sing the Magnificat we are not imitating someone else's hymn; we find ourselves singing our own. These last words from the conclusion were first penned by **Arthur Carl Piepkorn,** who wanted to revive early Lutheran generosity

toward Mary. This essay was the prize winner in the second annual contest named after our late colleague.

For the seventh straight year we also include in the December issue a "surprise package" of poems, hymns, and devotional readings for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. This year's contributors are **Johanna Beicke, Robert Drewes, Richard Gaugert, Walter Mees, Jr.,** and **R. G. Schoenheider.**

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a collection of helps in this issue for the doing of your ministry, just as they too were ministered unto by eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, may it seem good to you also (and to the Holy Spirit), having followed all things closely for some time past, to speak and write an orderly account for those entrusted to your care, that they may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed. Yours is to preach about the kingdom of God and to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ "quite openly and unhindered" (Acts 28:30).

Welcome to the succession!

**Ralph W. Klein**
**Editor**

# Preaching the Lukan Gospel

**James L. Bailey**
*Wartburg Theological Seminary*
*Dubuque, Iowa*

With Advent, the lectionary year of Luke begins. As a help to the study and proclamation of the third Gospel, I undertake two tasks in this article: first, a description of key methods presently employed by scholars to investigate the Lukan Gospel; and secondly the consideration of three Lukan pericopes to illustrate the interpretive movement from text to sermon.

## Interpretive Methods

Only two decades ago, *redaction criticism* was developing as the new approach for studying the Gospels. This method investigated the final composition of the Gospels and was a significant step beyond earlier form criticism with its focus on small units to describe the pre-literary history of the gospel tradition. Gradually redaction critics moved from viewing the evangelists primarily as editors who had somewhat mechanically pieced materials together to seeing them as authors who were theologically subtle and sophisticated. Clearly Conzelmann's germinal study on Luke[1] demonstrated that the third evangelist's theological understanding was to be taken as seriously as that of Paul, John, and the other Synoptic writers. By now, redaction criticism has made a rich contribution to understanding the distinctive composition techniques and theological themes of each evangelist so that we no longer assume that all the Gospels are the same.

Fundamental to the method of redaction criticism is the attempt to distinguish the evangelist's redactional work from the material which came to him in the tradition. Such distinguishing of redaction from tradition is difficult, however, particularly in the case of Mark and of the Q materials used in Matthew and Luke. Often redaction critics have assumed that redactional segments, when isolated, reveal significantly more about the evangelist's intention than the traditional material being used. A reconstruction of the historical context for the writing of the Gospel—the author-audience setting—is also necessary for making sense of the evangelist's message, but such reconstructions are largely based on evidence internal to the documents and always hypothetical.

In more recent years a number of scholars, noting the limitations of redaction criticism, have sought to investigate the Gospels in their present literary form without separating out the evangelist's redaction. This approach which draws conclusions about the structure and literary devices employed by the evangelist and how the text of the entire Gospel makes its impact on the audience is called *literary*[2] or *narrative criticism* when applied to the entire Gospel story and

[1] Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (Harper & Row Publishers, Engl. trans., 1961).

[2] This is to be distinguished from earlier "source criticism" which investigates the literary sources for the Gospels.

**Today's interpreter has to exegete the contemporary context as well as the text.**

*rhetorical criticism* when discussing shorter segments and texts. To date, scholars have exercised narrative criticism more in studying Mark than the other Gospels, but some are beginning to use this literary analysis on Luke-Acts.[3] By drawing on insights of our contemporary literary critics in analyzing formal features, these scholars focus on the "story world" created by the evangelist and its development of characters and plot. Without denying the importance of knowledge of first century history and culture for interpreting a Gospel, these critics want to rivet our attention on the completed narrative not as a representation of historical events but as an unfolding drama of characters and movements in the carefully crafted "story-world." Though they acknowledge the necessity of a working knowledge of the New Testament world for interpreting the Gospels, their temptation is to focus on the "story world" to the exclusion of all historical considerations. This can lead to interpretations which are anachronistic or intellectually too sophisticated.

Another approach to the Gospels and the New Testament generally is called *socio-historical* or *socio-cultural criticism.*[4] This method makes heuristic use of social-science models to better understand the cultural world of the biblical texts assuming that all ancient texts communicated meaning within a social and symbolic system of significance. Even though social-science models explain and interpret common patterns of behavior and shared perceptions within a culture and not the self-conscious thought and activity of individuals, they can highlight the individuality of a figure or group precisely because they define deviant behavior and ideas over against cultural and societal assumptions and conventions. Socio-cultural criticism, a needed supplement to both redaction and literary criticism, does not result in precise knowledge of the specific historical context for a Gospel or a given text but a more appropriate understanding of the wider cultural world of meaning. For example, Bruce Malina, in his book, assists us in understanding how New Testament persons approached matters of honor and shame, purity, family, etc. Because socio-cultural critics are becoming more theoretically sophisticated in their methodology and more comprehensive in analyzing available archaeological and literary data, their studies are revealing far more about the culture of antiquity than most former historical study of the biblical period which often neglected the

[3] See, for example, O.C. Edwards, Jr., *Luke's Story of Jesus* (Fortress Press, 1981), Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke* (Crossroad, 1982), and Robert C. Tannehill, "Israel in Luke-Acts: A Tragic Story," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104, No. 1 (March 1985), pp. 69-85.

[4] Examples are Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Fortress Press, Engl. trans., 1978) and Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World* (John Knox Press, 1981).



economic, political, and social dimensions of that world.

Finally, I need to say a word about *canonical criticism,* an enterprise most cogently defined by Professor James A. Sanders.[5] Canonical criticism seeks to take seriously the dynamic and on-going interplay between the authoritative tradition (eventually transmitted as sacred text) and the believing community, both during and since biblical times. As in tradition criticism, canonical critics seek to discern how authoritative traditions (e.g., the Mosaic-Sinai and Jesus-traditions) were continually repeated and adapted in new historical contexts for the biblical communities. This process of adapting and reappropriating the tradition has given rise to the pluralism within the canonical Scriptures themselves.

Further, canonical critics reflect on the interpretive process of relating a biblical text to a specific contemporary community and how that text exercises authority. Sanders points out that within the Scriptures themselves the tradition was used both in a "constitutive" and a "prophetic" mode.[6] The "true prophet," both then and now, discerns whether the audience, given its attitude and the historical circumstances, needs the gracious activity of God re-interpreted in a supportive or challenging way. The "false prophet" tends to announce the grace and forgiveness of God without emphasizing the community's obligations which result from its relationship with God. Today's responsible interpreter has to exegete the contemporary context as well as the text in order to decide how to address its "authoritative word" to his or her audience.

## Interpreting Lukan Texts

In my consideration of three Lukan texts, I attempt to make clear what methods are being used in interpreting their message and how these texts might address our contemporary American setting.

## LUKE 4:16-30 (3rd and 4th Sunday after Epiphany)

One task of redaction criticism is to compare the text under consideration with parallel sections in other Gospels. In the case of Lk. 4:16-30, a comparison reveals that Jesus' rejection in Nazareth occurs in a quite different form and place in the Markan Gospel (Mk. 6:1-6). In Mark, it does not open Jesus' Galilean ministry. Instead Jesus begins his ministry with the announcement of his message (1:14-15) and the call of the first four disciples (1:16-20), an episode depicted quite differently in Lk. 5:1-11. This comparison reminds us that Luke,

[5] See, for example, James A. Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," *The Christian Century* 98 (39, '81), pp. 1250-1255.

[6] James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* Supplementary Volume (Abingdon, 1976), p. 405.

**What accounts for the transformation of the friendly crowd into an angry mob?**

as well as the other Gospel writers, arranges and tells the stories about Jesus in a way which serves his overall theological message and not primarily as a biographical sketch of Jesus.

Although Lk. 4:16-30 has been divided in the lectionary, it seems crucial to consider the text as a whole. Most Lukan scholars note the programmatic value of this story in the third Gospel. It portrays the inaugural episode of Jesus' public ministry by highlighting the themes of fulfillment, universality of the gospel, and rejection, motifs already sounded in the words of Simeon in the birth narrative (2:29-35). Immediately prior to 4:16-30, Luke has described Jesus' baptism as involving the bodily descent of the Spirit (3:21-22) and his temptation as occurring when filled with the Spirit (4:1 and 4:14). Then in the Nazareth synagogue scene the evangelist employs the Isaiah 61:1-2a (plus 58:6) quotation and Jesus' own announcement of its fulfillment to make clear not only Jesus' messianic calling but also the character of his spirit-filled work. It means good news and action for the poor and oppressed and inaugurates the liberty anticipated in the eschatologized Jubilee ideal (Leviticus 25). Thus, the Lukan text underlines the fulfillment theme.

But at this point the Lukan text unnerves us. In 4:22 the hometown people react favorably towards Jesus' gracious announcement that the anticipated day has arrived and are moderately puzzled about who Jesus is. By the end of the story their reaction has turned raw and they are ready to kill him. What in the Lukan story accounts for the transformation of this friendly hometown crowd into an angry mob?

The research of James A. Sanders is most helpful in this regard.[7] He undertakes "Comparative Midrash,"[8] a method which contributes to canonical criticism and examines the manner in which an "ancient authoritative tradition" was utilized and contemporized in the life of the biblical communities. Such use of the Isaiah 61 tradition, particularly in certain Qumran writings, proves illuminating for Luke's handling of it. Sanders observes, first of all, that whereas in Mk. 6 and Mt. 13 the hometown audience is scandalized because of the unpretentious origins of Jesus, in Lk. 4 their rejection comes as a reaction to his sermon. What proves offensive is how Jesus chooses to interpret this Isaianic scripture. According to Sanders, what is really at issue in the Lukan presentation are the "hermeneutic axioms" which are at work. When providing Midrashic commentary on scriptural passages and applying them to its own situation, the Qumran community

[7] "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults,* ed. Jacob Neusner, Part I (Brill, 1975), pp. 75-106.

[8] "Midrash" designates something written in Jewish literature to interpret and explain the Scriptures. See Renee Bloch, "Midrash," *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice,* Brown Judaic Studies, No. 1 (Scholars Press, 1978), pp. 23-50.



operated with two axiomatic principles: (1) An eschatological one, i.e., the Qumran interpreters viewed all scriptural prophecy as pointing to the End-time and considered their own time as that End-time; and (2) a constitutive one, i.e., all scriptural words of blessing and comfort were understood as addressed to them as the "true Israel" while all negative scriptural words of judgment and disapproval were assumed to be directed to "ungodly" outsiders.

As further explanation of this second axiom, Sanders writes:

> . . . the Essenes never in their commentaries interpreted scripture as judgmental of themselves in terms of their basic claims. That is, there was no prophetic realism or prophetic critique at Qumran. No scripture is ever interpreted as a judgment or challenge to their own theology or ideology, or to their confidence in their blissful destiny in the End Time . . . Prophetic realism is that dimension within a community which challenges its identity, and challenges it on the base and authority of the very tradition on which that identity is based.[9]

When Sanders turns to Lk. 4, he uses the Qumran texts as a "foil" for understanding the Lukan presentation. As at Qumran, Jesus is portrayed as applying the first hermeneutical axiom; Jesus would have his followers understand themselves as living in the eschatological time of fulfillment because of his presence (so 4:18-21). But in contrast to Qumran's second principle, Jesus is portrayed as turning "the very popular Is. 61 passage into a judgment and a challenge to the definitions of Israel of his day."[10] In Luke, Jesus does not quote the last part of Is. 61:2, which speaks of God's vengeance and would be understood as directed against "outsiders" but instead interprets Is. 61 in light of Elijah-Elisha stories. Prophetically Jesus is suggesting to his own people that the "poor" of Is. 61 represent not only "insiders" but also "outsiders." He interprets the well-known scriptural tradition as a challenge to the community's self-understanding rather than as easy confirmation of what the community believes, and in this way he stands in the line of the authentic prophets who proved unacceptable to the people precisely because of their hermeneutics (see 4:24).

Methodologically Sanders has demonstrated that understanding the Lukan use of Is. 61 in this text requires more than a comparison with its use in the Old Testament. It requires an awareness of the wider Midrashic use of this scriptural tradition within the life of Israel (so at Qumran). Only then does Jesus' prophetic use of Is. 61 and the ap-

[9] Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4", p. 95.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

**It is crucial how we identify with the text.**

parent inconsistencies in the story make sense.

It is crucial how we as preachers identify ourselves and our congregations with this text. If we do not recognize the same tendency operating in the Christian community as in Qumran, both in the earliest times and now, then we mistakenly take Lk. 4:16-30 to be anti-Jewish and a confirmation of our belief in Jesus. At issue in the text is the persistent inclination of God's people to take the reassuring words of scriptures as easy comfort while assuming that all harsh prophetic words are intended for "unbelievers." We do well to ponder what it means to identify ourselves with the hometown crowd in Nazareth, and then to suggest ways in which we turn Jesus' gracious words to the "poor" into easy justification for our self-created and comfortable way of life. Today third world Christians offer challenging and refreshing interpretations of the Gospels, especially Luke, which have the potentiality of recovering for us the prophetic Jesus in texts like Luke 4:16-30.[11]

## LUKE 6:27-38 (7th Sunday after Epiphany)

This periocope contains "Sayings of Jesus" which are part of the Lukan "Sermon on the Plain" (6:17-49). The following exegetical comments result primarily from a close comparison of the Lukan sayings with their parallels in Matthew (part of redaction criticism) and an analysis of the form and force of the sayings (usually termed rhetorical or literary criticism).

A comparison with Matthew reveals how the two evangelists employ these sayings differently. Luke 6:27-30, 32-36 uses material which appears in Mt. 5:44-48 and Mt. 5:39-42. 6:31 is the "golden rule" which appears as an independent saying in Mt. 7:12. Finally, 6:37f. parallels Mt. 7:1-2 which occurs in another context in the Sermon on the Mount. Thus, in contrast to Matthew, the Lukan arrangement subordinates both the non-retaliation and golden rule sayings to Jesus' command to love enemies. In fact, the Lukan sermon, though far less extensive than Matthew's, is designed so that this "love command" holds the prominent position, only preceded by the four eschatological "blessings" and "woes." The four woes, unique to Luke (6:24-26), lament those whose lives stand under the final judgment—the rich, satisfied, happy, and well-spoken-of people. In making the transition to 6:27, Luke's use of "but" (*alla*) suggests that Jesus' disciples are not to seek revenge on others since judgment belongs to God.

Luke 6:27-31 immediately clarifies that "loving the enemy" involves undertaking benevolent action towards the enemy, that is, "doing good," "blessing"

[11] See Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News* (Westminster Press, 1984), especially pp. 74-126, where he offers Third World readings of Luke 1:46-55, 4:16-30, 10:25-37, and 9:28-43.



and "praying" since these last three phrases grammatically stand in apposition to the first one. Thus, loving the enemy is not a matter of emotion but decision and action. As Victor Furnish points out,[12] in the first century world "blessing" and "praying" were not pious evasions of involvement.

In 6:31 Luke includes the "golden rule" which reflects an ancient principle of reciprocity, sometimes stated in a negative way, well-known in the Hellenistic world.[13] Minimally understood, the golden rule agrees with the "lex talionis" presupposed by Jesus' teaching on non-retaliation in that it also enunciates a "this for that" approach to the other person. A person is urged to treat another kindly in order to be so treated. Its placement in this text, however, elevates this principle of reciprocity by associating it with "agape" love. Even when faced with hostile action from the enemy and thus tempted to retaliate, disciples know how to respond because they remember how they wish to be treated. This humane memory can save them from being drawn into the hatred and violence of the enemy.

Next the Lukan order presents a concerted attack on the "reciprocity ethic" (6:32-34) and reiterates in its place a contrasting ethic for the disciples which seeks its motivation solely in a reminder of divine action towards humans (6:35-36). The three-fold repetition in form ("If you . . . what credit is that to you? For even sinners . . .) suggests how deeply the reciprocity mentality is rooted in Jesus' listeners and their world.[14] Contrary to their natural inclination, the disciples are to act in surprising ways by expecting nothing in return for their benevolence (6:35), and their reward will be great. Precisely when the disciples stop worrying about "rewards" or what they would get out of it, God's promised reward comes into play. Perhaps Jesus' next promise, "And you shall be sons (and daughters) of the Most High," makes clear the nature of the reward, that is, to be children of God who acts graciously toward the ungrateful and evil. According to the thought of the biblical world, children were to share in the character of the parents; in this case the disciples as God's children need to emulate God's chief characteristic of mercy and indiscriminate love. All this climaxes in 6:36 with the categorical imperative, likely based on Leviticus 19:2, to be merciful just as God is merciful. Luke speaks of God's mercy rather than "perfection" as in Mt. 5:48 (*teleioi*). When 6:36 is pondered, there is definite irony for Lukan readers—God is depicted as merciful, not vengeful towards enemies. If the disciples are will-

[12] Victor Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 55.

