June 1985
Volume 12
Number 3

CURRENTS in theology and mission

Swords into Plowshares —
Misuse of a Word of Prophecy?
Hans Walter Wolff

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Printed In U.S.A.

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CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION is published bimonthly, February, April, June, August, October, December by Christ Seminary — Seminex, a non-profit organization, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Annual subscription rate: $10 in the U. S. and Canada ($11.50 overseas). Two-year rate: $18.50 in the U. S. and Canada ($21.00 overseas). Three-year rate: $26.00 in the U. S. and Canada ($30.50 overseas). Second Class Postage Paid at Chicago, IL and at other mailing offices.

CURRENTS is indexed in Elenchus, IZBW, NTA, OTA, Religion Index I (formerly IRPL), Religious and Theological Abstracts, and Theologische Literaturzeitung.
(ISSN: 0098-2113)

June 1985
Volume 12
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Published by
Christ Seminary — Seminex
in cooperation with
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

Note: Address all business correspondence to: *Currents in Theology and Mission,* 1100 E. 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615.

Biblical Stomach Aches

"It is the Bible passages which I understand that give me a stomach ache, not those that I don't understand." Our first article ends with this wry observation by Mark Twain. Those readers of *Currents* who interpret the Bible professionally as parish pastors, or existentially as Christians intent on discovering the will of God for their life, know exactly what he meant. Jeremiah said it at least as well: "If I say 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."

Hans Walter Wolff starts this issue off with an essay on the biblical passages about beating swords into plowshares. Faith in the God of Israel and security through military power are incompatible, in his reading of the text. Connected with the promise of the messiah belongs the hope for an end to war, the destruction of weapons, and the establishment of peace between nations. Believers in every age are called to join their ancient counterparts, who, in the face of a delayed promise of world peace, made their own strategy explicit: Even though other nations still go their own way in their godless fascination with weapons, we will walk in the name of Yahweh forever, making our swords into plowshares and not learning war anymore. Should Christians today settle for legal, political, and gradual solutions to the arms race? Or are they called to a proleptic, one-sided life of peace? "Swords into plowshares" — now that's a stomach ache!

Or is it? **George Brand** and **Paul Hinlicky** report on an ecumenical conference on peace they attended as representatives of the Lutheran Church in America. While one Christian group wanted to say "No without any Yes" to nuclear deterrence, they found themselves allied with the Russian Orthodox: God summons us to work against war; Christian faith guards against the temptation to view human life on earth as an end in itself; Christians cannot assume universal assent to their teaching, but they bear witness as they can and assume responsibility as situations allow; the preservation of life may

require the use of military force in defense. Those who seek unilateral superiority or who advocate unilateral surrender are both wrong, according to this article. The true price of temporal peace is in the hard labor, under God, of political responsibility for the protection and promotion of the common human life on earth. How was that, Mark?

Two facts confront us as we talk about the ministry in the new Lutheran Church: There is a great variety of ministries in the New Testament, and there is no consensus on this question among Lutherans today. **Michael Root,** a lay theologian, defines the ministry as the official representation of the word to the community and the world. The ministry offers service to a community that is called to test the spirits. As he reads the early traditions, the ministry is called to witness, to pastoral care, and to broad leadership in the church. Not central in the New Testament is presiding over liturgy and the sacraments. The call to such ministry comes from Christ through the Spirit. Yes, the authority for ministry derives from the Spirit even if it is mediated by the call of the community. Our church papers have told us in recent weeks about the impasse in the CNLC and among the bishops on the question of the ministry. How was that again, Mr. Twain?

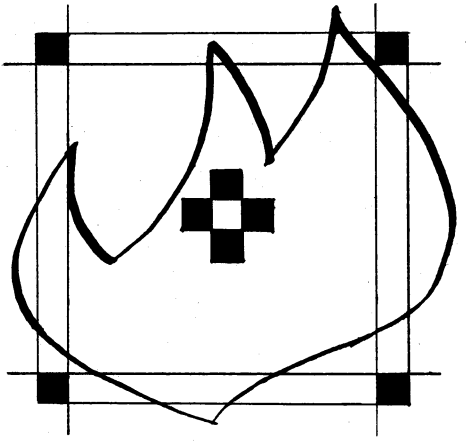
Travis DuPriest reflects on all those who have spiritual experiences, whether they come from a spectacular weekend retreat or in the humdrum of work, homes, and social lives. Should we share each spirit-filled moment, or recollect and savor it in our tranquility? Other features in this issue include a poem by **Elizabeth-Anne Vanek,** a large number of reviews, two letters to the editor, and a back-page editorial by **John H. Tietjen.** He asks: Should our new church call itself Lutheran? Or should such words as Evangelical, Catholic, and Augsburg appear on the letterheads in 1988? What are the theological issues?

As the sailors threw that great belly-acher Jonah into the sea, legend says they assured him that relief was just a swallow away. So

God said also to Ezekiel when he called him to swallow the scroll and be the first on his block to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the word. As we face stomach aches stemming from tough questions on war and peace or the office of the ministry, we are called "ad fontes," to the evangelical and scriptural sources.

May I freshen your drink?

Ralph W. Klein
Editor



Swords into Plowshares Misuse of a Word of Prophecy?[1]

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"Swords into plowshares." — Several years ago young people of the church in the German Democratic Republic chose as their motto this phrase from the Old Testament prophets. They wore it, sewn upon their jackets and shirts, but this was immediately forbidden by the authorities. Yet this watchword quickly moved across the border into "West Germany," where Christians who were members of the Peace Movement picked it up everywhere.

This prophetic word is not only made use of — even loved — by peace advocates, but it is also a matter of resolute controversy among theologians. In the face of the extreme threats to the future of the world, the lack of agreement on the meaning of this prophecy forbids us to remain silent on the matter. Rather, we ought to attempt to overcome the impasse, or lack of unity, in its interpretation. I shall attempt to make several exegetical observations which I hope will promote some unanimity in our understanding of the Christian's witness to the world.

For the sake of some methodological clarity, I begin with questions addressed to Prof. Trutz Rendtorff. In an interview with Professors Rendtorff and Dorothee Soelle, reported by the magazine *Der Spiegel* (Oct. 10, 1983, vol. 37, no. 41), Prof. Soelle made passing reference to the passage in Isaiah about "beating swords into plowshares." To this Prof. Rendtorff responded, "Which prophet should we listen to, Prof. Soelle? Surely you know the word of the prophet Joel: 'Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears' (Joel 3:10)? How do we resolve the dilemma of which biblical passage we should follow? We are not relieved of making our own individual decisions by reference to such texts." The editor of *Der Spiegel* then asked: "Who interprets the Christian teaching correctly, Prof. Soelle or Prof. Rendtorff?" Later, Rendtorff commented: "You can surely see that also in theology different positions can be represented. But each individual must decide for himself. For my generation, this has been a theme of life."

If I understand Trutz Rendtorff correctly in this interview, he intends to suggest in a preliminary way two things for consideration: (1) The Bible contradicts itself. Individual Bible passages do not help us to decide whether, according to Isaiah, peace will be secured through disarmament; or whether, according to Joel, arming for war, at least at certain times, protects against its dangers. The Bible provides evidence for both views. (2) The criteria for our decisions in such matters are to be found outside the Scripture. Therefore, Christians are unable to reach unanimity on such matters. Each person must arrive at his or her own decision, and also allow the decision of others to stand as valid.

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[1] Guest lecture at the University of Munich, January 27, 1984.

"Plowshares into swords" makes a blunt mockery of the world powers.

Joel 3 vs. Isaiah 2?

Now, allow me to pose two methodological counter-questions. First, is not his opposing of Isaiah 2 ("swords into plowshares") and Joel 3 ("plowshares into swords") to be understood as a dramatic gesture in the discussion? Do we not agree that, for the genuine understanding of these texts, their context deserves attention?

How are we to interpret the reference in Joel 3? The context of Joel 3:9-12 (Heb. 4:9-12) clearly indicates that the prophet proclaims Yahweh's judgment on the nations. Because nations of the world have severely mistreated Israel, the people of God (cf. 3:1-3), they are all to bestir themselves and be gathered together before their judge (v. 12). With biting sarcasm this gathering for punishment is characterized as an all-inclusive mobilization for war:

> Proclaim this among the nations.
> Prepare for a holy war!
> arouse the warriors!
> Let all the men of war draw near,
> let them come up! (v. 9)

And then the entire war is turned into irony by the reversal of the passage in Isaiah:

> Beat your plowshares into swords
> and your pruning hooks into lances!
> Let the weak say: "I am a warrior."
> (v. 10)
>
> Come all you nations
> round about.

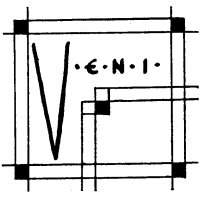
(But for what purpose? For a great war and victory? No!):

> So that Yahweh may shatter
> your heroes . . . (v. 11)
> For there I (God, the Lord)
> will sit to judge
> all the nations round about (v. 12).[2]

Here we find it blatantly stated that all military preparation — even when peaceful farming and vinedressing implements are turned into weapons, even when all the men are summoned, including the weaklings, untutored in war — is completely in vain. Thus, in principle, Joel chapter 3 by no means stands in contradiction to Isaiah chapter 2. Joel emphasizes with sarcasm that all military preparation must come before the judgment seat of God and be annihilated. The phrase "plowshares into swords" makes a blunt mockery of the world powers, who think that by completely arming themselves with much effort they will have power and superiority over the people of God. Verse 16b then adds:

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[2] On the text, cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, trans. Waldemar Janzen et al., Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), *ad loc.*



But for his (weaponless) people
Yahweh is a refuge,
and a stronghold for the
people of Israel.

Once the context of the passage is correctly understood, we find not an opposition between Joel 3 and Isaiah 2, but instead in both texts the declaration of an end to the wars of the nations. It seems to me that, on the basis of these observations about the context, there can be agreement among us.

Second, how are we to evaluate Trutz Rendtorff's statement which emphasizes that each individual must make his or her own decisions? Is a person — including each Christian — really free to make up his or her own mind regarding military armaments, since our modern weaponry brings mankind closer to total self-destruction as never before? The slogan from Joel, "plowshares into swords," by no means has the sense of a divine command to make military preparation, but rather is a divine judgment upon massive armaments. Surely, as always, we may not arbitrarily isolate a given passage from its context. But, as Christians, where else should we seek help for making decisions in these matters, if not in the entire kerygmatic intention of the Old and New Testaments? In view of military threats capable of annihilating the human race, where else should we Christians find an orientation for our "yes" or "no" than in the foundational concepts of the canon of our faith? The Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches has challenged the church "to increase its efforts, in a common witness to a divided world, to oppose with renewed energy the threats to peace . . ." So we want the endeavors of our biblical exegesis to arrive at a common understanding and decision about peace in our world. Of this I am certain: if we will listen to the biblical witness, there need not be a permanent split on matters of war and peace also in the church.