[13] Pheme Perkins, *The Love Commands in the New Testament* (Paulist Press, 1982), pp. 28-35.

[14] C.H. Talbert, p. 74, for reference to the "reciprocal obligations" operating between benefactors and beneficiaries in the Hellenistic world.

**Only God's overflowing mercy can break listeners out of a "this for that" approach to life.**

ing to withhold their own vengeance against their enemies because they think that God will get even for them in the end-times as the "woes" suggest,[15] then they themselves will be surprised. They are led to conclude against their own inclinations that God acts mercifully towards their enemies as well as towards them, and that "judgment" results more from rejecting mercy than from reaping divine wrath.

Finally, this Gospel selection includes a version of Jesus' "judge not" saying, but the question remains how 6:37-38 relates to 6:27-36. By noting the form, Talbert concludes that 6:37f. goes with the preceding sayings since what follows are four parables (note that in Mt. 7:1-5 the parable of the "log and speck" illustrates the "judge not" exhortation.)[16] If Luke intended 6:37-38 as a follow-up to 6:27-36, then the themes of "judging" and "forgiving" (being merciful) are deliberately and explicitly introduced into this context. Unlike Matthew, Luke includes "forgiving" among Jesus' four commands: two prohibitions (not judging and not condemning, the second clarifying the first) and two positive expectations (forgiving and giving). Robert Tannehill's analysis of the literary form of Luke 6:37-38 proves most illuminating.[17] Tannehill notes the fourfold movement of the verbs from the active to passive voice ("Judge not, and you will not be judged . . ."). The present active forms suggest the repeated need to be "non-judgmental" and "forgiving," while the passive voice pulls God's action into the picture. The saying thus forcefully attacks the listeners' condemning attitudes and forces them to link their own treatment of others with God's treatment of them. Once again, God's judgment finds its description in our failure to accept and implement forgiveness and mercy. Tannehill demonstrates further how this saying unfolds a strong attack on our "measure for measure" mentality. Verse 38 employs the metaphor of measure (in this instance alluding to measuring out of grain) to shatter this approach to life. Although the last part of verse 38 suggest a *quid pro quo* approach, the accumulating verbs in v. 38b linguistically nullify its force. The overflowing grace of God, like the grain, illustrates that we do not receive from God only what we deserve. The "overflowing" measure is no longer really a measure.

In summary, 6:37-38 expands an insight of Jesus already implicit in 6:27-36. Only God's overflowing mercy can serve as the motive to break listeners out of a "this for that" approach to life. Life among humans and before God does not begin or end with the principles of reciprocity but unbelievable mercy. This is why Jesus' disciples can even love their enemies.

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[15] Perkins, pp. 27-41, demonstrates that delayed vengeance is an expressed motive in some Qumran and other Jewish writings.

[16] Talbert, p. 75.

[17] *The Sword of His Mouth* (Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 107-113.



Today in America we cannot proclaim these words of Jesus without remembering the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. Reading a biography of Dr. King (Bennett's *What Manner of Man?*, Miller's *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, or Oates' *Let The Trumpet Sound)* and/or his own writings (e.g., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* or *Strength to Love*) can be a profoundly moving experience and give us different ears with which to hear this Lukan Gospel. In the Montgomery bus boycott, King and others fashioned a non-violent resistance movement which gradually and painfully enacted the fundamental wisdom and transforming power of Jesus' "Love your enemies." Through King's experience, we learn that "loving enemies" is not a slick strategy to manipulate others, but a risky perception of reality which refuses to see others as enemies no matter what the cost.

In Martin Luther King, Jr., we see that Jesus' words can transform not only interpersonal relationships, but societal and political structures. Further, we can learn the following profound lessons: 1) Taking seriously Jesus' words about nonretaliation and loving enemies is not for cowards; 2) nonviolent resistance, as King described it, does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponents but appeal to their deepest humanity and moral sensitivities; 3) nonviolent resistance seeks to avoid not only external physical violence but also internal violence of the spirit, operating from a fundamental vision which acknowledges others—even "enemies"—as brothers and sisters; and 4) nonviolent resistance must include a willingness to accept suffering without retaliating, recognizing that suffering reaches beneath the rational and conscious and possesses tremendous transforming possibilities.[18]

## LUKE 15:11-32 (4th Sunday in Lent)

No one interpretation exhausts the meaning of the parable of the prodigal son because of the story's symbolic depth and the varying contexts and perspectives of interpreters. By including the parable in his Gospel, Luke is providing a new context and nuancing the story differently from earlier tellings by Jesus and others in the oral tradition. Indeed, the reappropriation of this parable has continued throughout the history of the church, resulting in a range of interpretations which are dependent to some degree on the experiences and perspective of the interpreter.

All this does not mean that every interpretation is equally valid. In each case, one must judge how seriously the interpreter takes the features and development of the parable; valid inter-

[18] Summarized from Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Judson Press, 1974), pp. 47-69.

**The two sons require their father's unexpected love.**

pretations provide plausible explanations of all the parable's features and make sense of its structure and dynamic. Nonetheless, scholars today are demonstrating that the deliberate application of different methodological approaches can yield varying, though I would assume complementary, insights into the parable. I share two recent interpretations to illustrate the range of possibilities.

1) Kenneth Bailey[19] argues for both a literary and cultural approach to the Lukan parables. On the one hand, he attempts to be sensitive to the literary characteristics of the parable—how the story unfolds and how it might affect the hearers (then and now). In the case of Lk. 15:11-32, he terms it a "ballad" and concludes that the first half (15:11-24) and the second half (15:25-32) reveal parallel design involving both similarities and differences. On the other hand, Bailey seeks to demonstrate how knowledge of oriental culture illuminates the meaning of many features in the story. Though less explicit regarding the theoretical basis for his investigation of the first century world than most recent advocates of sociocultural criticism, he shares their concern to understand texts in terms of their wider cultural context. In this regard, Bailey is confident that a study of first century sources and an awareness of more recent Middle Eastern customs and attitudes allow him to reconstruct the "world of meaning" in which Jesus' Palestinian audience would have heard this parable.

In explaining the opening scene, Bailey uses considerable ink documenting how exceptional the younger son's request for his inheritance would have appeared to first century hearers; it was the equivalent of wishing that his father were dead. According to Bailey, the older son should have protested this improper request but he does not accept the role of the reconciler. The father's granting the request would have seemed most incredible since it follows his public humiliation; it represents amazing love.

Next, Bailey seeks to demonstrate that the son's returning as a "hired servant" meant that he intended to be independent of his father's household and live in the local village. He wants no grace from his father, but expects to earn his way. Consequently, it is the total and unexpected acceptance by his father which prompts the younger son to repent fully; in the face of the father's love the son gives up his pride and independence. According to the parable, then, repentence is the acceptance of grace. Further, Bailey argues that the purpose of the banquet was to reconcile the younger son to the whole community.

In the final scene with the older brother (15:24-32), we have another public humiliation of the father. In light of the Oriental respect for the head of

[19] *Poet and Peasant: A Literary Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 158-206.



the family, the older son's actions would be viewed as extremely insulting. It is particularly unthinkable to humiliate one's father at a banquet. But again the father does not respond in anger as would be expected; he exhibits firm love. All this heightens the contrast between the younger and older son. Unlike the younger son, the older one shows no signs of repentence thought it is not clear whether or not he will eventually join the party. At the end the father's words stand as the final appeal to him to rejoin the family.

Bailey's use of literary and cultural analyses strikingly underlines the similarities and differences between the two sons; both are "lost" and require their father's unexpected love in the midst of his humiliation to move them from "servanthood" back to "sonship."

2) A quite different interpretation results from the experimental work of Mary Ann Tolbert.[20] She is not concerned to interpret the parable in terms of its setting in the Lukan Gospel since it was not originally part of the written Gospel. She does not attempt to reconstruct the cultural milieu in which Jesus' story was told and heard. Tolbert is sensitive to the literary characteristics of the story as it now exists and further argues that it is legitimate to employ a depth-psychology perspective on the assumption that the story relates to a psychological reality just as valid in the first century as today.

Viewing the parable from a psychoanalytical perspective, Tolbert interprets it as speaking to the deep wish in all humans for the restoration of unity within themselves where there is conflict and disunity. Applying Freudian categories, the younger son would represent the "id" or one's prodigality, the older brother the "superego" as the seat of morality and "professional righteousness," and the father figure the "ego" which seeks to establish wholeness and unity. Tolbert writes:

> The parable of The Prodigal Son seen from this perspective expresses a basic human desire for unity and wholeness in life. Though the wholeness reached by and in the father at the close of the story is limited and partial, it is still a kind of resolution, perhaps the only kind life allows. Every character is necessary, including the elder brother, and the conflicts and relations between them are basic to human existence. The comparison of the characters in the parable to Freud's analysis of the elements of the psyche is enlightening to the degree that Freud's analysis is an experiential reality in the lives of countless human beings. We can see that at least one reason for the parable's prominence lies in its power to touch the heart of human desire. It depicts the continuing

[20] "The Prodigal Son: An Essay in Literary Criticism From a Psychoanlytic Perspective," *Semeia*, Vol. 9 (1979), pp. 1-20.

**Tolbert interprets it as the deep wish for the restoration of unity.**

> conflict and attempt at resolution that form the basic fabric of everyday psychic life. The wish fulfilled by the parable is the wish for harmony within, for unity no matter how partial or how precarious.[21]

At first look, these two interpretations seem radically different. But both see the parable speaking about the movement towards reconciliation and unity. Obviously Tolbert's interpretation addresses our internal psychic world, but we know that that world has parallels to the outer world of relationships.

In light of the Lukan context (see 15:1-2), it is obvious that the evangelist interprets the parable as addressing the issue of "insiders" and "outsiders." It would appear that Jesus in his ministry battled with religious leaders regarding his fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, those who through their neglect of the Torah made themselves "outsiders." This parable stands at the heart of his proclamation of the kingdom: it is God's unconditional love which transcends barriers and makes "outsiders" "insiders." In the Lukan church, that meant that the Gentiles were also included. As a story of the most profound graciousness and forgiveness, this parable can have massive implications for us individually and corporately.

It is helpful to ponder the story's portrayal of God's unconditional forgiveness which can touch us through others. First, such radical forgiveness always seems risky—those forgiven might conclude that they got by with something. Whenever we forgive another, our temptation is to condition forgiveness so that the recipients will learn a lesson. But the father in the story did not act that way; he did not control or condition his love. Not only can such radical forgiveness be misappropriated by the forgiven party; it can be misunderstood by others. It did not seem fair to the older brother.

Secondly, such forgiveness is powerful. The unexpected acceptance by the father transformed the younger son. The older son was likewise invited to share in this creative forgiveness and join the family celebration. As with his younger brother, the father's forgiving love had the potential of transforming him. Though the world might judge otherwise, such radical forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but unleashes tremendous power—the power to recreate life and restore relationships.

Finally, this forgiveness is costly. One senses that in the story the father's forgiveness was costly. It involved the hurt suffered at the hands of the younger son, the pain of public insult, and the possible loss of the older son. Accepting such radical forgiveness is also costly. It meant that the younger son had to give up his old life and his intention of earning his way back to respectibility. It meant that the older son had to let go of his resentment and the "you-get-what-you deserve" mentality. He was invited

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 19.



to be part of the family and realize that life together begins and ends with amazing forgiveness and love.

The Gospel of Luke offers us provocative texts which as preachers we dare not domesticate. Much of the current scholarly study of this Gospel reveals how "prophetic" Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and his activity were. Contemporary preachers stand in the succession of Luke and the other evangelists as they share the awesome responsibility of discerning the times and letting the Jesus-tradition speak its prophetic word to the people of God.

# Christmas Joy

**Walter Mees, Jr.**

When Christ is born on Christmas an angel chorus sings,
Rough shepherds come to greet him as do three Eastern kings,
The star proclaims his glory as ox and ass stand by.
And Mary, his blest mother, keeps all in memory.

The babe who now lies sleeping the world's best hope will be;
From sin and death to free us, he'll die on Calvary's tree.
The tomb will not long hold him, this God's triumphant Son,
Then the whole world will know him as King and blessed one.

How shall I fitly meet thee and give thee welcome due?
The nations long to greet thee, and I would greet thee too.
O fount of light, shine brightly, upon my darkened heart,
That I may serve thee rightly and know thee as thou art.

(The third stanza, by J. S. Bach, was set to "O Sacred Heart Now Wounded" in his Christmas Oratorio)

# Politics of the New Age According to St. Luke

**Frederick W. Danker**
*Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of New Testament*
*Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

The year 1985 has demonstrated that the science of politics is no longer practiced only at recognized local or national levels. A few zealots in the Middle East showed that they could permeate entire Planet Earth with fear. They had all the authority and power of a Pentagon in full complement. A trillion dollars of sophisticated weaponry was no threat to these innovators. But the last thing the world needs is an invitation to play "Ain't it awful." It has, though, a crying need for democratization of the art of politics. And by this is not meant the implementation of so-called democracy.

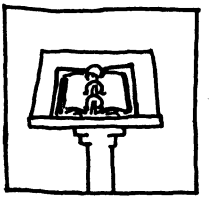
The Christian church has a larger stake in the matter. Christians pray for good government, yet are accustomed to denigration of the very idea of politics. The derogatory expressions are many: "It's all politics." Translation: "Politics is a dirty game." "He's political." Meaning: "You can't trust him." So ingrained is this concept that when church officials are referred to as bureaucrats, objection is sometimes made that the terminology is inappropriate. Such usage implies a downgrading of their activities!

It is not surprising that such a statement as, for example, "God is the Supreme Politician" will, despite the overwhelming evidence of biblical diction in favor of the equation, be interpreted by some as blasphemy. Yet this very circumstance may be the justification for broader use of such terminology. Some of the misconception rests on the assumption that politics is a secular matter, whereas the church is involved in other, and alleged higher, concerns.

Fortunately, proclaimers of the Gospel have the opportunity to probe the resources of one of the most astute political writers represented in the pages of the Bible. His name is St. Luke, and his heroes are God and Jesus the Son of God. And his two-volume work is the story of a political power struggle. Jesus, the Great Politician (see Luke 1:32), performs in total obedience to his Father, the Supreme Politician (4:8), and overcomes the Great Usurper. By taking this approach Luke redeems the diction associated with the art of promoting and maintaining a civilized society and escapes problems later introduced by the idea of "Two Kingdoms."

Since political language dominates the pages of both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures, Luke does not apologize for his terminology. He makes use of the expression "Kingdom of God" at least thirty times. And no term could be more political. Jesus tells the disciples that they will be sitting on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:30). Being chief administrator, Jesus is addressed as "Lord," the title with which many superiors are addressed, but one that is certainly used in acknowledgment of imperial authority.

Preoccupation of biblical writers with political data has in fact ensured much of the attention that the Bible has received through the ages, for next to the weather no topic invites more garrulity. And St.



Luke probes the length and breadth of the subject.

An advance man, an administrator on the take, religious leaders who fear the loosened grip, adherents waiting to fill vacated seats of tyranny, a waffling governor, cover-ups by petty bureaucrats, a crusty military officer turned nurse, a toll collector who acquired a conscience, a judge who could not be bribed, two women and a strange caterer, a hungry crowd, spies aplenty, a sandal-licking attorney, a town-clerk who talked a mob out of a riot—these are only a few of the scenes and personnel in Luke's political account. For Romans the emperor bears the one name that counts throughout the world. The power of emperors is acknowledged as saving power. But there is one who possesses it to a higher degree—Jesus, the One Name. There is no other that spells salvation as does his (Acts 4:12). Luke's political theory here comes to fullest expression.