War and Peace

Before we investigate more closely the disputed meaning of the prophetic words "swords into plowshares," and before we make at least a preliminary comparison of related themes in the New Testament, let us discuss the main themes connected with war in the Old Testament.

Ancient Israel was well-acquainted with the "war-cry". In 1916 Hermann Gunkel described Israel's "war-like spirit" under the title "Israelitisches Heldentum und Kriegsfroemmigkeit im Alten Testament" (Israelite Heroism and Martial Piety in the Old Testament). The nature and disposition of the ancient Israelites can hardly be distinguished from that of the neighboring peoples, and, unfortunately, an even smaller distinction exists between the broadest streams of Christianity and the world, even in the twentieth century. Never-

Prophetic expectation about the future could look backwards into Israel's history.

theless, we have been made more and more aware of a series of voices which indicate that in the "flesh" of the Old Testament we encounter the "spirit" of Israel's God. In several highly significant streams of tradition, even in the midst of the old words, we hear a new word, pointing toward the future, giving us hope and directing our path.

To begin with, I call attention to the narratives which attest to the so-called "holy war," in which Israel, without any weapons, stands before its heavily-armed enemies, and then in a wonderous manner experiences the truth which Moses calls out to them in Exodus 14:14:

> Yahweh will fight for you, and you have only to be still and astonished.

This is the way Israel experienced the Exodus, and so Israel's faith was founded and ever and again renewed.[3] Later narratives attest to the same faith, as we find, for example, in the taking of Jericho (Joshua 6: Jericho's walls collapsed without the use of any weapons, as the priests marched around the city with the ark, trumpets and shouting); or when, according to Judges 7, Midian was defeated (Israel's army, having been repeatedly reduced, used no weapons, but smashed jars, torches, and trumpets to put holy terror into the enemy, a terror which caused them to destroy themselves); or, when David fought Goliath (1 Samuel 17: the giant Goliath, his sword, lance and spear notwithstanding, was defeated by the shepherd boy, who marched forth in the name of Yahweh of Hosts). Seen from an historical point of view these may have been quite insignificant experiences of deliverance from some difficulty, but Israel's faith had shaped them into a grand narrative in order to awaken new faith. In this way prophetic expectation about the future could look backwards into Israel's history.

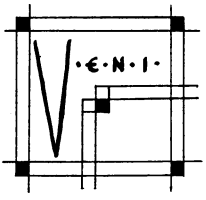
Isaiah condemned the attempts of his contemporaries to find security through military power:

> Woe to those who go down to Egypt
> for help
> who rely on horses.
> They trust in chariots because they
> are many,
> but they do not look to the
> Holy One of Israel
> or consult Yahweh (31:1-3).
> In returning and rest
> you shall be saved (30:15).

Israel's continued existence is never guaranteed by the usual deterrence of the enemy through fearsome armaments. Thus we find the prophet Hosea making an absolute contrast between military security and trust in Yahweh:

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[3] Cf. G. von Rad, *Der Heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951).



Assyria shall not save us,
we will not ride upon horses,
Nor will we any longer say "our God"
to the work of our hands (14:3).

The notion that "Yahweh destroys weapons" becomes one of the great themes of the Old Testament.[4] Psalm 46, a Song of Zion, puts it this way

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter,
. . . Yahweh of Hosts is with us.
Come, behold the works of Yahweh,
. . . He makes wars cease to the end of the earth:
He breaks the bow, shatters the spear,
and burns the chariots with fire
(vv. 6-9).

One cannot miss hearing in the Old Testament a decisive "No" to every trust in any kind of weapons. Biblical faith decisively rejects all that has to do with war, not only in the outside world, but also in Israel! Entirely unambiguous is the new tone sounded in the midst of the Old Testament: faith in the God of Israel and security through military power are not compatible.

Alongside this "No" to military weapons stands an equally clear "Yes" to peace.[5] Here I shall refer to a series of prophetic texts which we think of as messianic prophecies. Too little attention has been paid to the fact that all of these texts proclaim peace as well as a coming Messiah. We shall examine the most important prophecies, which strengthen the expectation that something new is coming into the world, which will nullify the old rules of war, whereby one group or nation was pitted against another.

In Isaiah 9, God is given praise first of all because he — once again — has overcome military oppression (v. 4) and destroyed the last traces of the soldiers' equipment (v. 5) in preparation for handing over sovereign authority to the Messiah. The Messiah himself, however, is given the lordly titles of "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (v. 6). The primary accent apparently rests on the last title, for the coming ruler is enthroned only so that "peace without end" can be established. The pedestal upon which his throne rests is called "justice and righteousness."

The promise in Isaiah 11 goes into more detail about the instruments the Messiah will use to bring about and maintain peace:

He will smite the violent with the
rod of his mouth
and with the breath of his lips
he will slay the wicked (v. 4).

Thus it is exclusively "word" and "spirit" which are used by the Messiah to stop

[4] Cf. R. Bach, "Der Bogen zerbricht . . .," Festschrift G. von Rad, *Probleme biblischer Theologie,* ed. Hans Walter Wolff (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 13-26.

[5] Cf. J.J. Stamm; H. Bietenhard, *Der Weltfriede im Alten und Neuen Testament,* 1959.

This messianic ecology amazes us.

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those who commit deeds of violence. The power of his words and the authority of his spirit do away with injustice, the source of discord. The churches of the Third World in their meeting at Vancouver placed special emphasis on the connection between righteousness and peace (cf. Isaiah 32:17: "The fruit of righteousness will be peace"). The Messiah offers care and concern especially for those who are weak and have few legal rights.

In addition to this peace which society will enjoy, vv. 6-8 speak of an unprecedented ecological peace:

> The infant shall play over
> the hole of the cobra, . . .
> The wolf shall live with the sheep,
> and the leopard shall live
> with the kid.

This messianic ecology amazes us. The narrow confines within which we usually envision the development of a future peace are widened through fables and leave quickly behind the sphere of what is humanly possible. In Isaiah 11:10 the messianic age is also described in terms of world peace:

> The root of Jesse shall stand
> as an ensign for the peoples.
> Him shall the nations seek.

The Messiah is the last refuge to whom the peoples can turn with their problems. In Micah 5:5a it can even be said of the Messiah: "He shall be the peace" (or: "he will bring about peace" [?][6] and, indeed, even "unto the ends of the earth" (v. 4b). He will be the son of the small town of Bethlehem, which never mustered a significant number of troops for the Israelite army ("little among the thousands of Judah," v. 2). He will conduct his office as a shepherd (v. 4: "he will feed his flock in the strength of Yahweh"). There is no mention of any kind of military weaponry.

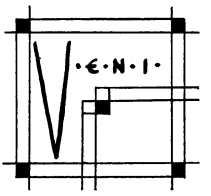
Zechariah 9:9-10 is very clear on this point, and goes further by adding three additional ideas. (1) Although the Messiah himself is proclaimed also as a king ("Behold, your king comes to you!"), the traditional picture of a king is completely changed. Lacking power of any kind, he is even described as "poor and needy." He does not ride upon a charger (an animal of war), but upon an ass, indeed, the weak foal of an ass (the animal of the common people). (2) This king, himself weaponless, will disarm his own people:

> He will cut off the chariot from
> Ephraim
> and the war horse from Jerusalem,
> and he will break the battle bow
> (v. 10).

Those who are most closely connected with this king (Ephraim, Jerusalem), his

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[6] Cf. Wolff, *Micha*, BK XIV/4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), *ad loc.*



own people, are the first to be disarmed. (3) Finally, he will "command peace to the nations"; indeed, this peace will encompass the world ("from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth").[7]

Now let us summarize: The expectation of a Messiah belongs inseparably with the hope for an end to war, the destruction of weapons, and the establishment of peace between nations, including social justice. When the disciples of Jesus called their master the Christ, i.e., the Messiah, they hardly could have been unaware of these motifs from messianic prophecy. Does not the passage in Ephesians 2:14, "He is our peace," recall Micah 5:5a and Isaiah 9:6-7? Is it not true that the hymnic praise of the inaugurator of peace is at the heart and center of messianic thinking?

But what is the relationship of the one whom Jesus' disciples saw as "their peace" and peace for the nations? At this point we must turn our attention, unhurriedly and with exegetical precision, to the prophetic text from which the catchphrase "swords and plowshares" is taken.

An Interpretation of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4

Our passage is the most significant promise for Jerusalem on the theme of world peace that is known in the Old Testament. In this particular text are combined the most important elements of tradition concerning the theme "war and peace." This prophecy comes down to us in two similar, almost verbally identical literary traditions, in Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3. In their present literary compositions, both passages are attached immediately to older prophecies which threaten Zion with devastating blows of destruction, a destruction which surely had already taken place by the time of this prophetic word of promise. This promise is to be regarded as "eschatological" in the strict sense of the term. It reckons with a great change in the world. Mount Zion and the temple of Yahweh, which had become an expanse of ruins, will in the end range above all mountaintops of the world. The nations of the world, until then in conflict, will stream to Zion for universal instruction through the word of Yahweh. And thus the prevailing world politics will be put to an unequivocal and final end.

> Nations shall not lift up sword
> against nation
> neither shall they learn war
> anymore (Isaiah 2:4).

The introductory formula "And it shall come to pass in the latter days" (RSV) is meant to be understood in an

[7] W. Rudolph, *Micha-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, KAT XIII/3 (1975): "with words he will establish peace for the nations."

The prophetic promise in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4.

eschatological sense. The Septuagint correctly rendered the eschatological expression, as did the Vulgate *(in novissimo dierum)*. I translate "But in days to come, at the passing of this age," because the text refers less to the "last days" (Luther) or the "end" (thus the German "Einheitsuebersetzung") of the present age than it does to the age which is presently still hidden, a time which is entirely new. In the post-exilic literature we find the expression "in the latter days" more frequently used to characterize a change of fortune, especially for hostile nations (Jeremiah 48:47; 49:39) and, indeed, for all peoples (Ezekiel 38:16). Evidence for an early post-exilic date of the prophetic promise in Isaiah 2/Micah 4 is also found in the word-statistics and the new thematic connection of older traditions.[8]

We turn now to the structure of the basic text as it has been handed down similarly in the books of Isaiah and Micah. We may distinguish between three strophes.

The first strophe consists of Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1, including in each instance the first three words of the following verse. In three double-triplets (3 + 3), the first strophe announces the vision of the surpassing height of the temple-mount in Jerusalem and streaming of the nations to it:[9]

But in the days to come,
  at the passing of this age,
the mountain of Yahweh's house
  shall be established as the
  highest of mountains.
It shall be raised up above the hills.
To it will flow (all) peoples (nations)
  and the multitude of the nations
  (peoples) will come.

The second strophe consists of the continuation of the third verse of Isaiah and the second of Micah. It offers a report of un-named nations summoning one another to make the pilgrimage to Zion.

They say:
"Come, let us go to the mountain
  of Yahweh,
to the house of the God of Jacob."

They expect that Yahweh's voice will provide them with instruction; this is made emphatic by a brief verse formulated as a double-doublet (2 + 2).

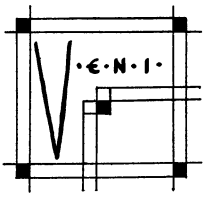
That he may teach us his ways,
  and that we may walk in his paths.

Then another double-triplet (3 + 3) speaks of the fulfillment of this expectation that the word of Yahweh will come forth out of Zion:

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[8] For further support of this date for the passage, cf. Wolff, *Micha*, BK XIV/4, 88f.

[9] The following translation is based on the text in Micah. The variants in Isaiah are placed in parenthesis. Later additions to the Micah text will be particularly noted as such.



For out of Zion shall go forth
instruction,
the word of Yahweh from
Jerusalem.

The third strophe (v. 4 in Isaiah; v. 3 in Micah) contains the specific promise of the word of Yahweh, which is the particular scopus of this great prophetic text. Indeed, we read for the first time a conciliatory statement about justice from Yahweh:

He will make conciliation between
(Micah: many) peoples (nations),
give justice for numerous nations
(peoples) (Micah: afar off).

Two further double-triplets express the effects of peace among the peoples, namely, the transforming of weapons into peaceful implements, and the end both of war and the study of war:

Then they shall beat their swords into
plowshares,
and their spears into
pruning hooks.
No longer shall nation lift up sword
against nation
nor shall they learn war anymore.

The Hebrew texts in Isaiah and Micah exhibit small variants when compared with one another. Such variations suggest that there was a lively oral tradition which handed on this great prophetic promise. (An early example of the modern popularity of this pericope!) A most significant addition occurs in Micah 4:4. Whereas the basic text in Micah — almost identical with that in Isaiah — speaks of overcoming the conflict among nations, this later addition in v. 4 draws the consequences for the peaceful individual life which is to be hoped for. The idyllic sketch presented in this verse departs from the context, and with its lines of four stresses each, is also rhythmically different:

They shall sit everyman under his vine
and under his fig tree —
and no one shall be afraid.
For the mouth of Yahweh of Hosts
has spoken.

In post-exilic times such words were also used to portray the golden age of peace during Solomon's reign (1 Kings 5:5; cf. 2 Kings 18:31) as a time of security, free from the dangers of war; as a life of joy (cf. 1 Kings 4:20 with 5:5) and neighborly friendship (Zechariah 3:10: "In that day everyone of you will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree"). No terror disturbs a sociable, serene community life. By the addition of v. 4 the universal promise of this prophetic text is reinterpreted in terms derived from the sphere of intimate peasant life.

A different sort of addition to the unconditional promise of peace just noted in Micah 4:4 are those expansions which are not a part of the promise, but instead

A crisis in the orientation of the life of the people of God.

draw conclusions which are for the purpose of offering helpful orientation for a present crisis. The additions occur in Isaiah (2:5) as well as in Micah (4:5), but each differs considerably from the other. This, once again, may indicate a lively oral tradition through the recitation of these words in the worship service.

Let us begin with the shorter, more prosaic text in Isaiah. To the grand, three-strophied promise an admonition has been attached which is meant to address the then present audience:

> O house of Jacob!
> Come and let us walk
> in the light of Yahweh (v. 5).

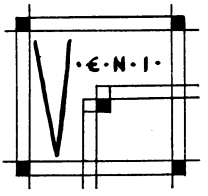
One cannot fail to recognize the connection of the wording with the previous verses. The address "house of Jacob" recalls v. 3, according to which the peoples are to go up to the "house of the God of Jacob." Similarly, the exhortation "Come and let us walk in the light of Yahweh" picks up the language of the summons with which the peoples call to one another: "Come and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh." It also takes up the wording of the expectation that is expressed in v. 3a: "that we may walk in his paths." Other early post-exilic texts about Jerusalem also speak about walking "in the light of Yahweh"; indeed, these texts speak not only of the "peoples" (Isaiah 60:3), but also of Israel (Isaiah 60:1-3, 19; cf. Micah 7:8; Psalms 56:14; 89:16; 27:1).

Now it is to be noted that the grand promise (vv. 2-4; also Micah 4:1-3) spoke not of Israel, but of the peoples inclusively and of their relationship to the house and the word of Yahweh. On the other hand, now the leader in liturgical worship summons in v. 5 only the worshipers in Jerusalem, as "House of Jacob," to walk in Yahweh's light. What else can this mean than that the Israelite hearers already now should follow the instructions of Yahweh, which at a future time will lead all peoples to peace with one another (vv. 3-4)? Thus the eschatological promise for the peoples has become a word to help give direction for Israel for the present.

That such a summons belongs to a crisis in the orientation of the life of the people of God is made even more clear when we examine the corresponding passage in Micah 4:5. For in this verse the difference at that time between the world of the nations, on the one hand, and Israel, on the other, is made explicit. At the same time, the non-fulfillment of the promise of peace among nations stands in contrast with Israel's accomplishment of obedience to God.

> All the peoples walk
> each in the name of its god.
> But we will walk
> in the name of Yahweh,
> our God for ever and ever.

The connection between v. 5 and vv. 1-4 in Micah has until now been given



too little attention. The difficulty is related to the meaning of the conjunction which connects v. 5 with vv. 1-4. Usually the particle is translated in the casual sense as "for." It is thus translated in the Septuagint and the Vulgate as well as in the older Luther translation, the Zuercher Bibel (1954), the Jerusalem Bible (1968), and unfortunately also now in the Unified Translation (Einheitsuebersetzung, 1980). Such a translation of the particle makes the significance of the connection of v. 5 with vv. 1-4 completely unclear, for the declaration in v. 5 can just as little serve as a motivation for vv. 1-4 as does the exhortation in Isaiah 2:5 for vv. 2-4. It is probably for this reason that the revised Luther translation of 1964 leaves the conjunction untranslated — an unsatisfactory solution offered out of embarrassment.

But the connection between v. 5 and the preceding context becomes quite clear if we understand the conjunction to have a concessive meaning ("although," "even if," "notwithstanding"), as Th. C. Vriezen[10] has convincingly demonstrated (cf. for example Isaiah 54:10, "Although the mountains depart and the hills be removed, my steadfast love shall never depart from you . . ."; cf. also Isaiah 51:6; Proverbs 6:35). Thus the connection of v. 5 with the preceding word of promise becomes clear. It may be paraphrased:

Even though all peoples go
(their own way)
each in the name of its god,
we ourselves go
(even now our own way)
in the name of Yahweh, our God,
for ever and ever.

Thus we have here a confessional statement, which the worshiping community speaks in the first person plural, and which is solemnly concluded with a liturgical expression ("for ever and ever," as in Psalm 45:18; 145:21, etc.). This confession, in relation to the preceding words of promise, precisely corresponds in substance to the exhortation in Isaiah 2:5. But it points more clearly to the spiritual crisis for Israel in order to lead it away from this to an unequivocal action of the worshiping community. The universal promise, according to which all nations will be at peace by walking in the ways of Yahweh, is at that time completely unfulfilled. The nations of the world do not yet think about directing their lives in accordance with the word of Yahweh. But the community of Yahweh even now should (Isaiah 2:5) and will (Micah 4:5) obey his instructions and his word; even now it is to make its swords into plowshares and not learn war anymore. So the worshipers of Yahweh even now are to walk on the path which is promised for all peoples for the days

[10] "Einige Notizen zur Uebersetzung des Bindewortes *ki*," BZAW 77 (1958): 266-273; L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, *Hebraeisches und aramaeisches Lexikon zum AT* (Leiden, 1953; 1963), 449, no. 12.

Questions for Pannenberg.

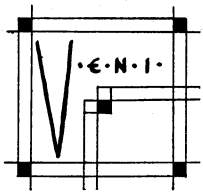
that are to come. Even now! — although Mount Zion does not by any means tower over all the mountain peaks of the world. Even now! — although the nations still follow their gods of war. The way of Yahweh is the only lasting way, the path that leads to what is ultimate and final, the path which also all people must tread in the future.

In the light of these considerations, several questions arise which I would like to put to Wolfhart Pannenberg and his article "Swords into Plowshares — the Meaning and Misuse of a Prophetic Word."[11]

1. Pannenberg correctly states that the prophecy about "Beating your swords into plowshares" is not found in the context of a direct political challenge; rather, it belongs to an eschatological vision. Nevertheless, did not our exegetical observations convince us that this form critical analysis of the context is yet incomplete? The present literary context of the promise makes it apply to the contemporary times of a new audience, with the exhortation to the House of Jacob that it should even now walk and act in the light of Yahweh (Isaiah 2:5). Our analysis further showed that in Micah 4:5 there is a corresponding clarification of the divine will that, unlike the nations, the House of Jacob is to act even now according to Yahweh's will for peace. Does this not fully justify the use of this passage by the Protestant youth in the German church? Indeed, does it not unambiguously require it for the worshiping community which hears these words?

2. Pannenberg refers in his article to Isaiah 2:5 and suggests that the prophetic vision, with its reference to law (Isaiah 2:3), could become a certain signpost in our own historical situation. However, does not this restriction of focus on the concept of law in the passage arbitrarily diminish the contemporary significance of the text's content and meaning? Pannenberg's admonition to work on international law is of course useful. But does it in fact correspond to the content of the text? The expectation voiced in the text points ahead not to the law as such, but to the fact that Yahweh judges the nations; that Yahweh's word and instruction will lead to peace. In this passage those who hear the word of God have a question put to them for the present as well as for the future. And what about the consequences which the text draws? Those who hear these words are to transform their weapons into implements of peace; they are to stop learning about and declaring war. As a consequence of Yahweh's mediating and judging of nations, it is apparent that the decision to beat swords into plowshares cannot be evaded. The direction things are to take is unambiguous. Any alternative to this, especially in the

[11] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Schwerter zu Pflugscharen — Bedeutung und Missbrauch eines Prophetenwortes," Briefdienst 3/83 des Arbeitskreises "Sicherung des Friedens" Bad Boll.



direction of building modern weapons capable of annihilating humankind, is surely not to be found here or among the many related Old or New Testament texts. Surely it is most urgent that we work toward an international legal agreement on disarmament, but such acts of conciliation ought not to take the place of what is proclaimed here as the consequences that Yahweh's word wants to call forth. As people who listen to the God of the biblical witnesses, must we not take upon ourselves the rigorous requirements of a special and proleptic, one-sided life of peace, as this text and many of the words of Jesus and the apostles teach us in the New Testament?