## Broad Political Base

Fundamental to politics as seen from the divine perspective is the breadth of the political base. According to Luke, bad politics is frequently the result of a narrow conception of the constituency. Therefore in his account Jesus is displayed in contact with people of various ages, class, status, and condition. A primary editorial signal of his interest in this thematic direction is his introduction of the word "all" or "every" in a number of stories taken from Mark.

Jesus especially spends much of his time and energy reclaiming those about whom others say, "They're not our kind of people." Had he been permitted to continue, the "publicans and sinners" would have outvoted the Pharisees. The point of Luke 15 is that God broadens the divine political base by including such people in the New Age benefits, and the insiders are invited to share in the celebration. To accomplish this objective Jesus sponsored the art of overcoming bureaucratic obstructionism.

Jesus taught his followers not to be intimidated by tradition, strong refuge of the red-tape crowd. Much bad politics is the result of a narrow approach to the past and a deafness to the invitation of the future. The very essence of good politics is the ability to exercise creative ingenuity in the face of problems.

Jesus showed himself to be an enterprising politician by performing in constant reference to the Constitution of Israel, the Law of Moses. When he was confronted by the Great Politician of this Age, whose arguments and conceptions of reality were impressive, he quoted chapter and verse out of Deuteronomy (Luke 4:4, 8, 12). This was a programmatic statement indicating that he would review all tradition in the light of the basic sanctioning structure of the Chosen People. Scribes, frequently thought in terms of rules and regulations. But canon law and constitutional

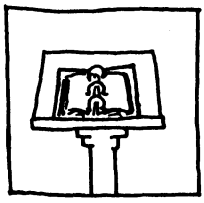
## Jesus encouraged the use of a loose-leaf agenda.

fine print have a way at times of holding up justice and innovative resolution of problems. Jesus thought that even good rules were bad when they interfered with the divine intention for people's well-being.

One is tempted to take oneself off the hook and say, "That was the Lord. He can do what he wishes." Yet he himself set the pace for both civil and ecclesiastical disobedience by suspending regulations and tradition in numerous situations, and he told his people to follow him. And they did, to such an extent that the Christian movement not only eliminated circumcision as a basic requirement, but did away with the priesthood and most of the Biblical injunctions that had outlived their usefulness, and all this without apparently ever consulting Caiaphas and the Sadducees. Jesus liberated them to such an extent that they even used numerous variations of the Lord's own prayer, and evangelists among them revised or entertained revisions of just about every saying he uttered.

In the case of a crippled woman whom he encountered on the Sabbath, Jesus thought it would be a shame to let her go one more day in that shape. So he healed her. The scribes accused him of being a free-wheeler, no team-player. The problem in dealing with this type of story is that parishioners too often come away critical of the scribes and end up with anti-Semitic feelings. "Jews are traditionalists." "Jews frustrated Jesus' loving concern for people." But contemporary Christians need to be confronted with their own scribalness, their own resistance to having favored traditions interrupted or suspended in favor of the divine outreach to the disadvantaged and others who are outside the normal processes of everyday inter-relationships. Jesus was a great politician because he looked out for the weakest members of his constituency. This crippled woman was a daughter of Abraham. She had a distinguished pedigree, and it would have been an affront to her personal dignity to deprive her of an immediate solution to her problem.

Ecclesiastical bureaucrats, when faced with touchy and sensitive issues, usually retreat to the phrase, 'It's quite controversial,' and remit to committee for further study. Jesus saw that it was a New Age, and he said, "Let's do it now." He had an annoying propensity for quick solutions and encouraged the use of a loose-leaf agenda. Fortunately the church has politicians, known as presidents, bishops, and other bureaucrats, who are more astute than was Leo X in dealing with Blessed Martin Luther and they have the good sense to encourage initiative and creative enterprise, knowing that canon law is for the people, not people for canon law. On the other hand, there are a few who are quick to use the grave as an escape hatch and, when asked about certain possibilities of change, say, "Not in my lifetime." From Jesus' perspective they



should rephrase it and say, "Not in my deathtime" (see 9:60), for any change worth being made in the future is worth being made now. So thought Jesus (4:21).

The function of canon law is to maintain good order. But 'good order' is anarchical when it stands in the way of God's orders, and the principal of Acts 5:29 must prevail: "We must obey God rather than people." The best favor the New Lutheran Church can do for Christendom is to have a bureau composed of a broad representation of the constituency whose business it shall be to periodically review all rules and regulations and recommend to the delegate bodies the elimination of any that in its judgment impede the progress of the New Age. At the same time, so as to forestall any tactics subversive of the Kingdom, this bureau should be urged to bring in commendations for all individuals and groups who have shown signal initiative in bypassing in a creative and constructive fashion any rules and regulations that interfered with the progress of the New Age during a given period. If these things are done, the New Lutheran church will most closely approximate the Early Church in vigorous commitment to the Lord's mission. Impractical? Not in Jesus' judgment (cf. 17:5-6).

Are Jesus and Luke too judgmental? Or are we to grant that the Scribes and Pharisees did indeed have problems in facing the New Age, but that we at the present moment in history have outstripped such narrowness of conception? Persius, a Roman writer on social morality, lamented the fact that we all walk in single file and see the burden on the back of the other, but no one sees what is in his or her bag. Not too long ago some women tried to get the attention of the church by encouraging publication of *An Inclusive Language Lectionary*. From responses made even at the highest bureaucratic echelons one might have thought that Greeks were about to bomb the Parthenon, Roman Catholics the Pieta and St. Peter's basilica, and Germans the town of Wittenberg. Theologians were appalled by the possibility of a competing theological dialect that seemed to threaten extinction of orthodoxy.

The performance reminds one of Basil Gildersleeve's query as to how many fewer souls would have been saved had not the King James Version of the Bible upgraded the barbaric diction and syntax of the Greek New Testament. The odd thing is that many of those who lament the New Lectionary are quick to point out that one of Luke's features is the recognition of women and their contribution to the church's life. Alas, as Jesus said about another class of people for whom the New Age was too advanced, "Institutions in love with the past love dead prophets" (11:47-48), that is, they look good in the tradition and being dead they don't make waves in the present. Over-simplification? Probably not. Only one thing Jesus requires: Let

**Jesus can be termed the Great Benefactor.**

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those who prefer the old not stand in the way of those who prefer the new (Luke 5:36-39). This is the art of compromise, the very soul of politics. Unfortunately most of the opposition to Jesus came from those who saw divine virtue in administrative tidiness and suppresion of private enterprise in religious and social matters. They could not share the 'dominical rage for blessed disorder' as a unique instrument for achieving a new brand of consensus.

## Integrity

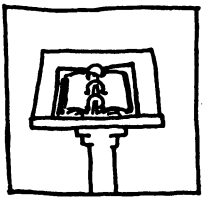
In support of his emphasis on breadth of political base, Luke captured the imagination of his auditors by setting Jesus forth as a Mediterranean hero, whose words and deeds expressed the acme of Greco-Roman political charisma.

The climax of Luke's picture of Jesus is a formulation found on the lips of Cleophas, who praises Jesus as "a person mighty in word and deed" (24:19). This is the very formulation used by gentile historians and other writers in descriptions of outstanding personalities or superstars, especially heads of state, noted for their contributions to the general welfare.

Unlike some political figures who like to pose as saviors of the people but do not deliver on their promises (cf. Luke 22:25), Jesus, Luke is at pains to show, acts on the platform policies announced in his inaugural at Nazareth (4:18-19). It will prove very instructive for preachers on the Gospel of Luke to trace this theme of political promises and fulfilment in Luke's work, both with reference to Christology and Jesus' expectations of his followers. In a society that majors in ripoff, the receipt of benefits rather than their conferment, Luke's message about the high road of commitment to usefulness in all sectors of society will present a meaningful challenge.

Awareness of this theme of beneficence is important for understanding Luke's perception of the connection between God's interest in the welfare of humanity and the function of Jesus. Caesar Augustus proved to be a benefactor to Rome by closing up the chasms that had been created by civil war. One of his boasts recited in the *Res Gestae* is the amnesty that he granted to the losing side. God displays a related disposition in the kindness manifested toward the thankful and to the unthankful or the boorish (6:35). This description clearly has in mind a beneficent Donor.

Jesus is appropriately called the Son of God, for he manifests the basic character of his Parent. Hence Luke shows that in response to a query by his disciples, whether they should request heavenly fire to come down and consume an inhospitable Samaritan village, Jesus rebuked them (9:54-56). Subsequently ten lepers are healed, but only one, a Samaritan, comes to give thanks (17:12-19). Greco-Roman auditors would immediately grasp the point. God is the Supreme Benefactor who ought to



receive glory (vs. 18). Yet the Samaritan returns to give thanks to Jesus (vs. 16). Clearly Jesus is the one through whom God expresses beneficence. Jesus can therefore appropriately be termed the Great Benefactor.

The plot now develops quickly. Jesus, the one who has endeavored to do so much for his people, is rejected. Religious authorities, who ought to know how gracious God is, fail to recognize Jesus as the central point of divine demonstration of goodness and forgiveness. The strong arm of the Roman state, which prides itself as an instrument of peace and justice in pursuit of the general welfare, becomes the agent of history's most ignominious travesty of justice.

In the Passion account Luke pulls all stops in his orchestration of politics, Jewish and Roman, at its worst. That such is the case is clear also from his express statements in Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28. Jesus remains the beneficent one to the end and does not change his political perspective. He confirms his mission to "publicans and sinners" by assuring the repentant criminal that he would share Paradise, that is, be on intimate terms with the King, that very day. It is a declaration of amnesty, an imperial decree, and is of utmost significance for understanding Luke's Christology. Even before the resurrection and the ascension, Jesus acts with executive privilege.

What does God think about all this? The answer comes with the resurrection of Jesus. God raises Jesus and to those who crucified him assures pardon on the condition that they repent. Thus Jesus, who has been God's gracious gift to Israel and to others, including a centurion (Luke 7:10), a man from Gerasa (8:26-39), and Samaritans (9:52; 17:12-19), becomes now the dramatic demonstration of God's ultimate beneficence. The resurrection of Jesus is God's sign to humanity that the door to the divine presence is open to all who repent. In Luke the resurrection of Jesus is missiologically conceived via such doctrine of the Second Chance. Jesus is the One Name that transcends all names, for in connection with him God has demonstrated uttermost generosity.

Nero boasted to Greece, at Corinth, that whereas other generals and heads of state liberated cities, he would liberate an entire province. God liberates not a province but a world. Through the resurrection of Jesus, God announces a mission of forgiveness to all inhabitants of the world, and Jesus himself is Directing Agent of the mission.

Repentance is a political decision of no mean consequence. It is a renunciation of the very political devices that led to the crucifixion of Jesus and that also lead to the exploitation and oppression of the poor and the outsider. Repentance is a revolution of the mind. It is not a call to impossibilities. Had Caiaphas repented, he would have recognized the validity of

**Repentance is a political decision.**

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Jesus' challenge to his tidy rule-oriented system. Had Pilate repented, he would have said to the crowd, "Rome stands for justice. This man is innocent. I refuse to bend to your demands."

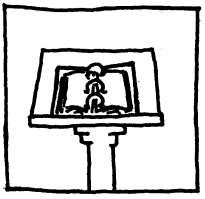
Bad politics results from unwillingness to share in the resolution of the New Age. Good politics commits one to the practice of what one claims to profess in the name of constitutional law. Bad politics results when politicians and bureaucrats of the institutionalized church try to secure special favors from the state. Good politics is promoted when the church urges her members to seek the health of the total city instead of protecting a narrow area of turf. Through communities of Christians God aims to broaden the divine political base, cut bureaucratic red tape, and pour out bounty after bounty, joy upon joy, on all who inhabit Planet Earth.

## Delegation of Responsibility

Because Jesus was anxious to broaden his messianic political base beyond the boundaries set by people of far less vision, he prepared not only the Twelve for the apostolate but also the Seventy. This double dispatch displayed political sagacity. The apostolate of the Twelve has not been especially notorious for creative advancement of the Lord's mission. It took a one-time terrorist like Paul to push the Good News to the frontiers of the Empire. On the very night of his betrayal Luke had to upbraid the Twelve for seeking to use their privilege as an excuse for recycling traditional political patterns (see Luke 9:46-48; 22:27). Well-known is Peter's waffling at Antioch (Gal. 2:12). One day at the Swine-and-Dine with the gentiles. The next day Kosher, when V.I.P.s came from Jerusalem.

With the Seventy as back-up, Jesus guaranteed that the Mission would succeed, and church history demonstrates that when the wheels of institutionalized churches lock into position, God relies on the "seventy," that is, outsiders to traditional power and office, to maintain the momentum of the New Age.

Jesus saw the fields ripe for harvest, and he pleaded for petitions to the Heavenly Father for more workers. Yet in these latter days some ecclesiastical entities instead of exercising bureacratic flexibility and creative approaches to mission and evangelism are worried that there might be an overproduction of workers at their seminaries. Others permit thoughts like those of the Apostle John to prevail. John had seen a non-union exorcist casting out demons and tried to stop him (9:49). His thinking was of the stripe that has surfaced at meetings of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church: should parochial school teachers be admitted to the directory of clergy? This, despite the fact that Jesus placed great emphasis on the value of children as models for understanding of God's political action (18:16-17). Oversimplification? The Gospel is full of it.



What Jesus said about little children and the importance of the kind of education they receive applies also to the question of input by non-clergy. Occasionaly anxiety surfaces over the hazard of substandard headwork from that direction. But if Jesus is correct, officially recognized theologians who think that the future of Christianity depends on traditional formulations and their own cerebrations, with minimal input from the so-called 'ignoramuses' (Acts 4:13, traditionally termed 'laity'), will require Peter's rooster.

One only wonders in the face of ongoing scribal debate how long the patience of the Supreme Politician will hold out. Luke has an answer, but it is not pleasant to hear: "Take away the mina and give to the one who has ten" (19:24). Modern translation: "If the Lutherans won't do it, give the go-ahead to the TV evangelists."

# Knowing

**Robert Drewes**
*Pastor, Wrangell Lutheran Church, Wrangell, Arkansas*

Mary knew.
Before 'knowing' a man
She was certain,
Accepting angelic report.

Time and place uncertain,
This birth will join
Pathetic others of the poor
In camps, on road, in prison.

Why not? This Son would be
Of Mankind—none forgotten.
Incidental statistics matter not;
These a handmaid leaves to God.

She has a deeper certainty: a Son!
A King! An everlasting house that I
Possess by grace. Like her,
I know.

# Luke's Soteriology of With-ness

**Robert J. Karris**
*Catholic Theological Union*
*Chicago, IL*

Luke's soteriology has often been criticized, for it is contended that Luke's does not view Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin[1] and that he stresses a theology of glory to the detriment of a theology of the cross.[2] These criticisms falter on two accounts. First, they fail to allow Luke to be himself and invidiously compare him to a systematic thinker like Paul who views Jesus' death as a expiation for sin (Rom 3:24-25).[3] Secondly, they fail to note that Luke uses stories to inculcate his understanding of how God saves in Jesus. As Joseph A. Fitzmyer writes:

> Finally, it has always puzzled me how one can refer to Luke's neglect of the salvific character of Jesus' death, in light of one of the peculiarly Lucan episodes of the passion narrative that brings it out expressly. Only in the Lucan Gospel does the already crucified Jesus say to the thief beside him: 'Today you shall be with me in Paradise' (23:43).... That scene certainly conveys to the reader of the Lucan Gospel *in a highly literary way* something about the salvific character of Jesus' death.[4]

In this article I will develop Fitzmyer's insight that Luke presents his soteriology by literary means. Such development will also show that the pursuit of Luke's soteriology is an exploration of the breadth and depth of Luke's Gospel. I will treat three dimensions of Luke's captivating soteriology of with-ness: 1) In Jesus' table fellowship, God is imminent to creation and in union with sinners and outcasts; 2) through Jesus, God empowers people to move from destructive isolation to communion with their fellow men and women; 3) God is with Jesus, the innocently suffering righteous one and thus with all creation, even in its darkest hour. We will see that Luke uses themes of union rather than those of separation to show how Jesus saves.

## I. Jesus' Eating Habits Symbolize God's Will to Save All by Being With Them

Luke portrays a Jesus who is almost always eating. But perhaps, this fact is not so important, as is the fact of Jesus'

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[1] See I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 175: "The atoning significance of the death of Jesus is not altogether absent from Acts, but it is not the aspect which Luke has chosen to stress. His presentation of the work of Jesus is consequently one-sided.... What is lacking is rather a full understanding of the significance of the cross as a means of salvation."