3. I hope that I have been able to convince Professor Pannenberg that the confession in Micah 4:5 has great significance for the broader understanding of this prophetic text and for the problem of its misuse. In this passage the conduct of the nations in those days and the community of Yahweh is clearly distinguished. This clarity of distinction is completely absent in Pannenberg's article. In Micah 4:5 the people of God clearly perceive that the nations for the time being are a long way from hearing God's word, which can help them achieve peace. But this cannot and should not hinder the worshipers in Zion from following already the ways of their God, in the certainty that the ways of God are the ultimate and final path which, sooner or later, the nations must also tread. But how does this expected action of God's people relate to Pannenberg's idea that "we must hold fast to the principle of mutuality, to the conception of mutual obligations, even when it has to do with questions of disarmament"? The community spoken about in Micah 4:5, in the midst of a world crisis, confesses its faith that it must already work unilaterally for that peace which the nations in general did not yet practice. Pannenberg thinks that even during a time of nuclear armament "peace can be attained and guaranteed only on the basis of mutual give and take, and thus on the basis of political agreement." Is this conception of mutuality representative of biblical thought if, as we read elsewhere, "to give is more blessed than to receive"? In any case, it is not compatible with Micah 4:5.

In my opinion, the fear of a misunderstanding and a misapplication of this prophecy is justified only when the watchword "Swords into plowshares" is banned from the historical present of the worshiping community and its members and their public actions, and is relegated to an indefinite, far-off future for the nations (or else applied to a spiritual inwardness). One can ask, in the light of present-day Christianity, whether the negotiations of the major powers would not be more successful for achieving world peace, if the politicians who want to be Christians would allow a more unequivocal impact of this prophetic word upon their work. In any case, there remains the question about what it is that

The community's conduct should conform to the example of Christ.

specifically distinguishes Christian actions in this matter.

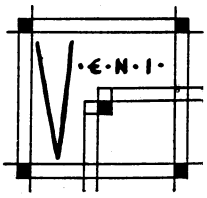
4. We have examined a prophetic text which occurs twice in Israel's literary tradition and which exhibits several variations and interpretations in its oral transmission. This prophecy not only takes up those strands of tradition which allowed a new theme to break forth in the midst of the war-cry in ancient Israel (we noted above the experience of faith in narratives about the wars of Yahweh; the theme "Yahweh destroys weapons" in Zion Psalms; the prophetic condemnation of self-security through the politics of military power; and the connection of messianic expectation with a hope for peace); it also stands in a relationship to New Testament texts, which we must now seek to determine. In conclusion, let us ask whether the New Testament, in the light of the life and activity of the followers of Jesus, at some point reflects the meaning and the spirit of our prophetic text; and whether the New Testament does not disclose even more the ultimate basis for the text.

Some New Testament Parallels

According to Romans 12, with the appearance of Jesus Christ the eschaton of the mercy of God has entered into our history. Accordingly, the community of Jesus' followers is not to be conformed to this world; rather, in its reasonable worship, the community should repay no one evil for evil (cf. vv. 17-21!). This means: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (v. 18). "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (v. 21). The First Letter of Peter reckons with the fact that the Christian community, like its Lord, will experience suffering. The letter reminds the community that its conduct should conform to the example of Christ, who "when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly" (2:21-24). Jesus' disciples, according to Luke 9:51-54 were inclined to let "fire from heaven" fall upon their enemies (v. 54). "But Jesus rebuked them and said: 'Do you not know what manner of spirit you are of?' " Do not all of these passages from different areas within the New Testament point in the direction of our prophetic text? Do they not make clear the meaning, the spirit, and the essential foundation of our deeds and actions?

Now, it can be said that, considered sociologically and also in the light of their political problems, the New Testament followers of Jesus are comparable neither to ancient Israel, nor to our national churches, large denominations, nor to the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century. But concerning this, let me ask two questions.

1. In the midst of our human and political problems, must not the church today — if it is to be, remain, or become the church of Jesus Christ — hold fast to the apostolic exhortation, as did early

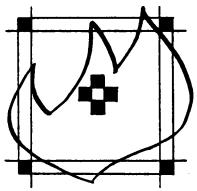


Christianity: "Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27; cf. Colossians 1:10)?

2. Does not the church of today in many respects stand closer sociopolitically to the problems of Old Testament Israel than it does to the New Testament community?

Thus we may draw the conclusion that a prophetic text such as Isaiah 2/Micah 4 elucidates and makes concrete for us our responsibilities, though the final basis for our actions is laid in the New Testament.

It is said that everyone wants peace. What is disputed among us is the way to achieve peace: occasional threats with weapons that annihilate humanity, or immediate disarmament. Is there a clearer help for Christians in their decision-making than the prophetic passage about "turning swords into plowshares," supported by other theological traditions proclaimed in the Old Testament, and by further motivations found in the New Testament? It would be an immeasurable gain if the churches of the world would become more and more unified on this point. There are certainly no significant words of the prophets, of the Apostles, or of Jesus, which point in any other direction than the prophetic text, "beat your swords into plowshares." I ask you: if we listen to God's word of reconciliation and if we look to the way of Jesus' cross, must there still be a parting of our ways? No! Nor should this be the case when our encounter with this prophetic word is similar to what Mark Twain once wrote: "It is the Bible passages which I understand that give me a stomach ache, not those that I don't understand." "Beat your swords into plowshares" — that is easy to understand.



The Task of the Churches for Peace

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On May 7-10, 1984 the Evangelical Academy at Loccum, West Germany, sponsored a productive interchange between church workers who have been responsible for the statements on peace. The informal gathering yielded significant progress for the understanding of peace as a task of the ecumenical Christian church.

Perhaps the seriousness of the dialogue was underscored by the fact that the churches represented at the conference happened also to represent the principal actors in the present geopolitical conflict, the US and the USSR, and the geographical point of their confrontation, the two Germanies.

The work of the conference was greatly facilitated by the distribution of a comparative analysis of the various peace statements of the Reformed Alliance (West Germany), the Evangelical Church in Germany (West Germany), the Synod of Brandenburg - Berlin (East Germany), the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic bishops' conferences in the US and in West Germany, and the Lutheran Church in America.

The comparative analysis revealed a consensus among the participating churches on four issues: 1) the centrality of the person of Christ for the churches' understanding and pursuit of peace; 2) the need to distinguish between the peace of Christ and peace between nations; 3) the ethically problematic status of nuclear deterrence; and 4) the importance of political action for peace.

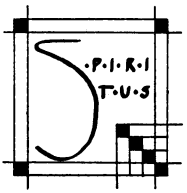
Essentially, the conference itself discussed four questions: 1) What is the relation between the confession of Christian faith and political action for peace? 2) How is nuclear deterrence to be evaluated ethically and on what basis? 3) What analysis is to be made of the military and political tension between the East and the West and how is such analysis related to the previous two questions? and 4) What has this conference achieved?

Christian Faith and Political Action

The comparative analysis revealed broad agreement on the proposition that Christian faith is not opposed to but rather requires political responsibility, and further that Christian action always aims toward peace, and never towards war.

On account of this consensus, it became possible more precisely to state the issue: Is it a sufficient witness to peace, in the words of the Reformed Alliance, to say "No, without any yes" to nuclear deterrence, just as we are required to say "Yes, without any no" to God's reconciliation in Christ?

In order to appreciate the precision with which the conference posed this question, some background on the German discussion of the past several years may be helpful. In Germany, a bitter dispute arose between those who supported the position of the *Memorandum*



of the West German church (EKD), which offers carefully qualified support to the "system" of nuclear deterrence as a transitional policy in military defense, and those who favored the "No (to the system of deterrence), without any yes" of the Reformed Alliance. Given the climate of slogans and recriminations which ensued, the achievement of the conference was to pose the question in such a way as to move beyond prejudice against the positions of the West German church or the Reformed Alliance.

In personal conversation a spokesperson of the EKD said, "For me, to affirm that peace and justice are the common human tasks of the political process is itself a christological affirmation." Similarly, a representative of the Reformed Alliance declared, "The 'No, without any yes' was meant as an impetus to the political process; it is not to be interpreted as claiming that good convictions alone make peace; or even that God's act in Christ provides ready guidelines for the political task of peace."

The discussion was initiated by the Reformed Alliance's query about the appropriate political action of confessing Christians in the present situation (i.e., after the NATO deployment). This question reflects the intense debate about future tactics raging within the Western European peace movement now that the movement's initial objective (i.e., blocking the NATO deployment) has failed. The Western European peace movement is debating options ranging from active resistance to "gradualism" (i.e., participation, through the democratic process, in the pursuit of arms control). Anything approximating violent resistance seemed not to be under consideration by the churches.

The Reformed Alliance is unclear whether the "No, without any yes" requires persistence in ongoing protest or allows entry into "gradualism." Would arms control work constitute a significant "yes" to the present policy of peace kept by nuclear deterrence? Would seeking to stabilize nuclear deterrence at the lowest possible level of risk constitute a qualified "yes"? Would such political action compromise the "prophetic no!" of Christian faith to nuclear deterrence? Would such action be a denial of the reality of God's act of reconciliation in Christ? While at the end of the conference there appeared to be some hardening (i.e., the sentiment was expressed by at least one representative of the Reformed Alliance that the task of Christians is witness, and they should leave it to the politicians to figure out what to do strategically), such questions were vigorously discussed throughout.

The Russian Orthodox Church spoke to the question of Christian faith and political action by noting that the comparative analysis had revealed a *lack* of christological foundation in the Orthodox Church's statements on peace. This lack, the delegate continued, does not mean that Orthodox theology lacks a

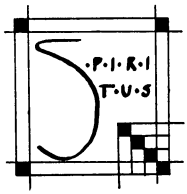
Similarities between Orthodox and Lutheran Christologies.

christological basis for its peace work. Rather, it is due to the fact that Christianity represents a minority in the Soviet Union, and that it has thus far sought a foundation for its peace work which could be shared by many religions. Thus, the Moscow conference of 1983 had as its theme "the sacred gift of life". Not christology, therefore, but creation is a guiding motif for religious work for peace. In addition, the Russian Orthodox Church cannot directly influence (through political action) the policies of the Soviet Union; its influence is indirectly generated by the peace of Christ manifest within the faithful. There can be no one answer to the question of the political responsibility of Christians — even if the same faith and ethical analysis is shared — because Christians live out that responsibility in differing political systems.

Then followed a splendid account of Orthodox christology, rich with references to patristic literature. Emphasis was placed upon the soteriological nature of Orthodox christology: that God became incarnate in Christ in order that humankind could become God's. Earthly life is not an end in itself but the means to eternal life. As such, earthly life is to be preserved from all violence. The life of the believer, at peace in the knowledge of eternal life, manifests and creates peace to all around. Hence, the Russian Orthodox Church firmly opposes nuclear war as a threat to the earthly life of humankind which, through the incarnation of Christ, has been appointed the means of eternal life.

The LCA delegation noted certain structural similarities between Orthodox and Lutheran christologies which seem to produce the following parallel judgments on contemporary issues: 1) that war, and nuclear warfare in particular, are devastations of human life against which God summons us to work; 2) that Christian faith has an indispensable role to play in culture in guarding against the temptation to view human life on earth as an end in itself; 3) that Christian churches cannot assume univeral assent to their teaching but can only bear witness and assume such political responsibility as their situations allow; 4) that, in view of sin and finitude, the preservation of life may require the use of military force for defense.

Such judgments are in part the product of the similarities between Orthodox and Lutheran christologies: The purpose of the incarnation was that humankind might become God's. This shared soteriological thinking lays emphasis upon the greatness of humankind's need for God and its manifest "unpeace"; the magnificent generosity of God's condescension in Christ; and the fact that the final victory of God's reconciliation in Christ will not be complete until the eschaton. By contrast, the soteriological thinking which seems to lie behind the "No, without any



yes" of the Reformed Alliance directly pits God's reconciliation in Christ as a present reality, against nuclear deterrence and requires a decision of faith or unfaith.

Summary

It is clear from this presentation that it is misleading to think of a christological consensus among the churches. Christology is always also soteriology: a doctrine accounting for how God's act in Christ achieves salvation for humankind. Crucial here for future work is the insight that, while all converge on the centrality of the person of Christ for the church's peace task, the decisive issue is the soteriological account of Christ's work, and the critical assessment of such accounts in light of the contemporary need for peace in the nuclear age.

Several EKD representatives maintained in personal conversation that such Lutheran christology lies behind the *Memorandum;* and if the *Memorandum* is to be faulted, it is because it inadequately explicated its own christological-soteriological basis. In an explicitly self-critical fashion, at least one member of the Reformed Alliance spoke of the insufficiency of the confession of Christ (i.e., as heretofore understood by the Reformed Alliance) for delineating the church's political task.

If the initial achievement of the question about Christian faith and political action was to overcome slogans and prejudice, perhaps its final achievement was to overcome the very abstractness of the question. Neither "Christian faith" nor "political action" is a self-explanatory concept. Future progress in understanding the Christian church's task for peace will depend on dogmatic elucidation and conceptual precision. The abstract consensus that Christian faith issues in political work for peace must lead to rigorous inquiry into questions like, "What Christian faith?", "What concept of political work?", "What meaning of peace?"

The Ethical Analysis of Nuclear Deterrence

The debate on nuclear deterrence was much more complex and consequently more difficult to narrate. It had several *foci* not easy to relate to each other. Similarly, various types of political science methods were used to interpret nuclear deterrence. Decisions for ethical criteria and political science methodology, moreover, seemed not to correlate in any consistent pattern. A West German political scientist could present a consistent "systems-theory" analysis of nuclear deterrence, warn against "moralizing" and conclude with an appeal to the Sermon on the Mount's love command. Similar political analysis, however, could also be employed by a West German Lutheran "Two Kingdoms" theologian.

Moral questions.

Future progress in the discussion may well depend on critical awareness of the ambivalence involved in evaluation and description. Ethical evaluations which seek to gain assent cannot expect serious consideration if they entail assent to descriptions which do not adequately account for the case under evaluation. For example, a vague description of the arms race as a product of "the spirit and logic of deterrence," thus overlooking the ideological, historical and geopolitical factors involved, can hardly be convincing, no matter what one wants to say ethically about the use of mass destruction weapons for deterrence.

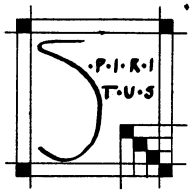
The principal actors in this discussion seemed to be the American and German Roman Catholics, the East and West German Lutherans and to a lesser, but significant extent, the LCA and the Russian Orthodox Church. The Reformed "No, without any yes" in principle removed them from any debate at all over the ethical analysis of nuclear deterence.

Sketched roughly, the Catholic contribution centered around the utility of just war categories. The East German Lutherans, appealing to the Sermon on the Mount, argued that the "spirit and logic of deterrence" inexorably involved the production and intensification of "enemy images" contrary to the love commandment. Several of the EKD people said in response that the moral questionability of *nuclear* deterrence must be distinguished from the moral legitimacy of deterrence as such (i.e., Romans 13).

As difficult and perplexing as this discussion was, significant common ground in ethical analysis between the LCA and Russian Orthodox Church finally emerged.

The discussion was initiated with a presentation by the American Roman Catholics on their utilization of the just war doctrine to evaluate the US nuclear policy. The West German Catholics were quick to respond on two levels. In terms of political analysis, it was pointed out that any move away from reliance on nuclear deterrence (as the American Bishops seem to require) made war more, not less, thinkable. In terms of moral analysis, moreover, it was urged that the possible transition from the mere threat of nuclear response, (judged by the Americans to be "tolerable" for the interim), to the execution of this threat, (should deterrence fail), had not been squarely faced. Two questions were put to the American Catholics by the German Catholics: had they failed to face, descriptively, the paradox of nuclear deterrence, and had they evaded, morally, the critical problem of executing the deterrent threat? These two questions seem to call into question the viability of just war thinking.

At this point a decision was made to "intensify" the moral question about deterrence by asking, "What if deterrence fails?" There were at least three different attempts to draw a moral from this



question. One moral would be that Europe needs to own up to its own responsibility for fighting a conventional war should deterrence fail. A second moral would be that Europe must face the fact that fighting would be impossible, precisely if deterrence should fail. Europeans must live with the contradiction of threatening to do what they cannot ever actually do. A third moral would be that this latter contradiction constitutes a *reductio ad absurdum* of the "spirit and logic of deterrence". It is accurate to say this discussion lead to an impasse.

Against the backdrop of this impasse, however, the LCA and the Russian Orthodox Church began to discover common ground in their ethical evaluation. The LCA spoke in defense of the American Catholic attempt, at least in principle, to rehabilitate moral discourse about nuclear policy.

The just war tradition should be viewed as an inference, based on the Sermon on the Mount, concerned for the love commandment's political consequences (cf. Augustine and Luther). Given the impossibility of a "just" nuclear war, this tradition's demand of love for the weak and love for the enemy might better be expressed by developing moral criteria for a just defense. Such criteria could not evade the reality of nuclear weapons.

Put otherwise, deterrence must not fail and the way to prevent it from failing is by making it more just. This latter task, moreover, cannot be conceived of unilaterally or solely in military terms. Ethically, it is the task of love.

The Russian Orthodox church reiterated its firm conviction that the church must be opposed to nuclear *warfare* on theological grounds. Yet, in view of sin, we must all reconcile ourselves to the inevitable evil of deterrence. Both the political work of statesmanship and the ecumenical work of the church provide significant avenues towards the construction of a safer world.

Future progress in the ethical discussion seems to depend on several factors: 1) the recognition of the ambivalence between evaluation and description (this was somewhat discussed under the rubric of "comparative justice"), and 2) perhaps a meta-ethical decision about the purpose of ethical analysis.

To put it concretely, if we view nuclear deterrence as sinful because it denies by potentially violent means the other's claim to be a neighbor, how may an ethical path be charted from what is to be avoided (nuclear war) to what is to be achieved (mutually assured security)? That seems to be the urgent question for the future: How shall we live together justly and decently? It is not a question about good intentions or the right direction of unilateral action. It is a question in which the moral and the political must be thought together for the sake of life in a sinful world.

Deterrence and the American-Soviet relationship.

The Political Dimension

Some concluding remarks are in order concerning the strictly political aspects of the discussion. The LCA pointed to four basic facts that must be taken seriously in any discussion concerning deterrence and the American-Soviet relationship.

1) The fundamental issue to be negotiated is the nature of deterrence and its components. At the present time there are tens of thousands of nuclear weapons in the world and no imaginable scheme of disarmament that could account for all of these weapons. The nuclear age will not disappear, and for the immediate future there is no alternative but to live with some kind of deterrence. The LCA Social Statement "Peace and Politics" recommends deterrence at the "lowest possible level of risk".

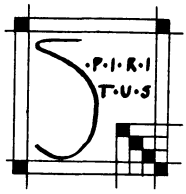
2) In any discussion of nuclear deterrence, the moral dilemma will always remain. Deterrence must be credible in order to deter, and that requires thinking and planning beyond the point where deterrence might fail. In other words, missiles in silos without an operational plan for use is not a deterrent. But each side's awareness of the other's preparedness dare not be confused with intent to initiate, wage, or prevail in a nuclear war. The sole intention of deterrence is to prevent these weapons from ever being used. In order that nuclear deterrence be stabilized on the basis of this reciprocal intention, the LCA statement recommends increasing "transparency" in military development.

3) Now, and for the foreseeable future, there is fundamental American-Soviet antagonism that can be modified, but probably not ended. The difficulties in American-Soviet relations are rooted in differing ideological commitments and geopolitical drives, as well as a genuine diversity in their interests and perceptions of international politics.

In this context, the political task is to devise a responsible policy that responds meaningfully to the challenge of a complicated relationship by striving to enhance the areas of cooperation between competing countries.

4) In order for detente to be enduring, it has to be increasingly reciprocal and comprehensive. A detente relationship will collapse if there is an attempt to compartmentalize it to a narrow geographical sector (Europe) while simultaneously engaging in unbridled competition elsewhere — particularly in the third world.

The LCA statement urges U.S. leadership to indicate to the Soviet leaders its willingness to accommodate, to widen the scope of cooperation, and seek real and substantive arms reductions. But it must be made clear that the only way this will work is if the relationship between the two is bound by some mutually binding and reciprocal rules of restraint.



The Response of the Russian Orthodox Church

The Soviet representative made the following comments: The doctrine of nuclear deterrence is ambiguous; it can create fear, increase tension, and contribute to the arms race. But at the present time, nuclear deterrence is a necessary evil. We have to reconcile ourselves to its existence. He also stated that the armaments should be reduced to the lowest possible level, that the political leaders of the USA and the Soviet Union must display wisdom and restraint, and be responsible in their actions. Detente, he concluded, should include all regions in the world.

The Achievement of the Conference

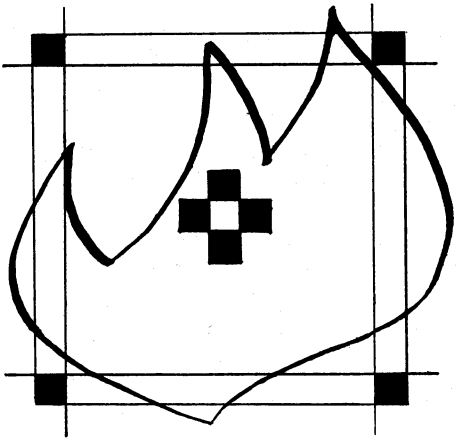
The LCA and the Russian Orthodox church established themselves as conversation partners at the conference. Archbishop Pitirim invited the steering committee to hold its planning session for the follow-up conferences in Moscow. Dr. George Brand, one of the authors of this article, will go to Moscow for this meeting as *Currents* goes to press.