[2] See the discussion in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 28; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) 22-23 on this issue. On Acts, see C.K. Barrett, "Theologia Crucis—in Acts?" *Theologia Crucis—Signum Crucis: Festschrift fuer Erich Dinkler zum 70. Geburtstag* (Ed. C. Andresen; G. Klein; Tuebingen: Mohr, 1979) 73-84.

[3] See David J. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 11-13.

[4] *Luke*, p. 23; the emphasis is mine.

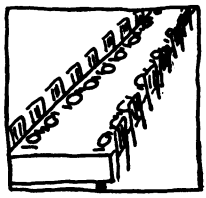


table companions: sinners, outcasts, tax collectors. Drawing upon the biblical view of salvation as a banquet—the Messianic banquet—Jesus proclaims in the loud symbolic form of table fellowship that God invites all to the food of life. Jesus' eating habits draw fire from the religious leaders who charge Jesus as "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." (7:34) The seriousness of this indictment is seen from the parallel in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 which describes the rebellious individual as "a glutton and a drunkard." The punishment for that person is ultimate removal from the community by being stoned to death. Jesus, who does enjoy a good time, has crossed over boundaries set up by religion and society and united himself and the kingdom he embodies with the outcasts of society and religion. Jesus' opponents see the God, bodied forth in Jesus' eating with rogues, as an alien God. The sumptuous delights of God's messianic banquet cannot be for Jesus and his ilk. Jesus will be crucified because of the way he eats.

Let us take a brief tour of Luke's kitchen and dining rooms and see how he paints the dimension of his soteriology of with-ness. The attentive reader will see that Luke refers to Jesus' eating habits in every major section of his Gospel. In the very forefront of his description of Jesus' Galilean ministry Luke recounts Jesus' call of Levi, a tax collector and therefore a traitor who had sold out to the occupation forces. (5:27-32) At the great feast mounted by Levi to evangelize his fellow tax collectors, Jesus and his disciples are criticized for offering the bread of life to such pariahs.

In Luke's travel narrative (9:51-19:44) we find three very important passages. One of the striking features of the Martha and Mary supper story (10:38-42) is that the evangelist depicts Jesus' communion with an inferior class—women. Not only does Jesus cross a forbidden boundary by being alone with them in their house, but he also invites them to the close union of discipleship with him. For both Mary and Martha are invited to the discipleship posture of sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to his word. Jesus' eating habits symbolize a God whose kingdom transgresses the boundaries of separation of male and female and unites all at the messianic banquet.[5]

At a meal in the house of a ruling Pharisee, Jesus reaches his unifying hands across other restrictive boundaries when he enjoins: "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor,

[5] For more detail about the Lukan theme of women, see Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life.* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 51; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.)

**Jesus incarnates the messianic banquet.**

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the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay." (14:12-14) In effect, Jesus says that if one looks forward to adopting the eating habits of the messianic banquet, then one need wait no longer. Those eating habits are Jesus' own. In his union at table with society's and religion's disabled, Jesus anticipatorially incarnates the messianic banquet.

At the end of Luke's story of Jesus' journey of faith to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44), it is significant that we encounter a tax collector, Zacchaeus, who is very rich. (19:1-10) In a variation on a theme, Luke does not have the controversy about Jesus' eating with such a rogue take place inside the house as with tax collector, Levi. The protests occur outside in the street. Jesus will eat with this chief tax collector and outcast, for the guest list of God's messianic banquet is proud to include such children of Abraham.

At the end of Luke's Gospel there occurs the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. (24:13-35) Again we find Jesus eating with outcasts, but this time the outcasts are two of his disciples who have abandoned the journey of faith and left Jerusalem, the city of the new life of the resurrection. The Messianic Banquet is also for these folks.

Luke may not develop a soteriology of expiation which uses the imagery of cleansing and separation from sin. But that does not mean that Luke does not have a soteriology. His soteriology uses the stories, themes, and imagery of with-ness. Luke's stories of Jesus' eating habits proclaim to his readers the gospel that God is imminent to creation, that God longs to be with God's creation, and that God will remove all boundaries which impede that communion. Those stories are good news, indeed, for readers who during persecution search for God's presence and who after persecution search for guidance on whether they should receive apostates back at table.[6]

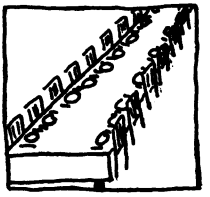
## II. Salvation is Moving from Destructive Isolation to Nurturing Community

The key to this aspect of Luke's soteriology of with-ness is the complex of words: access, boundary, isolation, and communion.[7] That is, this aspect has to do with boundaries which deny individuals access to communion with their fellow men and women and keep them isolated. Salvation is boundary-breaking, communion after isolation. This dimension of Luke's with-ness soteriology is present in a number of his miracle stories, in the theme of poor and rich, and in the theme of love of enemies.

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[6] For more detail on Luke's life situation, see my *Invitation to Luke* (Garden City: Doubleday Image, 1977) 13-22 and my "Missionary Communities: A New Paradigm for the Study of Luke-Acts," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979) 80-97.

[7] I owe these thought categories to the as-yet unpublished paper of my colleague, Donald Senior: "Healing as Boundary Breaking: The Cross-Cultural Impulse of Early Christianity."



Luke 7:20-22, a summary of Jesus' proclamation of the good news, highlights Jesus' kingdom power to restore people to wholeness. The blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead, and the poor are given access to full human community. No longer are they isolated. Upon closer inspection one notes that in 7:22, Luke is alluding to Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1. By means of such allusions Luke further teaches that in Jesus, God is faithful to God's promises of breaking the boundaries which deny people access to communion with their fellow men and women.

The powerfully symbolic story of the Gerasene pigs is a parade example of Luke's view that salvation is transformation from destructive isolation to nurturing human community (8:26-39). In 8:36, Luke expressly states that this is a story of how the man who had been possessed was saved.[8] And as the contrasts in the story clearly indicate, salvation consisted in being transferred from harmful isolation to communion. Here are the contrasts:

1) outside city (8:28)—preaching inside city (8:39).
2) living in the tombs among the dead and not in a house (8:27) —living in a house among human beings.
3) unclothed (8:27)—clothed (8:35).
4)possessed/mad (8:27)—of sound mind and free to choose to be a disciple of Jesus (8:35).
5) living in the desert, the place of demons (8:29)—living in a house (8:39).

Because of Jesus' kingdom power the man breaks boundaries of isolation and gains access to life among his fellow men and women. Through Jesus, the madman becomes rational and thus able to make the decisions necessary for human interchange; he finds a home and lives among his fellow men and women; he wears clothes which give him an identity and mark his position in human society. In brief, Jesus saves the madman.

In his account of Jesus' Galilean ministry Luke narrates how Jesus restored a leper to union with his fellow men and women. (5:12-16) In his account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, Luke has a parallel narrative. This time the hero of the story is doubly isolated, for not only is he a leper, but he is also a hated Samaritan. (17:11-19) The salvation which Jesus effects crosses over ritual and racial and religious boundaries as it restores human beings to nurturing human community.

It is well known that one of Luke's favorite themes is rich and poor.[9] But

[8] The Greek behind the Revised Standard Version's translation of "was healed" is *esothe* ("was saved").

[9] See Luke T. Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: Mandate and Symbol of Faith.* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); Robert J. Karris, "Poor and Rich: The Lukan Sitz im Leben," *Perspectives on Luke-Acts.* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1978) 112-25.

**People are encouraged to cross boundaries.**

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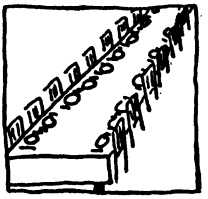
what is perhaps not so well noticed is that this theme is interrelated with Luke's soteriology of with-ness. To hold on to one's possessions is to erect boundaries which isolate oneself from God and from one's fellow men and women. For example, consider Luke 16:19-31, the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Note how salvation is depicted negatively in terms of isolation: during life the rich man isolated himself from Lazarus, who lay at his gate; after death the rich man is isolated in torment from Lazarus. And how does Luke say that the rich man and his five brothers could have avoided such isolation? By the context of the rest of chapter 16, especially 16:9-13, and by 16:29, Luke maintains that such isolation will be avoided by the almsgiving enjoined by Jesus, and Moses, and the prophets. For such almsgiving will initiate the process of breaking down the boundaries which separate rich human being from poor human being.[10]

Perhaps, the ultimate boundary which separates human beings from unity with one another is enmity. The human tendency is to isolate, even to eliminate the enemy. The Lukan Jesus moves in the opposite direction: he teaches love of enemies and practices what he teaches. The heart of Luke's Sermon on the Plain contains these challenging words: "But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." (6:27-28) At the beginning of his travel narrative Luke portrays Jesus as living out that teaching by refusing to punish Samaritans who do not accept him. (9:52-56) Jesus thus opens up the possibility of restoration to human communion at some future time. One of the last words of the Lukan Jesus is a prayer that God forgive his enemies. (23:34) To his dying breath Jesus bodies forth God's kingdom message: God desires to break down those boundaries which isolate human beings from one another. God wants to restore them to union with God and with one another.[11]

As we saw in part one above, salvation for Luke is surely that God desires to be with his creation. In this part we have seen a further aspect of the human dimension of Luke's soteriology of with-ness. Through his stories and themes Luke proclaims that in Jesus God wills and effects the restoration of human community. Jesus grants ailing individuals access to human concourse by breaking down the barriers of dehumanizing folks from God and from their fellow men and women. In his teaching and life style the Lukan Jesus incarnates the love, mercy, and forgiveness which can break the high boundary of hatred and restore enemies to unity. Luke's stories and themes are addressed to Theophilus and his fellow believers as they struggled to live together as rich and poor, as people from

[10] See Johnson, *Sharing Possession,* esp. pp. 117-48.

[11] See further J. Massyngbaerde Ford, *My Enemy Is My Guest: Jesus and Violence in Luke.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984.



different cultures and backgrounds, as people who were persecuted, and as people who went on mission. They are encouraged to cross boundaries and to allow others to do the same; they are encouraged to forgive their persecutors; they are encouraged to be such a nurturing community that they will give life to isolated and alienated men and women.

## III. God is With the Crucified Jesus, the Innocently Suffering Righteous One

Luke's soteriology of with-ness achieves a certain fullness of expression in two verses in Luke's passion account: 23:43 and 23:46. In 23:43 we find ourselves at the conclusion of what has been aptly called "The Gospel within the Gospel," as Jesus promises the evil-doer, "Today you will be with me in paradise." From the beginning of Luke's Gospel we have seen that Jesus' mission is to befriend and save outcasts like this malefactor by eating with them. Now faithful to his mission to the last, Jesus again associates himself with one of society's rouges' gallery. With utmost assurance and confidence Jesus invites this pariah to eat with him at the banquet of paradise.[12] By the story of 23:40-43, Luke proclaims to Theophilus and his fellow Christian readers the salvific meaning of Jesus' death. Jesus' death effects union with Jesus and thus with God.

Our second key verse from Luke's passion account is 23:46: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." With this quotation from Psalm 31, one of the psalms of the righteous one, we touch upon a rich theme in Luke's Gospel—Jesus as the innocently suffering righteous one.[13] In brief, this theme describes Jesus as the one who preaches God's message in word and deed and is unjustly persecuted for his efforts. In the plights of this righteous one two individuals are on trial: 1) the righteous one himself, to see whether he will maintain integrity in the face of dire opposition; 2) God, to see whether God will be faithful to the righteous one who is persecuted for upholding God. Another way of putting this second point is this: will God remain with and thus save God's unjustly treated creation as typified in the unjustly crucified righteous one, Jesus? Luke 23:46 is Jesus' resounding affirmative answer of a faithful God who desires to be with God's creation to the last. And Jesus' trust does not go unanswered. To Jesus, who typifies God's creation held in the grip of sin and death, God answers with

[12] Joachim Jeremias has summarized the food dimension of the symbol of paradise in this manner: "Its (the reopened paradise) most important gifts are the fruits of the tree of life, the water and bread of life, the banquet of salvation, and fellowship with God" (*"Paradeisos," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 5.767).

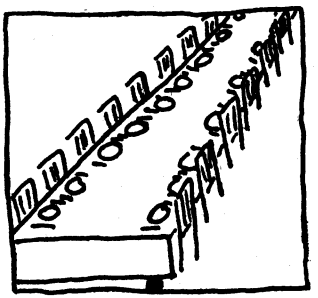
[13] Further detail on this motif may be found in my *Luke: Artist and Theologian.* (Theological Inquiries; New York: Paulist, 1985).

**Luke's God is with creation through sin and death.**

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the life of the resurrection. Nothing, not even sin and death, can hinder God from being with and thus saving God's creation.

In Jesus' death we see another aspect of the Lukan soteriology of with-ness. Through his death on the cross the Lukan Jesus effects union between God and those who were deemed separated from God. By remaining true to the righteous Jesus in and through death, God shows that God is faithful. God's desire and power to be with God's creation are victorious over the powers of isolation. In the kerygmatic story of Jesus, God's righteous one (23:47), Luke's communities are encouraged that persecution, inter-Christian hostility, and terminal illnesses cannot separate them from God. God will be faithfully with them as he was with Jesus, the innocently suffering righteous one.



## Conclusion

Luke does have a soteriology. Perhaps, it is, in the main, an unfamiliar one. Surely, it is not the familiar soteriology of expiation which emphasizes a transcendent God who cleanses sin away through the blood of Jesus (see Rom 3:24-25). Luke's soteriology features an imminent God, who is with God's creation through the thick and thin of sin and death. Through the stories, themes, and imagery of with-ness Luke appeals to Theophilus and us to believe, at a deeper level, that our God is with us and thus saves in Jesus.

The theme of Luke's soteriology has given us insights into Luke's entire gospel message: Jesus' miracles which restore people to communion with their fellow men and women, Jesus' joyous table fellowship with outcasts, and the righteous Jesus' death on the cross with sinners who are promised a place with him in paradise. It is small wonder that tradition has adopted the symbol of the sacrificial bull for the third gospel. For throughout the length and breadth of this gospel courses the message of God's com-passion with us.

# Highlights of Luke's Theology

**Robert F. O'Toole, S.J.**
*Professor and Chair, Department of Theological Studies*
*Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, Missouri*

In responding to Prof. Ralph Klein's gracious invitation, I will attempt in the brief compass of this article to give the highlights of Luke's theology which were developed at much greater length in my recent book.[1]

In pursuing this goal, I have divided the article into three principal headings: Luke's main theme, that the God who had brought salvation to Israel of old continues his saving work in the lives of Christians, who now constitute the true Israel. Under the second heading I will outline Luke's description of salvation which God concretely brings. Finally, we will look at Luke's notion of discipleship.

## Suppositions

Before launching into the article proper, it would be well to set forth my operating suppositions. Fundamental is the proposition that Luke-Acts must be studied together as a single work. Otherwise, one truncates the thought of Luke. However, in service to its homiletic purpose in the coming liturgical year, most of the examples in this article will be drawn from Luke's gospel.

Luke used Mark and "Q" as sources for his gospel, and very likely had sources for Acts. But in this latter, the detection of such sources is far from easy. Consequently, the methodology followed will be a form of redaction criticism which might more correctly be termed, "composition criticism," for Luke did compose Luke-Acts. He wrote for Christians, in order to assure them of the reliability of the instruction they had received. (Luke 1:4) We Christians, even today, therefore remain his true audience.

The main influence on Luke, other than Christianity itself, was Hellenistic Judaism. His Bible was the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament). Other Hellenistic literature had only a secondary influence on him but his use of it demonstrates that he, and the Christianity he taught, were citizens of the world.

Something should be said in regard to Luke's *Sitz im Leben.* All attempts to tie Luke-Acts to a single Christian community and its concerns have failed. Most likely, Luke developed his ideas through years of pastoral experience, and now in his writings he was addressing the body of Christian believers as a whole—thus also addressing us today! He somehow wants to elicit from each one of us our personal response to God's saving action in the world. We will do well, then, to review Luke's main theological ideas.

[1] For further treatment of what is said here see R.F. O'Toole, *The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts* (Good News Studies 9; Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1984). This book offers additional bibliography. But perhaps the most helpful recent bibliographical source is E. Richard, "Luke—Writer, Theologian, Historian: Research and Orientation of the 1970's," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 13 (1983) 3-15.

## I. God Continues to Bring His Salvation to the New Israel

Christians are the true Israel. Once one realizes that Luke is writing for Christians, it becomes immediately evident that he so addresses them from the earliest pages of his work, such as in the *Benedictus:*

> "Blessed be the *Lord God of Israel,* for he ... has raised up a horn of salvation *for us* in *the house of his servant David* ... that *we* should be saved from *our* enemies and from the hand of all who hate *us;* to perform the mercy promised to *our fathers* ... the oath which he swore to our *Father Abraham,* to grant *us* that *we,* being delivered from the hands of *our* enemies ... in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of *our* life ... through the tender mercy of *our God,* when the day shall dawn on *us* from on high ... to guide *our* feet into the way of peace". (Luke 1:68-79)

Jesus is set for the fall and rise of many in Israel (Luke 2:34), or, as Luke puts it elsewhere, Jesus is the prophet like Moses; whoever does not listen to him will be cut off from the people. (Acts 3:22-23) To belong to Israel, then, one must listen to Jesus.

Moreover, Luke views Christians as the *true Pharisee.* Paul, who represents all Christians collectively, and ultimately so identified himself (Acts 26:28-29), says in his defense before Festus and Agrippa II that he has lived all his life as a Pharisee and is on trial for no other charge than for holding to the pharisaic belief in the promise of a resurrection of the dead. (Acts 26:4-8) This is why, in Luke's Passion Narrative and throughout Acts, the Pharisees are never mentioned among Jesus' opponents.

Luke has many ways of sketching how God continues to bring his salvation to the new Israel (the Christians). Most often, he will assert that a given event fulfills the Scriptures (the Law, the psalms, and the prophets). He points to God's foreknowledge, will, plan, purpose. Compound verbs which begin with "before" (*pro-*), and the verbs "to do," "to fulfill," "to determine," "to set," "to stand (or) set up," "to appoint," and "to be destined" all point to God's salvific will. Luke also makes frequent use of some form of "it is necessary" to express this same reality. God directs Christians through the Holy Spirit, angels, prophets, dreams and visions. Finally, and most importantly, God works through Jesus, our only Savior. The Risen Jesus continues to save, and speaks and acts now through his disciples.

### Jesus the Savior

There is salvation in no other name than that of the Risen Jesus (Acts 4:12). Certainly, Luke associates salvation with Jesus during the Infancy Narrative (Luke 1:69, 71, 77; 2:11, 30), and during his earthly ministry (e.g. Luke 4:18-19; 7:50; 19:9-10). But the Risen Jesus continues to save. One of the ways he is active is through the Holy Spirit, but also in his own name.[2] More significant for the understanding of his gospel is Luke's insistence that it is the Risen Jesus as Lord who saves; he is present in his witnesses, and he is present in the Lord's Supper.

Jesus is active as Lord throughout Acts. But we do well to remember also that Luke, who writes after Jesus' resurrection, has read back into his gospel narratives the post-resurrection designation of Jesus as Lord. It is because he sees a unique relationship between Jesus and

[2] Luke 24:47; Acts 2:21, 38; 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10-12, 30; 9:34; 16:18; 22:16.

the Father that Luke is able to take an OT passage which uses "Lord" to express God, and apply it to Jesus. (Acts 2:21) So, for Luke, Jesus is the Lord of the Church. Jesus, the Lord, frees his followers from the obligation of the Jewish law (Luke 11:39; 13:25); he invites believers to repentance (22:61) and to faith. (17:5-6) The disciples are to hear the word of the Lord (10:39, 41) who exhorts them to distribute their goods. (19:8) The Lucan eschatological parables also have parenetic and ecclesial dimensions. The Lord (12:42; 14:23; 16:18; 18:6), whose return the believers await, is present among Christians, and in faith they already live in communion with him.[3]

## The Disciples Continue the Work of Jesus

Jesus acts through his name, and he also promised his disciples that when they were being persecuted, this also would be an opportunity for them to bear witness. They are not to meditate how they will answer, for Jesus will give them a mouth and wisdom which none of their adversaries will be able to resist (see Luke 21:13-15). There are three obvious examples of this presence of Jesus to his persecuted disciples.

As was mentioned earlier, for Luke, Jesus is the prophet like Moses. Whoever does not listen to him will be cut off from the people. (Acts 3:22-23) But how can one listen to this prophet-who-is-risen? Peter in this instance is the one speaking. Luke's logic seems to be that one listens to Jesus by listening to Peter, who earlier had identified himself as being among the "witnesses" of Jesus' resurrection. (Acts 3:15) Later, when Paul is witnessing in Corinth and encounters opposition, the Risen Jesus appears to him and says: "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city." (Acts 18:9-10) Finally, Luke has Paul, in his defense before Festus and Agrippa II, predicate of the Risen Jesus the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 26:23) which Paul himself is actually accomplishing (Acts 26:17-18; cf. 13:46-49). In this passage Paul, who was previously appointed by Jesus as witness, is certainly encountering persecution. So Jesus has fulfilled his promise. He has been with his persecuted disciples.

This last statement helps our understanding also of Acts 9:5 (see 22:8; 26:9-11, 15): "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Thus, too, the reasonableness of the statement in Luke 10:16: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

The narrative of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus reminds Christians that, if they have not seen the risen Lord, he will be known to them in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:30-31, 35). The phraseology of this story recalls the Institution Narrative, where we also find: "Do this in remembrance of me". (Luke 22:19) The Lord's Supper was evidently celebrated regularly in the early church. (Acts 2:42; 22:7-12)

Before we end this section, something should be said about the numerous parallels which Luke takes pains to draw between Jesus and his disciples.[4] The purpose of these parallels is to demonstrate the continuity which Luke

[3] See I. de la Potterie, "Le titre Kurios appliqué à Jésus dans l'évangile de Luc," *Mélanges biblique en hommage au R.P. Béda Rigaux* (ed. A. Descamps et A. de Halleux; Gembloux: Duculot, 1970) 117-146.

[4] See my *The Unity,* 62-93. In "Parallels between Jesus and His Disciples in Luke-Acts; A Further Study," *BZ* 27 (1983), 195-196, nn. 1-6, I provide an extensive listing of scholars who have written on this topic.

asserts to exist between Jesus and his disciples. God brings salvation through Jesus who, in his turn, speaks and acts through his disciples. In addition, these parallels will be seen to depict how the disciples are to imitate Jesus.

## II. Luke's Description of God's Salvation in Jesus

Salvation, according to Luke, is universal. Jesus appears particularly as the savior of the weak, the downtrodden, and the despised. The parousia is delayed, and in the meantime, Christians are to live peacefully in a Roman world. Finally, Luke adds a more personal touch to his portrait of salvation.

### Universality

God's salvation in Jesus is universal. If, as is very likely, the Infancy Narrative was added later by Luke, there is an evident universal framework in Luke-Acts:

> ... and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke 3:6). ... and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). ... and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, they will listen (Acts 28:28)."

Moreover, as is already clear from this universal framework, Luke wants to stamp God's salvation as being universal even from the beginning of his gospel. Nevertheless, in doing so, he does not violate another of his contentions: that the early Christians were unclear about universality until the Cornelius event. (Acts 10:1-11:18) A number of examples can be adduced to verify this assertion, but we shall have to content ourselves with three.

Universality can be detected in the hymn of the heavenly host: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased". (Luke 2:14) Again, in the *Nunc Dimittis,* we find, "... for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32) Finally, according to the narrative of the narrow door (Luke 13:22-30), people will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit at the table in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the prophets. But members of Jesus' audience will be thrust out, for "some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

### Jesus, the Savior of the Disadvantaged (the Anawim)

Obviously, Luke's stress on Jesus as the savior of the disadvantaged is related to his universality, but most likely both concepts ultimately go back to Jesus himself. Also, the OT concept of the *anawim,* the poor, or those who rely totally on God, stands behind this Lucan interest. According to the programmatic passage of the whole of Luke-Acts (Luke 4:18-19), Jesus is sent to the disadvantaged. He associates with sinners.

Since Luke numbers women among the disadvantaged, he writes parallel narratives about men and women (e.g. Zechariah and Mary, the mother of Jesus; the Good Samaritan and Mary, Martha's sister) so as to suggest an appropriate equality between them. Both Marys, in fact, are pictured as ideal disciples. Jesus is particularly kind to

widows, who have special needs. And, of course, the sick and those oppressed by evil spirits are healed.

Luke is also very concerned about the poor. Actual poverty, in his gospel, is termed a blessing (Luke 6:20), and is deemed more congruent with Christianity. The rich are not to be indifferent, but are to share their wealth. Jesus himself lived poorly, and in imitation of him, the early Christians were to share their wealth with one another. For Luke, wealth and poverty can have a metaphorical meaning. Possibly the clearest example of this appears in the story of the rich ruler who is unwilling to part with his wealth. When Peter, in this same pericope, says that the other disciples and he have left their homes and followed him, Jesus responds: "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life (Luke 18:29-30)." Here Jesus moves from wealth in the literal sense to one's relationship with a number of other things and persons which one may have to surrender in order to follow him.

The persecuted, too, are included by Luke among the disadvantaged. This doubtless explains why fewer of the other types of disadvantaged people occupy the pages of Acts. Other less privileged individuals include the apostles and disciples themselves, none of whom, with the possible exception of Matthew, belonged to the upper class. Luke also mentions Samaritans, ordinary Christians, and an Ethiopian eunuch.

## The Parousia Delayed

Luke clearly sees the parousia as delayed. He describes God's salvific will as happening now, in the end-times. These end-times began with Jesus' birth, and will end with Jesus' second coming.

Any attempt to describe Jesus as anticipating an imminent parousia is going contrary to the important testimony of Acts where, at the Ascension (Acts 1:6-11), the apostles are told that it is not for them to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his authority. In fact, the actual emphasis of the Ascension narrative is on the apostles, and on the direction given them to stop gazing upward toward heaven. Jesus will come in the same way that he went. The effort to claim an imminent parousia by reference to *mellein* (Acts 17:30-31; 24:15, 25) as expressing "before long" or "soon" is simply misguided. The word in these passages is best translated "to be destined," and forms part of the vocabulary which reveals that God continues to bring his salvation to Israel. We live, then, in the end times, but in ignorance of when Jesus will come again.

## Christians as Citizens of the World

More than any other NT writer, Luke has inserted Christianity into the world of his time. Christians are good citizens, and so enjoy the freedom and protection of the Roman government. Disturbances are rather caused by Jewish opponents. The centurion Cornelius is the first Gentile convert, and other, more important Romans like the proconsul Sergius Paulus also become Christian. Other than during Jesus' passion (cf. Acts 4:27-28), Roman officials treat Christians kindly and fairly; they protect them from political and religious abuse and intrigue. To the Romans, Jewish religious questions and disputes are of no significant import. (cf. Acts 18:14-15; 23:29; 25:18-19) The cleansing of the temple (Luke 19:45-48), which Luke, in com-

parison with Mark, tones down, and the apostles' "civil disobedience" in the face of orders from the Jewish officials in Jerusalem (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29) are performed respectively because of what Scriptures say, and because "we must obey God rather than humans." No political power, Roman included, ranks above God's will and plan of salvation.

At the end of Acts, Paul and Christianity in the person of Paul, reside in the capital city of the world, and Paul is able to preach and teach freely and without hindrance. In brief, Christians create no difficulty for a sensible, reasonable government and should enjoy all the consequent rights and privileges of their situation.

## The Personal Dimension in Luke's Portrayal

Luke describes salvation in a personal way. The universal extent of Jesus' mission, his saving of the disadvantaged, and the emphasis which, Luke puts on one's response and reaction to the Good News form the core of Luke's personal portrayal of God's salvific will. But Luke provides many other indications of this interest. He intensifies the presentation of persons, or of situations, in which persons are involved. He gives more information, naming people, directly addressing his audience, and adapting his material to his readers' experience. Special respect and attention is paid to the disciples and apostles and particularly to Jesus.

Here we can only sketch a few of the aspects of Luke's portrayal of the person of Jesus. He drops the Markan reports that Jesus' relatives thought he was crazy (Mark 3:21), and that Jesus does not know everything. (Mark 13:32; 15:34) Nor does Luke take over passages which too boldly express Jesus' human sensitivity (Mark 1:43), or his anger. (Mark 3:5; 10:14) According to Luke, Jesus is very popular with the people. They wait for him and welcome him (Luke 8:40) and come in vast crowds to see him. (Luke 11:29; 12:1; 21:38; 23:27-32) This popularity forces his enemies to deal with him by stealth.

During the passion, it is the others, not Luke, who predicate "crucify" in reference to Jesus alone. The scene before the high priest preserves Jesus' dignity better in Luke than in the other Synoptics. There are no false witnesses and no direct confrontation between Jesus and the high priest, for it is the whole Sanhedrin which addresses him. Nothing is said about the high priest tearing his garments, nor is any condemnation delivered. The emphasis rather is on Jesus' personal testimony about himself. Luke's reader needs no more than this before he is to express his own personal response to Jesus. Jesus does not blaspheme; it is his opponents who do. (Luke 22:65)

## III. Disciple: Following of Jesus, or Being a Christian

The study of discipleship in Luke has been somewhat neglected. Yet, Luke pays so much attention to the proper response and appropriate reaction to God's salvation that discipleship has to be one of his major concerns. This impression is reinforced by the numerous parallels which Luke draws between Jesus and his followers. Also, one need only reflect on how Luke composes Jesus' journey to Jerusalem which serves as a time of instruction for the disciples. Christianity is called "the Way"; the disciples follow Jesus' way.

In Luke 9:1-50, Luke's readers are to take Herod's clue and seek to know who Jesus is. (Luke 9:9; cf. 9:18-20) But most

of all they should follow the Father's directive and listen to Jesus, the Son (Luke 9:35), especially, as regards his passion. (Luke 9:44) As soon as Jesus has begun his journey, Luke expands on "Q's" description of following Jesus, which surpasses every other sacred duty. He stresses the disciples' mission, makes following Jesus equal to entry into the kingdom of God, and definitely discourages any mediocrity, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God". (Luke 9:62) Then only Luke proceeds with the narrative about Jesus' sending out of the seventy. The mission is not limited to the Twelve, and the disciples, as did Jesus, are to heal the sick and proclaim the message of the kingdom of God.

## The Desired Personal Response to God's Salvific Will

The free response to God's saving action in Luke-Acts follows from that of the Old Testament. As in the Qumran scrolls, Luke envisages a realm of light and one of darkness. (cf. Acts. 26:18) The disciple belongs to the realm of light because he or she responds to God's salvific action in his or her life. Luke has a great variety of ways of phrasing this response, but he makes no fine distinction among the terms. He is willing to use any one of them to designate the whole response to God's salvation in one's life, or an imperfect or, even,incorrect response. Luke's most frequent terms for receptivity toward God's saving action are: "receive," "hear," "see," "believe," "follow," "be baptized," "repent and turn."

Luke again and again lets his reader see how to respond to God, but he has strategically located some passages and clustered expressions of receptivity in others. The Gospel begins with Mary's ideal response. (Luke 1:38; cf. 1:45) The shepherds, who doubtless represent the disadvantaged, likewise respond well, as do Simeon and Anna. Even Zechariah ultimately yields to God. (Luke 1:62-64) Acts ends with the positive note, that the Gentiles will listen to the message of salvation. (Acts 28:28) The Gospel itself ends with those who have been invited to touch and see the Risen Jesus and witness his departure; it is these same believers who appear at the beginning of Acts.

Luke has clustered expressions of receptivity toward God's salvation in Jesus. The most extensive passage is Luke 8:4-21. A glance at the vocabulary leaves no doubt that these verses stress receptivity: "ears," "hear," "seeds," "word," "see," "understand," "believe," "receive," "manifest," and "come to light."

## The Appropriate Reactions to the Experience of God's Salvation in Jesus

Closely related to the above discussion is Luke's summons to his readers to enter into the joy, wonder, blessing and praise which should naturally result from the realization of what God has done for them in Jesus. It would probably be helpful to list here the expressions which form part of this extensive Lucan pattern, of a positive, joyful reaction to Christian salvation: "I rejoice," "speak in tongues or prophesy," "am glad," "am merry," "laugh," "jump for joy," "peace," "I am amazed," "surprised," "astonished," "marvel," "am afraid or in awe," "am confused," "am perplexed," "glorify (glory)," "thank," and "magnify."