The words of one LCA representative, "disillusion yet hope", might well capture the common ground discovered among many participants. The dual facts that weapons of mass destruction cannot be disinvented, and that the true alternative to the traditional "just war" (i.e., just defense) *remains* the catastrophe of an unjust war, constitute disillusionment for all who imagine that intending peace and achieving peace follow one another in an unbroken line. The complicating factors are human sin, which can corrupt even so urgent and so necessary a goal as peace. It is important for the church — precisely for the sake of peace — to say "No!" to peace-fanaticism, whether in militarist or pacifist versions, to disillusion those who propose "peace at any price" — be that price unilateral superiority or unilateral surrender. The true price of temporal peace is rather paid in the hard labor, under God, of political responsibility for the protection and promotion of the common human life on the earth.

Yet under this disillusioning "No!" — which derives from the cross of Christ and needs to be elucidated as God's "No!" to the atheistic utopias of modern culture — lies the surpassing goodness of God's "Yes" and the solid ground of hope. God is with us and for us — in the same cross of Christ — even in the face of God's judgment against us. The peace God has won for his enemies in the cross and resurrection of Christ is the peace for which God himself has entered the fray. It is this peace which surely will prevail. There is no Christian faith in God which does not live in surpreme confidence in the goodness and power of God to fulfill this promise.

The church's witness to peace.

The church's work for peace is above all its witness to peace. This witness sharply distinguishes itself from those currents in contemporary culture which are loveless and full of despair. The church's witness to peace as the promised victory of God's reconciliation in Christ includes new love for the weak through deterrence of aggression and love for the enemy even in the case of hostilities. The church's witness to peace can and must include these two most difficult matters as the single task of love. The church's witness can include these two because it knows that "peace" is not exhausted by them but points beyond to the gift of God's reign. It must include these two, however, because the reign of God lays claim, even now, to the common human life on the earth.



Called to the Office of Ministry: The New Testament and Today

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Direct comparisons between the New Testament and the contemporary church are a risky business.[1] The pitfalls of anachronism and special pleading are always only a few steps away. Nevertheless, the risks eventually must be faced. We confess that the Scriptures are the norm of our faith and practice. If we mean that confession, the hard task of applying the norm must be carried out.

This essay deals with one of the areas where comparing the New Testament and present practice is most difficult: ministerial office. This topic presents a double difficulty. On the one hand, the New Testament portrays and implies a bewildering variety of church structures, many of which can only be partially reconstructed. There is no such thing as *the* New Testament church structure. Even within the sphere of influence of Paul, churches seem to have structured themselves differently.

On the other hand, there is no detailed consensus among Lutherans today on the doctrine of ministry. This lack of agreement is not surprising. Lutherans have never achieved such a consensus on this topic. While the Augsburg Confession does make some important assertions about the office of ministry, how these assertions should be interpreted is not an agreed matter. I have become convinced that just as there is no one New Testament church structure, so there is no one Lutheran doctrine of ministry and ministerial office. At most the Confessions give us some constants and limits for an evangelical understanding of the ministerial office. We must compare the New Testament with some major strands in contemporary Lutheran practice and theology, rather than some alleged full-blown confessional doctrine of ministry.

This topic also raises both old and new questions about biblical authority. The old question is whether New Testament patterns of ministry should in any way be taken as normative for present practice. Lutherans have been rightly suspicious of a simple "they did it; we should do it" argument. One must show not only that the New Testament churches had some particular pattern of ministry; one must also show that the New Testament *teaches* such a pattern. Ideally, one should be able to state the theological reasons behind any allegedly normative aspect of New Testament patterns of ministry.

The new question about authority concerns the status of the final or canonical form of the text in relation to earlier stages of the text's composition. Is the norm and rule of the faith the text as it stands, or do earlier forms of the text somehow have an authority similar to that of the later version? This question becomes particularly pressing when

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[1] This essay was delivered as a lecture at the South Carolina Synod (LCA) Pastors Convocation, January, 1984. I have left it in the style of a lecture. Documentation is provided only for direct citations.

Three questions.

discussing the office of ministry. It is possible, for example, that in an earlier redaction the Gospel of John was hostile to notions of authoritative pastoral leadership. In chapter 21 of the Gospel's final form, however, Jesus himself assigns some sort of pastoral leadership to Peter, though only after Jesus three times reminds Peter of the rule of love, the fundamental rule of Christian life in John's Gospel. Historians tell us that chapter 21 is probably a redactional addition to an earlier form of the text. Arguments can be made that this earlier form included no such acceptance of authoritative pastoral leadership. Can groups which are suspicious of or even opposed to pastoral leadership appeal to this earlier stage of John as support for their position? Or is the only normative version of the text the final canonical redaction with its commissioning of Peter under the rule of love? This essay will focus on the New Testament text in its final form. I would make no claim, however, to have settled this difficult new question of authority.

I will, instead, examine the idea of a call to a ministerial office in the New Testament and relate it to some aspects of contemporary Lutheran thought and practice. Specifically, I will look at three substantive questions: 1) Is there an office or offices of ministry in the New Testament for anyone to be called to? 2) If there is such a call in the New Testament, to what particular activities does it call? 3) Who does the calling?

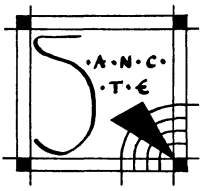
New Testament Offices of Ministry

Is there an office or offices of ministry in the New Testament for anyone to be called to? One can derive from the New Testament a variety of church structures. A good summary of recent scholarly attempts to reconstruct these structures can be found in the first chapter of *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* by Edward Schillebeeckx.[2] In these varying structures is there something which can be called an office of ministry to which individuals are called?

This question can be answered yes. All New Testament communities had some form of ministry of leadership. Schillebeeckx asserts: "There is no evidence anywhere in the New Testament that there were communities without any ministry."[3] The question can be raised whether these ministries took the form of offices. Obviously, much depends on what one means by "office." Certainly, New Testament ministries did not have clear institutional definitions. Functions and titles were highly fluid. Nevertheless, they were not totally fluid; "apostle" and "prophet"

[2] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, tr. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 5-37.

[3] Schillebeeckx, p. 20.



did not mean just anything. I will use the term "office," with the reminder that in the New Testament this term is not used in a technical sense.

The forms of New Testament ministry most analogous with the modern pastoral office (apostle, prophet and teacher, bishop and elder) all involved some sort of call that was a call from more than just the community, but was a call from Christ, or from the Spirit, or from God. Such a call-founded ministry is most evident in the case of "apostle." Even here, the nature of the office is not clearly or consistently implied throughout the New Testament. Paul and Luke/Acts have different understandings of what it means to be an apostle. Nevertheless, I think one can say that "apostle" most often refers to a witness to the risen Christ commissioned as such a witness by the risen Christ himself. The church is built on the apostles, as Ephesians and Revelation say, because the apostles are the originating, foundational witnesses to the message by which the church lives, the message of the risen Christ. This originating, foundational witness is trustworthy because it does not derive from women and men, but from the risen Christ himself. Note how Paul is at pains to insist that his apostleship does not derive from the human community. The apostolic witness, as that which founds the community, must not itself derive from the community. If the apostolic witness were to derive from the community, then the community would ultimately depend on itself for its existence, rather than on Christ and the Spirit. Robert Jenson is right when he states: "It was precisely a necessary character of an apostle that his service and authority were not derived from human initiative nor granted him by human designation. On the contrary the apostles were there before the church was; their service and authority were precisely to create the church."[4]

Paul clearly understands himself as possessing a God-given authority in the church. He asserts this self-understanding in the dispute with the church in Corinth. He refers in II Corinthians 13:10 to "the authority which the Lord has given me." In II Corinthians 13:2 Paul threatens disciplinary action when he visits. In I Corinthians 7:17 he lays down rules for the church. Throughout his letters Paul is answering questions of all sorts. Paul understands himself as an apostle, as one who can authoritatively interpret the gospel for the community.

This authority is limited or, better, balanced in two ways. First, the authority is not absolute. Hans von Campenhausen has noted how Paul's directions sound more like exhortations

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[4] Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 190. My description of apostle is indebted to Jenson's discussion.

than commands.[5] Paul persuades rather than orders. Why? The apostle does not speak for himself but for him to whom he witnesses. The community must hear in the apostle's words the words of the Lord. Even an apostle can misrepresent the gospel. At least in relation to individual apostles, Robert Jenson is off the mark when he states: "Whatever (the apostles) preached was the gospel just because they preached it."[6] When Peter at Antioch refuses to eat with Gentile Christians, he is misrepresenting the gospel and Paul calls him to account in the name of the gospel. Paul tells the Galatians that if anyone, even himself, an apostle, were to preach to them a gospel contrary to that which had been preached to them, let him be accursed. All preaching, even apostolic preaching, is to be tested by the community.

A second balancing feature to such apostolic authority is the insistence on service and lowliness as marks of the true apostle. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus continually impresses on the inner circle of disciples the importance of lowliness. Between Mk. 8 and 11 there is a continuing clash between the spiritual (and sometimes not so spiritual) pride of the disciples and Jesus' constant admonition to service and humility. Paul also understands apostleship as service and lowliness. Note the contrast in the letters to Corinth between Paul and the Corinthian enthusiasts. Paul especially sees suffering as a sign of apostleship. II Corinthians is a good example of the stress on servanthood that balances ideas of authority in the New Testament.

The call to apostleship is thus in the New Testament a call to an office of witness, but a witness that takes place in a context of mutuality and service.

A similar pattern exists in the post-apostolic New Testament church. Of course, the office of apostle does not continue. There are no new founding witnesses of the risen Christ beyond the apostles. The later church is not apostolic because it is led by apostles, but because it is true to the apostolic message and faith. But in this post-apostolic church there are again official, representative witnesses to the message. Various offices fulfill a function analogous to the apostolic functions, most notably the offices of prophet and teacher, and of bishop and elder. The authentic Pauline epistles show that Paul shared his ministry and authority with helpers, e.g., Timothy and Titus. Whether or not they are historically accurate, the Pastoral Epistles depict Paul as authorizing Timothy and Titus to appoint and ordain local leaders to carry on the apostolic witness. The New Testament depicts the later ministerial offices as analogous to and in a sense a continuation of the apostolic witness. Acts has Paul saying that the Ephesian elders have been made elders by the Spirit (20:28). Thus, in the post-apostolic period, the New Testament portrays a ministerial office involving a call that is not simply from the community, but is from the Spirit. As in the apostolic, so also in the post-apostolic New Testament church we find an official ministry, representative of the apostolic word, founded on a call.

(Let me note that here the question of the location of biblical authority becomes prominent. The Pastoral Epistles express the self-understanding of post-apostolic ministry in the form of a succession from Paul through Timothy and Titus to local church leaders. Is the normative status of the Pastoral Epistles

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[5] Quoted in John Knox, "The Ministry in the Primitive Church," in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives,* ed. H. Richard Niebuhr & Daniel Day Williams (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 7.

[6] Jenson, p. 192.

as one element within the New Testament undermined by the quite different historical picture reconstructed by contemporary critical scholarship? I would say no, but I find many implicitly saying yes.)

The central task of this post-apostolic office is to preserve the integrity of the apostolic faith. Note the stress in the Pastoral Epistles on guarding the faith taught by the apostles. I Timothy ends, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith." In describing this ministry, Schillebeeckx states: "the focal point is clearly handing on intact the apostolic gospel, 'the pledge entrusted.' The ministry as a service is subordinate to this continuity or succession which is apostolic in content . . . . Ministry is connected with a special concern for the preservation of the Christian identity of the community in constantly changing circumstances."[7] As with the apostles, the central task of the post-apostolic ministerial office is witnessing to the gospel. In the post-apostolic situation, however, such witness is not church-founding witness, but, rather, preaching and teaching the message handed down in a context where different versions of that message threaten to obscure the gospel.

As with the apostles, however, we find in the post-apostolic community also a counterbalancing view. A suspicion is voiced that the ministerial office will claim an inappropriate authority. Matthew 23:8-10 insists that leaders not be called rabbi, father, or master, for we have but one master, Christ. Throughout the New Testament we find the insistence that leadership within the church is service, not rule in a worldly sense. The synoptic gospels in particular are explicit in the rejection of worldly models of leadership (e.g., Lk. 22:25f). More radical than the synoptics is the Johannine literature. II and III John (and probably also I John) are written by a man who calls himself an elder. But John the elder does not attempt to teach authoritatively. I John 2:20 insists that all have been anointed by the Holy One and thus all know. "The anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you" (2:27). There are echoes here of the theme in John's gospel that the sheep know the voice of the shepherd and are thus empowered to differentiate between true and false leaders (Jn. 10). Thus, I John 4 encourages its readers to test the spirits for themselves.

We find again in the post-apostolic church the dialectic between an office called to witness to the redemptive word, even over against the community, and the power of the community to test and judge that witness. An important aspect of ministry is being emphasized. Even in the New Testament church, all ministry is ministry of the word and is subject to that word. This subjection to the word is realized in the freedom of the word over against all offices. No one, pastor, bishop, pope, or apostle, rightly speaks the word simply because of his or her office. The community, the laity in the widest sense, is always to test the spirits, to judge whether here the witness is truly made. In this give-and-take between ministerial leadership and the wider community I think we find a biblical norm that church structures should embody.

This conclusion has concrete consequences. Narrowly, I think that this norm implies that decision-making

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[7] Schillebeeckx, pp. 17, 24.

bodies at all levels of the church should involve both lay representatives and the clergy *as clergy,* as called witnesses to the word, rather than as representatives of congregations. As a result, I find LCA synod membership more theologically apt than either ALC structures or pure ministerium arrangements. More broadly, I think this norm implies that all ministry should be mutual ministry. All ministry should involve the cooperation of gifts. Especially those whose gifts and call involve leadership responsibilities should seek mutuality in the exercise of these gifts. Unilateral leadership is not just organizationally suspect but theologically dubious.

Let me summarize the results of this first part of my discussion. We do find ministerial offices in the New Testament which can be described in much the same way as the 1980 LCA Study of the Ministry describes the Office of Word and Sacrament: an official representation of the word to the community and the world. The basis of this office is a call. The earliest form of this office, apostle, was understood to be authorized by the risen Christ. Post-apostolic offices were understood as analogous to the apostolic office. In all cases, such ministry was pictured as service to a community which was itself authorized to test the spirits.

Activities of a Call

If there was such a call to offices of ministry in the New Testament, to what activities was it a call? As has already been indicated, first and foremost, it was a call to witness in the widest sense. Though it included teaching and preaching, "witness" was not narrowly conceived. As a call to official or authoritative witness, the call was to a concern for the faithfulness of the church's entire witness. (Is it descriptively true that witness is the most important task of the contemporary Lutheran pastor? I am not sure.)

Closely related to this concern for witness is a call to what we would now call pastoral care. A concern for the witness of the community is a concern for the wider life of the community. Paul says to the community at Thessolanica: "we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our very selves, because you had become very dear to us . . . We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God" (I Th. 2:8, 11f). Here again we find a note of service, of humble concern for the other, that offsets the note of authority. Images of a father are used in Paul and of a shepherd in John and I Peter to describe the ministerial office, but the father and the shepherd are to be the sort whose only concern is for the good of their charges. What we would call pastoral care is thus a moment in which the servant character of leadership comes to the fore.

Let me note here that the call in the New Testament to pastoral care with the expectations of servanthood is significantly different from a modern understanding of the ordained ministry as a helping profession. I wonder whether certain aspects of the model of helping profession are involved in worldly models of leadership that we ought to reject. To what degree is "helping profession" part of a modern social dynamic in which individuals become the passive consumers of services, the object of others' actions, rather than the subjects of their own lives? If the clergy become the providers of "pastoral services," then to what degree are the laity reduced to consumers, or, even worse, to clients? Does even the picture of the clergy as "equipping the saints for ministry" im-

ply a picture of dependence rather than mutuality between lay and ordained ministries? In the present cultural context, the call to pastoral care must be carefully defined.

The call to ministerial office in the New Testament is also a call to a third activity, broad leadership in the church. This call to leadership needs to be defined carefully. I am concerned that leadership within the church be mutual and involve a wide variety of gifts. The laity need to be included at every level. Such a picture of mutuality I do find in the New Testament. In the New Testament, however, a peculiar responsibility for leadership is given to the various ministerial offices. Apostle, prophet, teacher, bishop, elder are all called to participate in the leadership decisions of the community. This responsibility follows from the call to witness. If in both the apostolic and post-apostolic church ministry was concerned especially with witness, then, in light of the centrality of witness to the church's life, the ones who have a special role in that witness will inevitably play an important role in the leadership of the community.

These three activities, witness, pastoral care, and leadership are at the center of the call to ministerial office in the New Testament. One might have noticed that one element important to most modern understandings of the pastoral role is missing. Not central to any ministerial call in the New Testament is a call to presiding over the community's liturgy and its sacraments. The one activity more reserved for the clergy in modern Lutheranism than any other is presidency at the eucharist. We do not know, however, who presided at the eucharist in New Testament churches. The Didache, written perhaps toward the end of the New Testament period, assigns the presidency to itinerant prophets. Some contend that the final verses of Acts 2 imply that the Twelve led the communal eucharist in Jerusalem, but I find such a reading forced. We can deduce from a variety of evidence, such as parallel Jewish meal fellowships, that those who led the community in other respects probably would have played something like a presiding role in the communal eucharist; but that is just that, a deduction. If leadership in the communal eucharist was limited to prophets or bishops or some other office, such limitations are not mentioned in the New Testament. The most plausible explanation for such an omission is that liturgical leadership was not central to the New Testament church's understanding of the nature of these roles. Schillebeeckx concludes: "Throughout the development of the ministry in the New Testament one striking fact is that the ministry did not develop from and around the eucharist or the liturgy, but from the apostolic building up of the community through preaching, admonition and leadership."[8] These are the three calls I have stressed. If we continue to restrict in most circumstances presidency at the eucharist to the clergy (as I think we should), then we will have to base that practice on our theological understanding of eucharist and ministerial office rather than on an alleged biblical precedent.

So far the focus has been on particular activities to which persons are called in the New Testament. To stay on this level, however, is to miss an important aspect of the forest for the trees. One of the glories of the calling extended to all Christians is that they are called to participate in the mission of Jesus. The ministry of every Christian is a participa-

[8] Schillebeeckx, p. 29.

tion in the life of Christ in the world. All Christians are called not just to a Christlike ministry, but to a participation in Christ's continuing ministry in the world. During his life, Christ commissioned his followers to go out and preach and heal. Christ shared his ministry with the disciples, and he still does so. All Christians are "God's fellow workers," as Paul says in I Corinthians 3:9. This honor is given us in our baptismal commission. What is special about ministerial offices of witness in the New Testament is that participation becomes, to speak anachronistically, representative and official. Paul can say in II Corinthians: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (5:20). The minister of the word becomes the word's ambassador or representative, through whom the word itself speaks. Thus it can be said by Jesus in Luke; "He who hears you hears me" (10:16). The Apology to the Augsburg Confession applies this verse to pastors and states: "When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ's place and stead."[9] For at least some strands within the New Testament, strands continued in later church tradition, the ministerial office involves standing in the place of Christ, representing his word. The call to that office is thus a call to represent that word in an official way.

In this representation we find one important reason why something like ordination should precede carrying out the activities of the office. No one can make themselves a representative of Christ in his word. Not even the church as an assembly of believers can make one such a representative. Only the Spirit can make one such a representative. It is at least eminently appropriate that prior to taking up the office there should be a public prayer that the Spirit empower this person to be such an ambassador. Ordination is simply the form that such prayer has historically taken.

Within the New Testament, then, the call to ministerial office involves a call to activities of witness, pastoral care, and leadership. These activities, however, are simply the form in which those in these offices participate in the ministry of Christ in the world.

Who Calls?

From whom does the call come? As was implied above in my comments on ordination, as a call to participate in the ministry of Christ, the call can come only from Christ in his Spirit. The same is true for the baptismal calling of every Christian. One implication of the idea of justification by grace through faith for the sake of Jesus Christ is that Christ retains the initiative throughout the Christian life. Christ's initiative is particularly present in ministry. Since it is Christ's ministry, Christ retains the initiative over the ministry of the Church. I mentioned above how in the synoptics Christ shares his mission with his disciples. But note that Christ does this at his own initiative. He decides how this sharing will take place and who will take what role. The abruptness of the calling of the disciples in the Gospels is a witness to their understanding of the initiative of Christ.