Luke 15 will have to suffice as an example showing how Luke integrates this theme into his writings. The shepherd

*rejoices* when he finds his sheep, and both he and the widow call together their friends to *rejoice* with them. Both of their stories end with similar phrases, "... there is *joy* before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." The father, upon the prodigal's return, urges everyone to *make merry*, and in fact, they *make merry*. The chapter concludes with the father's words, "It was fitting to *make merry* and *be glad,* for this your brother was dead, and is alive, he was lost and is found." Furthermore, Luke introduces into this chapter other details which expand on joy. The shepherd puts the lost sheep on his shoulder, and the father runs and embraces his son and kisses him. He instructs them to dress him in the best robe and to put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. When the elder son returns from the field, he hears music and dancing, and Luke three times informs us that the father brought out the fatted calf and killed it. So joy permeates the chapter.

## Christians Should Imitate Jesus

As noted above, Christ works through the disciples, and particular attention is called to the following of Jesus at the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem. Luke does not often explicitly write of Christians' imitation of Jesus. Certainly, a disciple is fully taught when he or she is like the teacher (Luke 6:40), and Christians are to take up their cross *daily* and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23). Also, the disciples do ask Jesus to teach them to pray after they see him praying. The story of the rich ruler reminds Christians to let nothing stand in the way of following Jesus. At the Last Supper, only Luke of the Synoptics writes, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19) and "You are those who have continued with me in my trials" (Luke 22:28). Luke stresses that Simon of Cyrene carried the cross *behind* Jesus (Luke 23:26). However, most of all, Luke shows the disciples having the same experiences as Jesus. This is why he has drawn so many parallels between Jesus and them. These parallels are the main way that Luke demonstrates that the disciples should imitate Jesus. Most of the parallels are to instances of Jesus' suffering.

## Conclusion

Luke has a unity in his theology. God continues to save the Christians who are the true Israel. He does this in various ways, but particularly, through Jesus who likewise works through his disciples. Luke describes this salvation in specific ways. It is universal, and Jesus especially saves the disadvantaged. The second coming of Jesus has been delayed. Christians live peacefully in a Roman world, and a more personal portrayal of individuals is provided. Everyone should be receptive of God's salvation which naturally brings joy, wonder, blessing and praise. Finally, we Christians should imitate Jesus.



# Mary as Archetype of the Church: An Essay in Generosity Toward Mary

**Gregory Paul Fryer**
*Stewartstown Parish, Stewartstown, Pa.*

The following essay was the winning entry of the second annual Arthur Carl Piepkorn Prize. The prize was presented by Dr. John H. Tietjen, president of Christ Seminary-Seminex, sponsor of the award, at the 60th Annual Spring Convocation of the Gettysburg seminary on May 1, 1985. The prize, a $2,000 cash award, is presented annually to the winner of an essay competition open to senior students at Lutheran seminaries and to Lutheran graduate students of theology. The essay competition was established in memory of Arthur Carl Piepkorn, a deceased colleague of the Christ Seminary-Seminex faculty, to build on his theological and ecumenical contributions to the church.

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The word "generosity" in the subtitle of this essay comes from a recommendation by Arthur Carl Piepkorn near the end of one of his essays on Mary: "We shall do well to recover the generosity that marked our spiritual forebears of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that left room for wide differences of exegesis, pious practice and theological opinion, as long as binding dogmas or heretical conclusions were not inferred from them."[1] Piepkorn described himself as "an ecumenically oriented Evangelical Catholic,"[2] and his appreciative attitude toward Mary is certainly an instance of this orientation. He believed that Mary is worthy of a "religiously exceptional place within the people of God,"[3] and in his essays and sermons on Mary he sought to give her that place as far as this was possible within an evangelical framework. This essay on Mary tries to follow Piepkorn's appreciative approach to her.

The timing of this essay on Mary is good with respect to the National Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, which started its discussion of "Mary and the Saints" in 1983. That discussion presently is in the preliminary and exploratory stage. But while the timing is good from the point of view of the National Dialogue, it is late compared with the pace of Piepkorn's interest in Mary. Piepkorn was calling for generosity in such ecumenical matters as Mariology back in 1960.[4] Twice he was invited to address the National Convention of The Mariological Society of America, in 1967 and 1973, and he was an active member of that society throughout those years of 1967 to 1973, the year of his death. Piepkorn not only recommended generosity in ecumenical studies but illustrated it too.

In Piepkorn's address to the Eighteenth National Convention of the Mariological Society of America, in the

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[1] Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Eve Reversed: Intentionally Non-controversial Reflections on the Woman Who Gave Birth to God", *The Seminarian* (Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis) 51 (February 1960): 17.

[2] Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Mary's Place Within the People of God According to Non-Roman-Catholics", *Marian Studies* 18 (1967): 48.

[3] Ibid., p. 49.

[4] Piepkorn, "Eve Reversed", p. 17.

year 1967, he concluded his review of "Mary's Place Within The People Of God According To Non-Roman-Catholics" with his own proposals for fruitful dialog between Roman Catholics and non-Roman-Catholics. He offers a remarkable list of possible areas of agreement between the two sides, provided that the basis of the discussion is the Sacred Scriptures as the primitive church understood them. It is worthwhile to quote this list, first of all to be fair to Piepkorn by stating his specific proposals—neither more nor less. And second, this list should be valued as a testimony from one of the master teachers of the church, with words of direction for the present and future of Lutheranism. Piepkorn suggests that there could be ecumenical agreement on the following Marian themes:

> a place for Mary in prophecy (although it would probably be somewhat more restricted than a Marian maximalist would rejoice at); the virgin conception and birth; the rightfulness of the title *theotokos;* the Virgin's place in the Church as the first of the redeemed; her role as the *kecharitomene* par excellence, uniquely endowed with God's favor; her paradigmatic piety, patience, humility, and faith; her status as the most blessed of women; her *fiat mihi* as the typical divinely empowered response that God elicits from all those of His children whom He calls to be in freedom workers together with Him; the analogy between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church that makes it possible for a Lutheran to use the Magnificat as the canticle at vespers and to say the first, pre-Counterreformation part of the *Ave Maria* (as far as "and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus") as memorials of the Incarnation; the probability of her intercession for the Church; the paradoxical parallel between the obedient Virgin Mary and the disobedient Virgin Eve that theologians have noted since the second century (although originally the thrust was Christological rather than Marian); St. Mary's virginity certainly *ante partum* and *in partu* and fittingly *post partum;* the legitimacy of apostrophes to her in hymns and in the liturgy; the propriety of celebrating the Annunciation, the Visitation, and Purification for what they really are, feasts of our Lord, to which some non-Roman-Catholics, following the Church's example in the case of St. John the Baptist, would be willing to add her Nativity on September 8 and her Falling Asleep on August 15; the devotional value of good, unsentimental representations of her in the arts, especially after the earliest surviving models which always show her with the holy Child; and the legitimacy of naming churches and church institutions after her and after the mysteries of her Annunciation, Vistation, Purification, Birth, and Falling Asleep.[5]

In this essay I will address one item on Piepkorn's list: the "analogy between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church that makes it possible for a Lutheran to use the Magnificat as the canticle at vespers ..." I will suggest that the specific character of the analogy between Mary and the church is that of "archetype". Mary is the "archetype of the church", which is a strong analogy indeed. Furthermore, I will argue that acknowledg-

[5] Piepkorn, "Mary's Place", pp. 79-81.

ing Mary as the church's archetype benefits our evangelical Catholic Church.

## Early Lutheran Attitudes Toward Mary

The Lutheran confessional writings do not refer to an analogy between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the church. Instead, they affirm the Council of Ephesus's description of her as *Theotokos,* which is usually translated "Mother of God." Thus, the Formula of Concord says: "We believe, teach, and confess, that Mary did not conceive and bear a mere and ordinary human being, but the true Son of God; for that reason she is rightly called and in truth is the Mother of God."[6]

Because the Lutheran symbolical books do not refer to Mary as the "archetype of the church," nor as a symbol for the church or anything similar, the claim of Mary's archetypical relation to the church does not presume to be binding. It is rather what I think Piepkorn would refer to as, a "pious opinion" which can be tolerated and even valued so long as it is not made dogma and does not imply heretical conclusions.

While the *Book of Concord* is silent on the analogy between Mary and the church, Luther himself seems to have held this pious opinion. Piepkorn noted that Luther's personal devotion to Mary was lifelong, though it was not a Marian devotion, but was theological and Christological.[7] Luther valued Mary fundamentally for her Son. Yet also he had an ecclesiastical interest in Mary. He derived lessons for the church from contemplating Mary.

For example, Luther, in his Church Postil of 1521/22, argued for the priority of the church over the bishops and priests of the church by noting that the wise men found first of all Mary, and only then Joseph and the child:

> It was not without intention that Luke writes: "they found Mary and Joseph and the babe in the manger," mentioning Mary before Joseph and both of them before the infant. As we said above, *Mary is the Christian church* and Joseph the servant of the church, and this is exactly what the position of the bishops and priests should be when they preach the gospel. The church comes before the prelates of the church, as Christ, too, says in Luke 21 [22-26]: "He who wishes to be the greatest among you, must be the last." Nowadays this has been reversed, and one need not be astonished about it because they have rejected the gospel and exalted the babblings of men. *The Christian Church,* on the contrary, *keeps all the words of God in her heart* and ponders them, compares one with the other and with Holy Scriptures. Therefore he who wants to find Christ, must first find the church.[8] (italics mine)

Another example from the same time period is Luther's interpretation of Simeon's warning that a sword shall pierce through Mary's soul. Luther interprets this to mean that the church is destined

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[6] Theodore G. Tappert (ed. & tr.), *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), "Formula of Concord": "Epitome" VIII, 12, p. 488, and "Solid Declaration" VIII, 24, p. 595.

[7] Piepkorn, "Mary's Place", p. 73.

[8] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* American Edition, ed. & tr. Theodore G. Tappert, vol. 52, "The Gospel for the Early Christmas Service" (1521/22) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 39. The 55-volume edition of *Luther's Works* (eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955-) is hereafter cited LW.

for sorrow and widowhood, but she will endure, just as Mary did after the death of Joseph:

> But what does it signify that Simeon here speaks only to Mary, the mother, and not to Joseph? It signifies that the Christian Church, *the spiritual virgin Mary,* will remain on earth and will not be exterminated although the preacher and their faith and the Gospel, the spiritual Christ, are persecuted. Thus Joseph died before Christ suffered, and Mary in her widowhood was deprived of her child, yet she lived, and all this grief overwhelmed her soul. Thus the Christian Church will always be a widow, feeling great sorrow because the holy fathers, represented by Joseph, die, and the Gospel is persecuted. The Church must feel the sword, and will yet remain until the last day.[9] (italics mine)

The analogy between Mary and the church is powerful here, extending Mary's suffering to the destiny of the church. Luther does not seem to be noting a chance similarity between Mary and the church, but is rather deriving the fate of one from that of the other.

A final example from the Wartburg Postil in which Luther sees an analogy between Mary and the church is Luther's interpretation of Mary's name as a "sea of bitterness." Given this meaning of her name, Luther is nor surprised that the gospel is persecuted. Mary's bitterness befalls the church:

> What can be more painful for a Christian than to see and experience how furiously the tyrants and unbelievers persecute and exterminate the Gospel of Christ? This is done more at the present time under the pope than ever before. With this agrees the name of Mary, which means a "sea of bitterness." This declares that there is in her not only a drop, nor a river, but a whole sea of bitterness, for all the waves of sorrow go over her, so that she may indeed be called Mary, a bitter sea.[10]

In summary then, the Lutheran confessional writings do not speak of an analogy between Mary and the church. However, there is evidence that at least in one period of Luther's life, he accepted the pious opinion that Mary symbolizes the church.

## "Mary is the type of the Church"

So said St. Ambrose.[11] According to Otto Semmelroth, S.J., this simple claim "sums up the entire tradition of the Fathers and theologians concerning the Church's knowledge of its own nature ..."[12] The basic proposal of this essay is that St. Ambrose's insight to Mary as type of the church is the key to giving Mary a religiously exceptional place within the people of God. Mary is the type of the church. The church's "Spirit" is that of Mary's Son, but the church's "type" is Mary herself.

Semmelroth offers a threefold analysis of "type". In his analysis, he tries to capture the primitive etymological meaning of the concept, according to which the word "type" had an air of energy about

[9] Martin Luther, *Standard Edition of Luther's Works,* ed. & tr. John N. Lenker, vol. X, "Sunday after Christmas" (1521/22) (Minneapolis: Lutherans In All Lands Co., 1905), p. 276.

[10] Ibid., pp. 276-77.

[11] *Expos. in evgl. Luc.* II. 7 — ML 15, 1555 B, quoted in Otto Semmelroth, S.J., *Mary, Archetype of the Church,* trs. Maria von Eroes and John Devlin, Intro. Jaroslav Pelikan (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), p. 26.

[12] Semmelroth, p. 26.

it. Semmelroth says that "a type is the effect of *tuptein,* which means a hitting or pushing. Type is originally the blow itself, and thus the primordial physical relation of one thing to another."[13] I understand this to mean that Mary's "typical" relationship to the church is that the church bears her impact. She leaves her image on the church, as a blow leaves its impress. This language of "blow" or "impress" is no doubt too combative, and yet it does suggest what I take to be Semmelroth's theme: The similarity between Mary and the church —the kind of similarity that Luther employed in his Wartburg Postils—is not a matter of chance, nor correlation, but is an organic relationship. The similarity is intrinsic. Furthermore, this intrinsic relationship between Mary and the church should be acknowledged, for the health of the church.

The first element in Semmelroth's analysis of "type" is personification or representation. Thus, Mary, as the type of the church, represents the church. She makes the church conceivable or picturable as a reality in the world. And this is so not just for artists, who must have some symbol in order to depict the church. Also it is necessary for the church herself to have some self-representation. The gathering of people among whom the gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are rightly administered is not a mere collection of individuals, but is a "body" with its own life and presence in the world.[14] Like any other body enlivened by a spirit—in this case, the Holy Spirit—the church must have a concept of herself. She must be able to picture herself if she is to be aware of her own presence in the world.

Semmelroth explains the need for a type to represent the church by referring to the problem of "distance". The church is just too distant to be seen. This problem of distance is overcome through Mary's personification of the church:

> Because of this factor of "distance", the object in question must be made "present". But it is impossible to bring the object (in the philosophic sense of immediacy) into close view and proximity. That is why a type must represent it, must stand in its place. Thus, the reality of the Church needs a typical representative figure, even though she is so close to us that it is in her that we live and breathe and have our being. The Church is even physically visible—and at times we are aware of her all-too-human proximity. Yet she is also remote because in her visible form we cannot touch her inmost reality. What we see and experience in her visible existence is fragmented. Both her invisible, spiritual core and the totality of her external unity call for a type to personify her and make her present to us.[15]

But if we grant that the church needs a type in order to draw her into proximity to believers, so that she can be conceived by them, why select Mary as that type? Why not someone or something else, like, say a pomegranate? After all, the pomegranate is also a traditional symbol of the church, with all the little seeds inside unified into one fruit, as the church unifies believers into one body. But the pomegranate fails to personify the church because, first of all, it is not a person, while the church herself is personal, with body and spirit. So if the

[13] Ibid., p. 27.

[14] Jaroslav Pelikan credits Semmelroth for emphasizing the corporate nature of the church, in Pelikan's introduction to Semmelroth's book, pp. viii-x.

[15] Semmelroth, pp. 29-30.

pomegranate is a type of the church, it is not yet the church's "archetype".

The church's archetype, then, should share the characteristics of the church. The archetype should be paradigmatic of the church's nature, so that believers will not be misled about the kind of reality of which they are members. Semmelroth does not explain why Mary in particular should be the church archetype. Instead, he respectfully accepts Mary as the choice of the church's tradition. This choice is reflected in church art, in the fact that cathedrals are dedicated to Mary, and in the long history of Marian piety. This choice is articulated in St. Ambrose's saying that "Mary is the type of the church."

It may be possible, however, to make some progress in understanding why Mary should be the church's archetype rather than someone else. Why not Peter? More importantly, why not Jesus Christ himself? Why does not the church look to Jesus Christ to see what sort of entity she is in the world. The answer to these questions is perhaps found in an observation that Robert W. Jenson made about Mary: Mary is the foundational prophet within the people of God. Jenson notes that Luke's description of Mary's conception of Jesus is reminiscent of the way God's Spirit fell on the prophets of old, making them bring forth God's word. Thus, Jenson writes, "In Luke, the Spirit will 'come upon' Mary, exactly in the fashion of archaic prophetic seizure, to create the child: Mary will bring forth the child the way the prophets brought forth their words."[16] This prophetic function of Mary to bring forth the definitive Word of God may underlie the church's intuition that Mary is the archetype of the church. If so, acknowledging Mary as the church's archetype would both reflect and reinforce the church as a prophetic community, which she is, with her mission to proclaim the gospel.

This, then, is the first element in Semmelroth's threefold analysis of Mary as the church's type: Mary personifies the church, bringing the church into proximity to believers so that they can be aware of the church's nature. The second element in the concept of type is "inner connection" between the type and the reality it represents. This emphasis on inner connection makes explicit the primitive etymological meaning "type" as a blow or a push. The relationship of Mary to the church is not a mere happenstance that Mary symbolizes the church better than anything or anyone else. Instead, Mary influences the church so that the church grows in her image. Semmelroth writes: "The united multiplicity of the Church is contained within her, as in a seed that unfolds in the breadth of time and space ..."[17] There is an ontological relationship between Mary and the church. The relationship between Mary and the church is not an imaginative construction of artists and theologians, but is a fact of objective reality which has been recognized and awaits further recognition.

There are two ways to explain this objective relation between Mary and the church. The approach favored by Semmelroth seems to be to acknowledge the relationship as part of God's wisdom. The church and Mary are similar because God wants it that way. Semmelroth states the logic of the situation this way: "Because Mary was to be the Type of the Church, she was given existence as the virginal Mother of God."[18] God creates both Mary and the church, and he creates them such that Mary is the church's archetype.

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[16] Robert W. Jenson, "The Holy Spirit", in *Christian Dogmatics*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), vol. 2, p. 115.

[17] Semmelroth, p. 32.

[18] Ibid., p. 52.

The other approach appeals to an analysis of self-consciousness. If the church is to be self-conscious, so that she does not wander aimlessly in the world, knowing her mission but not her nature, then she must have a concept of herself, and this self-concept is Mary.[19] Mary is the one to whom the church looks to see what she is about in the world. And given that she looks to Mary, she naturally grows in the direction of Mary's image. In this way, Mary leaves her impress on the church.

This second approach is consistent with the first. In fact, it requires the first to explain Mary's initial influence on the church: God arranges things so that Mary is in fact the church's archetype, and furthermore, God arranges for this fact to be recognized. From this point, the life of the church evolves in directions we would expect.

The second element of Mary's archetypical relationship to the church —the ontological relationship between the two—sets the stage for the third element: Mary is the moral example for the church.[20] If God creates an objective relation between Mary and the church, then the church is duty-bound to conform herself to that relation. Otherwise, she is kicking against the pricks, resisting God's will for her.

At this point we can return to Luther to test-out the pious opinion that Mary is the archetype of the church. We can look at his descriptions of Mary in his *Commentary on the Magnificat* and at other descriptions as well to see for ourselves whether Mary can serve as a moral example for the church. The strands of the argument are being gathered together at this point, and the argument is taking on an empirical character. We have said that the church is not a mere collection of individuals but is the Body of Christ with her own life in the world. But the church is too fragmented and distant from us to see her true character. But if the church is to be aware of her own reality, she must have a self-concept. The church needs a "type" to bring her into proximity to us. God has arranged things so that Mary is the archetype of the church, and the church has recognized this down through the centuries in her art, her dedication of cathedrals to Mary, and in the conviction of many believers that Mary deserves a unique place within the people of God. Now we will see for ourselves whether the things that can be said about Mary are typical things that should be said about the church.

We have already noted that it is fitting that Mary personify the church since she is the foundational prophet and so reminds the church of her prophetic nature. I think we will see that there are other Marian virtues which also can be predicated of the church.

## Marian Virtues and Ecclesiastical Implications

First of all, Mary is the archetype of humility. Her vision of herself was accurate. "He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden," she sings. Luther takes Mary at her word when she refers to her "low estate", thinking that this is neither false modesty nor an inaccurate estimate of things: "Though certain scribblers make much ado about her worthiness for such motherhood, I prefer to believe her rather than them. She says her low estate was regarded by God, not

[19] Credit for this line of argument goes to Professor Robert W. Jenson who in a classroom lecture made the following proposal regarding a special role for Mary within the people of God: "The self-consciousness of a community is not a consciousness of the community as such but of someone within the community. For the church to be self-conscious is for the church to be conscious of *the* prophet, Mary." (my lecture notes)

[20] Semmelroth, p. 31.

thereby rewarding her for anything she had done, but, 'He has done great things for me,' He has done this of his own accord without any doing of mine."[21]

Luther notes that even if Mary is sinless, which he himself believed throughout his life,[22] that would not qualify her to bear God's Son: "Mary also freely ascribes all to God's grace, not to her merit. For though she was without sin, yet that grace was far too great for her to deserve it in any way. How should a creature deserve to become the Mother of God?"[23] In two stark images of lowliness, Luther expresses Mary's humility, when he has her say that she is just God's "workshop"[24], and that her worthiness to become the Mother of God was no greater than that of the wood which was made into the cross![25]

Certainly this kind of humility opposes the kind of ecclesiastical arrogance of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, who would condemn Christ again if he should disturb the church's sway over people. But also, Mary's humility opposes lesser sins of spiritual pride which tempt the church. For example, it is because of no merit of her own that the church baptizes people. She is not worthy of expanding her ranks on her own authority, but does so at the command of her lord.[26] And she grants absolution and brings people into God's presence, but she should not think that these powers are a matter of course, befitting her dignity. It would be better for the church to follow Mary in saying that she is God's workshop. That way, the church will be reminded to praise God and not herself.

Second, Mary is the archetype of gratitute to God. God's gracious regard of her is to be praised:

> Hence she does not glory in her worthiness nor yet in her unworthiness, but solely in the divine regard, which is so exceedingly good and gracious that He deigned to look upon such a lowly maiden, and to look upon her in so glorious and honorable a fashion. They, therefore, do her an injustice who hold that she gloried, not indeed in her virginity, but in her humility. She gloried neither in the one nor in the other, but only in the gracious regard of God. Hence the stress lies not on the word "low estate," but on the word "regarded." For not her humility but God's regard is to be praised.[27]

Mary's whole Magnificat is a song of praise to God for his gracious regard for her.

For a church committed to the doctrine of justification, Mary's song of praise for God can only be respected and imitated. Knowing that God creates the church and sustains her day-by-day, not because of her merits but because of his gracious regard, should move the church to join Mary in her Magnificat.

Third, Mary is the archetype of Christian sacrifice. Arthur Carl Piepkorn expresses the point this way:

> In offering her own self and her own future to God at the Annunciation and her Son to Him at the time of the Presentation, she was performing acts that are of the very essence of Christian sacrifice, the yielding

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[21] LW 21, "The Magnificat", p. 327.
[22] Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Blessed Art Thou Among Women", in *Una Sancta* 15, No. 3 (Visitation, 1958): 5.
[23] LW 21, "The Magnificat", p. 327.
[24] Ibid., p. 329.
[25] Ibid., p. 327.
[26] Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 148-49.
[27] LW 21, "The Magnificat", p. 314.

> up of body and mind, of will and intellect and affections, to Him from whom we have everything, and the pleading before God of the sacrifice of Him through whom we have everything that is needful for this life and profitable for our salvation. Herein the Blessed Virgin stands as *a symbol of the church.*[28] (italics mine)

Fourth, Mary is the archetype of boldness in approaching God. Heiko A. Oberman makes this point:

> From an unexpected side—the great liberal historian of Christian thought, Adolf von Harnack—we are reminded that there are truly evangelical elements in the medieval understanding of the place of the Virgin Mary vis-a-vis God. Indeed, provided she is seen as the *typus ecclesiae,* i.e., as the prototype of the faithful, there is great soteriological relevance in her bold dealings with God, in which one can find a proper understanding of Hebrews 4:16: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."[29]

As Mary interceded with her Son on behalf of the wedding party about to run out of wine, so the church should boldly intercede with God for those in need.

Finally, and most importantly, Mary is the archetype of pointing to her Son. She ponders the things of her Son in her heart, and she says to them "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5) In this, Mary is a good example for the church, who should either speak of Christ or be silent.

## Liturgical Appropriation of Mary as the Church's Archetype

Considered in light of the archetype theme, some of the claims that believers have made for Mary become understandable. The Marian mysteries, such as her perpetual virginity and immaculate conception, may not be justified from a Scriptural point of view, yet it is possible to see how people incline toward them. The Marian mysteries may reflect intuitions believers have about the church.

The result of the longstanding devotion to Mary is that the Catholic tradition can give us many liturgical opportunities for holding Mary before the church's consciousness. Arthur Carl Piepkorn's list of possible agreements on Mary, at the start of this paper, not only gives themes for Christian education, like Mary's place in prophecy and the rightfulness of the title *Theotokos,* but also it gives liturgical possibilities for acknowledging Mary, from the first part of the "Ave Maria" to celebrating her Nativity and Falling Asleep. And of course, liturgical creativity is free to come up with new ways to hold the church's archetype before her.

In conclusion, it is fitting to quote Piepkorn on the church's singing of the Magnificat at vespers, for that canticle is a beautiful model of liturgical acknowledgment of Mary as the archetype of the church:

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[28] Piepkorn, "Mary's Place", pp. 77-78.

[29] Heiko A. Oberman, *The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective,* intro. Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971; Facet Books), p. 31. (This study was first published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 [1964]: 271-298.)

Actually it (the Magnificat) has become more than a memorial (of the Incarnation); the words of Our Lord's Mother have been wholly appropriated as the prayer of His Bride. What the Mother of the Saviour said of herself expresses exactly the faith of the Mother of us all. When we sing the Magnificat—every phrase of it profoundly informed by the Song of Hannah, *Excultavit cor meum,* and by the Psalter—we are not imitating someone else's hymn; we find ourselves singing our own. The parallel Mary/Ecclesia that primitive reflection saw in the vision of Revelation 12 thus receives practical liturgical sanction.[30]

[30] Piepkorn, "Eve Reversed", p. 12. (Also in "Mary's Place", p. 77.)

# O Saints of God

**R. G. Schoenheider**
*The Lutheran Triune Congregation of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada*

O saints of God the time is late,
The challenge is a world grown cold.
Shall we abandon it to fate?
Or claim it new by actions bold!

Christ, Son of God, God's Word of power,
Commissions us his Name to speak.
Now is the time, the day, the hour
The wholeness of mankind to seek!

God's Spirit waits with fire of love,
As bides the wind upon the morn.
He summons us our faith to prove
That others be with us reborn!

We venture forth with hearts made strong
To call the world to own Christ's ways,
Until that day in joyful song
With all the saints the Lord we praise.

Suggested Tune: "Truro", LBW 363

# Epiphany

**Johanna Beicke**
*Associate Chaplain, St. David's Community Hospital, Austin, Texas*

---

O God
Christmas is past
And it's January.
The hype and excitement of the holidays
Have flown with the packing
  up of decorations,
The incoming of bills
Another year gone by
Even New Year's resolutions and diets
Seem eons ago
Old and withered in the passage of time.
What new thing is there
Now?

Epiphany
Your revelation among the people
The star shown bright long ago
The wise men have brought their gifts
And are now
Back at their home hearths
Wondering

Wondering
  Wonderment
At the breaking in
Of a new king
  (what kind of a king?)
Into their mundane wise men lives.
Is it only wise men who can know you?
See you?
Feel you?

Or perhaps it is all of us.
Who
With the wisdom of children
Expect nothing—
  and everything.
The wisdom of seeing cosmic
  forces in an ant hill
Or magnificent castles in building blocks
The wisdom of receptiveness
  and imagination
  and wondering
  and listening

Your revelation, O God
Your epiphany, O God
  is in babies borning
    in lovers loving
    in creators creating
    in healers healing

Your revelation, O God
Your epiphany, O God
  is in the mundane
    in bread and wine and water
    in touch
    in compassion
    in kindness
    in companionship
    in being

Your revelation, O God
Your epiphany, O God
  is in still small voices
    when we listen
    when we hear

Help us to listen
Help us to hear
Open us to your revealing
To your epiphany.

# The Voice of Comfort (Isaiah 40:1-8)

**Richard Gaugert**
*St. Louis, MO*

---

## Voice 1

God has spoken.
God has heard the cries of the people.
God has seen the suffering of Israel.
God wants that suffering to cease.

You are Israel's prophet.
You are God's voice.
Speak for God.

Tell Israel that God has heard her cry.
Tell Israel her warfare is over.
Tell Israel her sin is forgiven.

Go.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.
Speak of God's tenderness.
Go ...

and Cry.

## Prophet 1

What shall I cry?
How can I speak tenderness
to a people hardened with bitterness?
Palestine is in ruins.
The homeland is desolate, wasted
and destroyed.
A few may hustle survival among
the ruins of the cities.
But their eyes are filled with tears
for the dead lost in war.
Their hearts are heavy for the children
lost to famine.
Their spirits are tired for all those
who have left—
that ragged band who went to Egypt
when Jeremiah was prophet,
seeking commerce among the old
oppressors; those thousands taken as
prisoners and slaves
by Tiglath-pileser and Sargon
and Sennacherib when Gilead, Galilee
and Naphtali were demolished;
and that last deportation ... by the
Chaldeans, when Jerusalem was utterly
destroyed, and Judah made barren.
What shall I cry to people held in con-
tempt by the powers of the world,
by the gods of the powers of the
world, for Israel is now nowhere and
nobody.

What shall I cry?

## Voice 2

Cry that Israel's warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that God sees she has suffered doubly
for her sins.

Israel indeed lost her land and her
statehood,
her place among the nations of the
world.
Even more, Israel lost her temple
and her worship.
But Israel has not lost God.

Israel has God's Word committed
to her keeping.
That Word which stretches out
like a highway

from Eden to Egypt to Jerusalem
is spread out even to Babylon.

Tell the people to prepare a highway
for God's Word.
Tell the people God's Word:
that Israel is forgiven,
that her warring is over,
that her comfort has come.

## Prophet 2

Highways are how we were scattered.
How shall I cry to a people made
hopeless by highways,
who traveled a highway
from Galilee to Assyria,
who trudged along a highway
from Jerusalem to Babylon?
Shall a nation of nobodies
build a highway?

Israel feels forgotten.
Israel feels betrayed—
that her God sold her to pay her
debts.
Israel has turned to other gods.
Feeling forgotten, Israel forgot.

How shall I cry to a forgotten people
who have forgotten God?

## Voice 3

God has not forgotten his people.
God sees the highways that scattered
them,
but God's highway will bring them
together.
God's highway is not a way of dispersion,
a scrubby road tramped
out of the desert.
God's highway is God's history.

Tell the people that a highway for God
is a way of forgiveness,
a way of comfort.

Tell the people that building
a highway for God
is turning off the road of dispersion,
walking away from the sideroads
in the wilderness,
walking towards the straight-way
that is the highway of God.

Then the people will see that
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made
low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord shall be
revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

## Prophet 3

You speak well, like a poet.
But what does God speak?

What worth is a highway history of
promises?
The people have become practical.
They have adjusted to their
various situations.
They are making livings in strange lands
that have become less strange.
They have built new temples;
they have adopted new gods.
They will not be persuaded
by a highway of promises.

## Voice 4

God's Word—filled with promise
—is more than promise.
God's Word is God.

God who created Israel,
God who saw Israel's bondage in Egypt,
God who gave Israel the promised land
is God who sees Israel now.

Go.
Tell the people God's Word.
Tell the people they are
already forgiven.
Tell the people they are
already God's.
Tell the people God wants to bring
them together in peace.

Tell the people it is not a new Word
from God—
it is God's Word for a new time.
It is the Word God spoke
to Adam and Eve,
to Abraham and Sarah,
to Moses and Miriam,
to David, Solomon, Jeremiah, Elijah
which God now speaks to you.

Go.
Speak God's Word of forgiveness,
and prepare the people
for God's peace.

## Prophet 4

But surely the people is grass?
Adam and Eve,
Abraham and Sarah,
Moses and Miriam,
are they not all blades of grass?

Is not all flesh grass
and its beauty like the flowers
of the field
which wither and fade
when the breath of the Lord
blows upon it?

How shall I speak to the grass?

## Voice 5

Speak ye comfort.
Not comfort that suffocates grass
like a blanket,
but comfort that invigorates grass
like the rain and the sun.

Tell the people of God's Comfort.
Tell the people it is not only
consolation
for the sadness they have seen
and the pain they have endured.

Tell the people God's Comfort
is God coming to the people!

Raise the trumpet!
Sound the trumpet!
God is coming!

God is coming as Comfort.

Comfort is God
seeing the people's wilderness.
Comfort is God
feeling the people's pain.
Comfort is God
forgiving the people's sin.

Comfort is God with us!

## Prophet 5

Now I hear.
Now I hear the voice of Comfort.

And it is not only words,
not only promises,
not only a metaphor.

Comfort is God ...
God with us.

That Comfort I can speak.
That Comfort I will speak.

God has spoken.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.

Hosanna!
Hosanna to God!

# Book Reviews



**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH AND LITURGICAL LIFE IN LEIPZIG.** By Günther Stiller. Translated by Herbert J.A. Bouman, Daniel F. Poellot, Hilton C. Oswald. Edited by Robin A. Leaver. St. Louis: Concordia, 1984. 308 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

The American publisher deserves a word of thanks for having made available in English this important, theologically-oriented work about J.S. Bach. It is a worthy and timely act of homage to the great composer as the civilized world celebrates his stupendous achievements, during this tercentennial of his birth. The translation is based on the German original which was published in 1970. In its first shorter form Stiller had presented in 1966 his study as a doctoral dissertation in the University of Leipzig. The English version of the work has a separate merit of its own, thanks to the editor who has provided a welcome introduction with many bibliographical notes. It informs the reader of the trends and accomplishments in Bach research since 1970 in which work the editor, Robin Leaver, has himself been an active participant (pp. 11-17, 267-268). In the translated version we also have a number of valuable old pictures of churches in Leipzig which are not in the German version.

The first major portion of the book—based on extensive use of old source material, both printed and manuscripts—presents in historic perspective a remarkably detailed picture of every aspect of worship life in Leipzig during the first part of the 18th century. Not only the leading churches of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas—the only parish churches in the city—but also Leipzig's other, auxiliary places of worship are included in his review. This comprehensive and well-documented survey provides us with a realistic and reliable "field report" about the nature and amount of work and its surroundings which to a large degree conditioned and regulated Bach's labors during the last twenty-seven years in Leipzig (1723-1750). Through this much needed, detailed survey of the local situation, the author has rendered a valuable service to modern Bach research. In the light of Stiller's findings a more reliable picture emerges about Bach's place and the character of his musical ministry in the worship life in Leipzig. It would now appear that a good deal that has been written earlier of Bach's Leipzig years would seem to require revision. Günther Stiller has given us a long overdue theological "companion volume" to the extensive earlier studies about the music culture in Leipzig by the eminent Bach scholar Arnold Schering (d. 1941).

Theologically, church life in Leipzig still bore the stamp of Lutheran Orthodoxy through the first part of the 18th century. Contrary to the usual clichés about excessive dogmatism and lack of spiritual vigor in later Orthodoxy, such a picture cannot be applied to Leipzig where—Stiller shows—dynamic church life led to the need of restoring and opening new churches and even adding to the regular Sunday and Feastday eucharists in each of the two parish churches a weekday communion. Another new feature was an expository preaching in some of the weekday services; certain books of the Bible were gone through chapter by chapter. We might have here an example of an earlier influence of Pietism. A.H. Francke had studied during the 1680's in Leipzig and there began his *Collegium philobiblicum* and the more devotionally-oriented *Collegia biblica.* The

period of Lutheran Orthodoxy also produced a great deal of devotional literature, some of which, like Johann Arndt's many-sided writings, were shared by both these major movements in the Lutheran Church. Such literature, Arndt included, had also belonged to Bach's own library. It is generally agreed that the 16th and 17th centuries mark the classic era of Lutheran hymnody. This large and many-sided treasure of Christian spirituality could not but safeguard, perhaps in a greater measure than we realize, a living relationship between strong traditional and liturgically rich churchliness and true godliness.

Bach knew through an earlier visit to Leipzig what awaited him there when he applied for the dual position of the Cantor in St. Thomas' school and the Director of Music in the city. His duties included, in addition to his primary responsibilities for church music and teaching, also the music on various civic occasions. He knew well from personal experience that the kind of "figural" or art music in Baroque style which he composed could only flourish in the culturally more open and tolerant ecclesiastical atmosphere of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Bach also hoped to find in this larger university city the necessary resources in voices and instruments for the fulfilling of his ministry to the glory of God and the recreation and edification of people. Stiller rightly sees the Lutheran hymnody and the chorale as the very heart and source of Bach's musical inspiration as well as his personal faith. He bases his conclusions on Bach's few known statements about his own religious views and their relationship to music, and chiefly on the detailed study of Bach's use of hymns in his cantatas composed in Leipzig. They are largely, though not in all cases, chosen from the printed lists of officially recommended hymns for communion services, covering the whole church year. Bach has created his great vocal compositions as a proclamation of the gospel in close relationship to the liturgical character of each day's service. This way—as Stiller repeatedly emphasizes—Bach could realize his heart's desire to provide "a regulated and well-ordered church music," as the great Maestro himself called it.

I would have wished that the author had also discussed more Bach's various types of organ compositions based on hymn tunes, for they, too, are proclamation of the Christian faith, and its Lutheran interpretation. For truly has Albert Schweitzer seen the genius of Bach, when he wrote long ago: "The greatest masters of chorale-pieces ... harmonized the melody; Bach harmonized the words."

**Toivo Harjunpaa**
*Professor Emeritus of Church History*
*Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary*
*Graduate Theological Union*
*Berkeley, California*

**THE SUFFERING OF GOD: AN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE.** By Terence E. Fretheim. Overtures to Biblical Theology 14. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984. xx and 203 pages. Paper. $10.95.

Let Terence Fretheim's conclusion to his chapter on Old Tetament theophanies, "There is no such thing for Israel as a nonincarnate God," be the only provocation needed to place his book on this year's must-read list for every *Currents*-reader. Implications for Christian theology (and ministry) are obvious, the more so because Fretheim exegetes with a minimum of Christian bias—one of his most important mentors is Abraham Heschel.

The book goes far in dispelling the prevalent notion that the God of the Old Testament is the judgmental monarch from whom Jesus saves us. To the contrary, pervasive are the divine metaphors emphasizing God's "organic" union with the world, a relationship so intimate that "God is affected by the world," indeed, creation was "the beginning of the passion of God." Static notions more appropriate to deism or determinism need to be exchanged for the language of "power-sharing" if we would be true to Hebrew conceptions.

Hence, God suffers. God pains and cries out; laments and mourns; bears and wearies; is humiliated. God's prophet lives the "theomorphic" life, the earthly counterpart of the divine pathos. For the Word of God is never "disembodied"; and we who

are attentive to the prophetic mandate know that we "are to reembody that word in the world."

Two points remain unresolved in Fretheim's book, witnesses more to the provocative nature of his work than to any deficiency. The first stems from his need to bracket out the wisdom corpus from his examination. The decision is understandable but has the effect of reinforcing the practice among biblical scholars of relegating Israel's sages to the fringes of theological relevance. As Fretheim suggests in a footnote, his God-in-the-world theme ("there is no experience of the world without a concomitant experience of God, for where there is world there is God") could be supported by the wisdom texts, wherein the God inherent in the created world appears to the suffering Job, Ecclesiastes finds the meaning of life in the sphere of the mundane, and Proverb's Lady Wisdom is the worldly divine voice who beckons from deep in the midst of human existence. At the same time, portions of this corpus would challenge the divine metaphor which Fretheim claims is constant: One "who will always, come what may, execute justice and love for the sojourner."

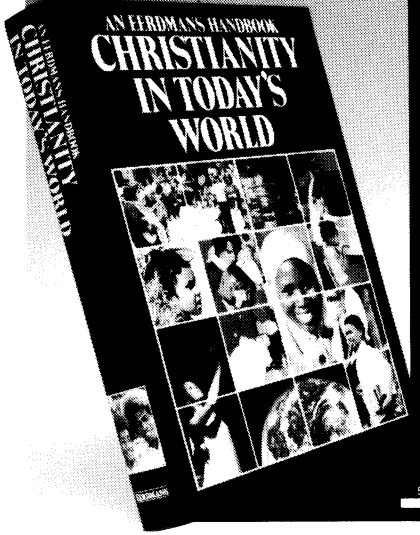
The second point also goes beyond the bounds of this book, yet is inevitably prompted by it: the question of theodicy, with which Fretheim teases throughout. Much potential lies in his suggestion that God relinquishes a degree of freedom and power in order to be in a relationship with the world. The presence of God is therefore dependent to a degree on humans, and divine "wrath is a distancing." This approach is helpful in explaining evil as discipline or as the result of human sin, but does not help with "natural evil" (e.g., a tree fell on my mother and killed her). Fretheim seems to reject Rabbi H.S. Kushner's solution, reached in light of his own son's birth and death with progeria, that God's power is limited in an unqualified sense. See *When Bad Things Happen to Good People;* cf. Fretheim, p. 77, "It seems to me that this (understanding of God's power is limited) does not mean that the language of omnipotence is no longer usable for OT God-talk." Rather,


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**Lamontte M. Luker**
*California Lutheran College*
*Thousand Oaks, California*

**BECOMING ADULT, BECOMING CHRISTIAN: ADULT DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.** By James W. Fowler. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984. x and 154 pages. Cloth. $13.95.

In this sequel to his *Stages of Faith,* Fowler demonstrates again that psychological theories of adult development provide a way to understand evolving life structures and personal life stories. But he also adds a third ingredient: the story of the Christian faith. Without that, adults may live out their destiny as individuals, but they will lack a sense of vocation in community, a sine qua non for becoming Christian adults. Along the way he criticizes theories of adult development put forth by Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson, and Carol Gilligan.

For Fowler, vocation is the opposite of the concept of destiny since the latter assumes that we can be self-grounded and still achieve our individual goals. The most prevalent modern heresy is the assumption that self-grounded persons are capable of working out their own destinies. Young adults, for example, need to be helped by the Christian community to have a vocational dream, not just goals for their personal destiny. Vocation is the response people make with their total selves to the address of God and the calling to partnership. Partnership with God in creation, governance of the world, liberation, and redemption requires on-going conversion or synergy that brings to completion our potential. Despite criticism of the term synergy in Western Christianity, the author employs the term in order to state a theory of development that takes account of the power available in the synergy of God's grace.

Fowler is to be commended for his emphasis on vocation, but he will no doubt be criticized and called a synergist until he modifies his proposal. God's gracious call is always prior (cf. Ephesians 4) and only in its wake do we work out the meaning of that call (cf. Philippians 2). Luther built on that idea by saying that God's call (vocation) is lived out in one's occupation. In this way both the grace of God and the work of human beings are taken into account.

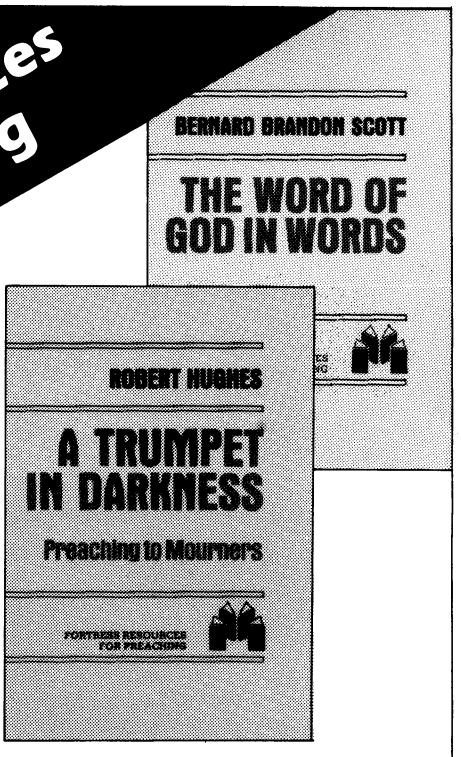
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# When the Faithful Gather

**Roger Fjeld**
*President, Wartburg Theological Seminary*

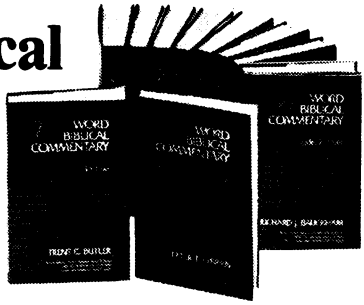
The faithful gather these days for a host of reasons. We gather for worship; we gather for fellowship; we gather for business or for service. Sometimes one suspects we gather just because we are so used to gathering! We do not often enough gather for dialogue. One is struck by how difficult it is, outside of worship and the classroom, to create a setting in which believers grapple with the vital issues of faith and life. But those settings do occur and when they do, one is struck by how differently the faithful approach such dialogic opportunities. Recently I had occasion to participate in two such gatherings of the faithful. Each had its own content and its own integrity, but what I want to share here has to do with the stark contrast in the way these two approached their chosen tasks.

One was a gathering of scientists and theologians. Wartburg Seminary and the Lutheran Campus Ministers at Iowa's three state universities served as sponsors for a discusssion on "Space, Time and the Understanding of God." Scientists, religion professors, and campus pastors from these universities and from colleges of the church joined with seminary faculty members in a wide-ranging discussion of the topic. The formal presentations were mind-stretching, the dialogue was intense, and we ended up with more questions than answers. And yet the gathering itself was an answer of sorts. It answered the question, "Can there be real dialogue between the scientific and theological communities?" In fact, it became evident that these need not be two separate communities. One was struck by the way this was, in fact, a gathering of the faithful, not a contest between opposing ways of viewing the world and the Creator. There was no fear of betraying one's discipline or one's faith. The several disciplines simply wanted passionately to know each other in order to enrich each other. People who already have very busy schedules decided that they wanted to continue the dialogue and laid plans for a second session together.

The other event was a gathering of congregation members and representatives of our church body to sort out theological issues in relation to the new Lutheran church. The agenda was set by those who believed the new church will not be faithful to Biblical Christianity. The questions were put in harsh form, assuming a hostility between the way things are and the way they should be. A central point of contention was the supposed conflict between faith and science. The goal of some was to discredit the new church before it is even born; the goal of others was to defend that church and the churches which are preparing to form it.

This gathering also became a statement of sorts. It showed what happens when the faithful gather without trusting each other, seeking each other, and seeking truth together. Participants did not lack integrity nor were they

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willfully doing violence to the unity of the Church. But the gathering did violence to the Church, precisely because some of the participants were afraid to look at new issues, new ways of faithfully understanding the Christian calling, new relationships between the faithful and the world. Those who were forcing the issue had made up their minds that faithfulness means holding to traditional language and traditional ways of being the Church and doing mission. There was a fear of insights from other disciplines than theology, especially a fear of scientific theories; a belief that such insights undermine faith. In fact, there was a fear of doing theology and a preference for a static dogmatics.

One could speculate about why this latter meeting was so difficult and offered so little resolution of the outstanding issues. My purpose, however, is not to analyze either gathering but to offer the contrasting experience as an exhortation to all of us to seek out mind-stretching dialogues rather than fearing them. There is something in the American church experience of the last hundred years or so which has created a false conflict between faith and science; faith and humanism; faith and social responsibility. We are, perhaps, reaping the harvest of years of assumption that change equals decay. We have not wanted to recognize God's gifts to scientists, historians, social scientists, and othes in what some call the secular disciplines.

But in a world which no longer has a margin for error by those who give leadership, we cannot afford to continue that sort of hostility. It is time to risk having our minds stretched by what other disciplines have learned and seek to enrich those disciplines by what Christian theology has to offer. It is high time we commit ourselves to live by faith, not in fear. I encourage you to find or create dialogues which will help you and your community of believers to understand what others have learned about our world and to share, in turn, what we understand from the resources of the Christian faith.

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