This dependence on the call of Christ comes not just at the beginning of ministry, but throughout. All ministry is true ministry when it relies on Christ. True ministry is not to rely on its own power. The importance of such continuing dependence is depicted in a puzzling

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[9] Arts. VII & VIII, 28, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. & tr. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 173.

passage in Mark 9. When Jesus comes down the mountain from the transfiguration, he encounters a crowd which has gathered around some of his disciples. His disciples have been trying unsuccessfully to exorcise a spirit from a boy. Jesus tells the father of the boy that all things are possible to him who believes. The father responds with the famous statement: "I believe; help my unbelief." Note that the father expressed dependence on Christ; he does not depend on his own capacities, not even on his own belief. Jesus then casts out the spirit. The disciples later ask why they had not been successful. Jesus replies: "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." This ministry of healing can only be carried out in dependence on God. Especially in the context of Mark 8-10, with its depiction of the disciples as consistently interested in their own glory and status, the failure of the disciples can be seen as a function of their lack of prayer, their lack of dependence on a power beyond them, their concern with their own powers and capacities. Ministry can be truly carried out only in continued dependence on the power of him who calls.

How can such dependence be concretely realized in the life of the church and its leaders? How does it become more than nice talk? That is a difficult question, and inevitably has a great deal to do with the Christian formation of leaders. One embodiment of such dependence, however, is the sort of mutuality I mentioned earlier. Cooperation with and dependence on others is an important element in our growth into a true dependence on the Spirit. Cooperation with and dependence on others can lead us beyond dependence only on our own capacities.

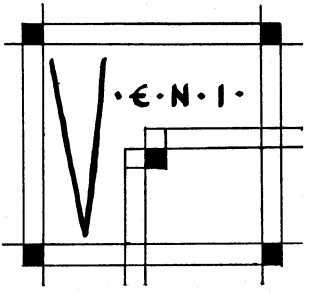
What is the relation between such a call from Christ through the Spirit and a call from the community? In Acts 13 and 20 calls from the community are interpreted as appointments by the Spirit. If the community participates in the ministry of Christ, then we should not be surprised by such an identification of at least some community calls and the call of the Spirit. Because it is a call of the Spirit, such community calls should not be understood in terms of a "transference" theory. Even if the community mediates the call of the Spirit, the authority of the official ministry derives from the Spirit and the word, and not primarily from the community, even if the community is empowered to test the spirit of every ministry. The role of the ministerial office of witness, precisely in its service to and mutuality with the wider community, is not under the ultimate direction of that community but under the ultimate direction of the word of the one who calls.

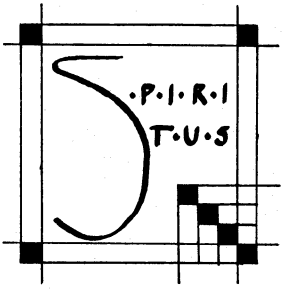
Challenge for Us

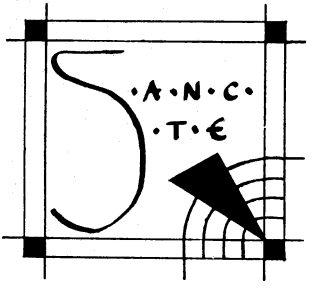
There are then in the New Testament a variety of ministerial offices, analogous to the modern pastoral office, which involve some notion of call. This call is to activities like those of the modern pastor: witness, leadership, and pastoral care. These activities are forms of participation in the ministry of Christ; they include even a representation of Christ in his word. The call to such ministry must come from Christ in his Spirit.

These outlines of a called ministry in the New Testament should be normative for the modern office of ministry. The question we face is how can such an understanding of the ministerial office be concretely and institutionally realized. How can we realize in church life a recognition of the pastoral office as involving a representation of Christ in his word, while still upholding mutuality of

all offices and roles within the ministry of the whole people of God? How do we embody such a theologically charged depictation of the ministerial office without falling into a clericalism that only feeds anticlericalism? The answer lies not in reducing the dignity of the pastoral call, but in seeking new ways to embody the dignity of all ministry and the mutuality among gifts which Paul praises. That will be a challenge for the new church, a challenge set for us by the New Testament.







Sharing the Spirit

Travis Du Priest
Associate Professor of English at Carthage College, Kenosha, WI

"Hey, Dad, look at me." "Everybody. Watch this. Over here." "Mom, Mom. Did you see that?"

From the beginning, we each want the spotlight. We want others to see what we're doing. It's healthy enough: we want to survive. And furthermore if we like ourselves, we have the potential for liking others. No guarantee, but the potential.

As we grow older, most of us learn that others are not as intensely interested in us as we are — some of us learn that; most of us become interested in the lives and activities of others. This interest is at the basis of friendships, marriages, families, villages, cities, societies; indeed, is the root of what we call civilized behavior. Through it all, however, we remain extremely interested in ourselves. Even if we have a deep religious awareness about our lives and our world, we think a lot about our own selves.

Most of this is unavoidable, is the condition of life. But what about those heightened moments, events, or experiences with God. Those special gifts some receive: a vision, a profound insight, a voice, an image, a fired-up urge to serve.

While the church muddles on, severely rent asunder, an amazing number of people in our century — individuals, couples, and small groups — are having mystical or at least intensified spiritual experiences.

There are numerous reasons. For one thing, in a situation of extreme religious pluralism such as ours, people naturally gravitate toward nurturing communities. In a world which has very few agreed-upon moral values and no agreed-upon religious values, naturally people seek out strong, charismatic leaders and spiritual guides. Moreover, because the church is often not this nurturing community and because people often do not find their own spiritual needs inspired by their pastor, people turn to sub-groups for self-identification and actualization. One manifestation of this in our time is the "intensive weekend."

We live in the age which surely will be known as the age of "weekend spiritual renewal": Cursillo, Schools of Pastoral Care, Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, Youth Happenings, Stress Workshops — most with their own follow-up "subgroups." And along with these opportunities are numerous retreats — guided and unguided — workshops in spirituality; summer sessions in prayer, meditation, wholeness, and healing; and on-going affiliations through Faith Alive, Women Aglow, local prayer groups, support groups, and the like. Spiritual direction and meditation are virtual industries in publication and teaching.

Though many of these phenomena or attachments are on-going and provide follow-up groups, some do not. Often a participant is taken to the mountain top, but never brought down. Often, provision is not made for what we call "re-entry" or "culture shock," for easing back

into the mundane and ordinary. People in these situations — and I've talked with young people who've gone to a spiritually — intensive weekend or adults who've had a profoundly moving religious experience on their own or on a "weekend" — are often truly charged up, not like others around them, running, as my seminary dean used to put it, off a dynamo, while the rest of us are still using flash light batteries.

Such super-charged dynamism is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, the individual may be truly re-newed. After a recent individually-guided retreat, I myself felt that I had just begun to learn how to pray in a personal way. I found myself using "reborn" "just-starting-to-live" language.

On the other hand, we live in homes, offices, and communities in which people are going about their daily lives — maybe, like J.A. Prufrock in T.S. Eliot's poem, measuring out life in coffee spoons. I once found myself counselling a woman to try to stop thinking about and talking about her "conversion experience" precisely because her husband did not think and talk in that language; her constant allusion to her "conversion experience" was ruining her marriage.

Many of us feel commissioned to change the world with our new power. And while this is an admirable motivation, or seemingly so, it misses the point of these holy gifts God gives us. When I confessed to a spiritual director, a deeply quiet, solid woman in Toronto, that I had taken a leave of absence from teaching so that I could be a homemaker but was having real trouble seeing that work as important as my teaching or work as a priest, she reminded me of the first thirty years of Jesus' life: an unknown, day-to-day existence. In those thirty years, as she put it, Jesus was making the Father known in the carpentry shop. Sanctifying the ordinary.

How easy it is to forget that our daily lives — our ordinary work, our family life and time with close friends — are the places to which we are "called," in the strong sense of vocation, to be fully ourselves, to be Christian, to plant — not let off or explode — but to plant our new dynamism. It is in our work, our homes, our social lives that our special visits of the Holy Spirit hold us up, sustain us. If we do an act of kindness, help our spouse, understand our children's point of view, cooperate with a neighbor, hold back from bearing false witness, then our energy is spreading, then we nudge the dry cell batteries of our world.

But after a weekend or an intensified personal experience, most of us want to share our experiences. This is natural; we are communal creatures.

Two considerations suggest themselves, however. One, do we really want to share, or do we want to do whatever we can to get someone else to have the same experience we did? To make someone else like us? This discernment is difficult to make. It is natural to want other people to have something good that we have; yet God works in a variety of ways — many of them quite mysterious; and those of us who feel "gifted" need be especially aware that our urge to share may be a way of validating our own experience or of rubber-stamping spiritual relationships and experiences. I have heard very sincere and well-intentioned people gear up efforts to "fill" a weekend. Logistics are important in our world, but one wonders if the Spirit counts sheep as we do.

While I was in seminary, I had a moving, transcendent moment during a solemn eucharist, a transport of delight,

let's call it, which I was really tickled over and wanted to tell everyone on my hall about. When I tried to talk about it, there was no way I could do the event justice. I began to question my motivation for wanting to tell others and spoke to the dean of a neighboring seminary who was teaching a class on prayer I was in: he calmly said, "God has given *you* a special treat; maybe it was just between you and God."

A second consideration about asking people to share our experience. Not only may it not be properly motivating,it may be dissipating of our own new energy. Several years back, in the late '60's and early '70's I worked every summer as a graduate student with a creative writing workshop for older people. It was thrilling and educational for me: I heard many "life stories," and I got to talk with and socialize with real live writers.

One evening I asked a well-known writer who was at the workshop teaching children's literature what she was working on at that time. Frankly and bluntly she said, "I don't talk about my stories because if I do that releases part of the energy that nourishes my writing them."

I didn't understand that then. Ten years later I do. She wasn't keeping her ideas to herself. She had learned the right way to use her gifts — to write.

There are different ways to release creative energy, and we can often be tempted to choose a quick, cheap, inauthentic route. This temptation is real with spiritual energy as well. What seems brave, pious, and zealous to us at first glance may not be the way the spirit has in mind at all. Much spiritual energy is like Wordsworth's comment on poetry: "emotion," yes, but "emotion recollected in tranquility."

There is wisdom here for anyone who has recently been charged up or specially touched by the Spirit. First, we ask ourselves, Why we want to shout from the rooftops. Then we wonder, Should I go evangelical with this? Perhaps the truly artful in life arises after recollection in tranquility?

When Jesus performed a mighty act, he almost always entreated those whom he had healed to tell no one. Occasionally he added that they should go to the temple and offer thanks, but his constant theme is, keep it quiet. No one did, of course. They ran about telling everybody that Jesus had healed them — not at all what Jesus himself had said or told them to do. Consequently, Jesus' reputation as a healer attracted large crowds whom Jesus preached to and spent no small amount of time escaping from. Much scholarly ink has been used up over the so-called "messianic secret," in Mark's gospel especially, but one cannot help but wonder if Jesus must not have been disappointed that people did chatter away and that his reputation was built on a misleading foundation?

When Mary was confronted with an angel of the Lord, and found that she was to be the mother of Israel's Messiah she pondered all this in her heart. Jesus: keep it quiet. Mary: pondering in her heart. These are the holy ways.

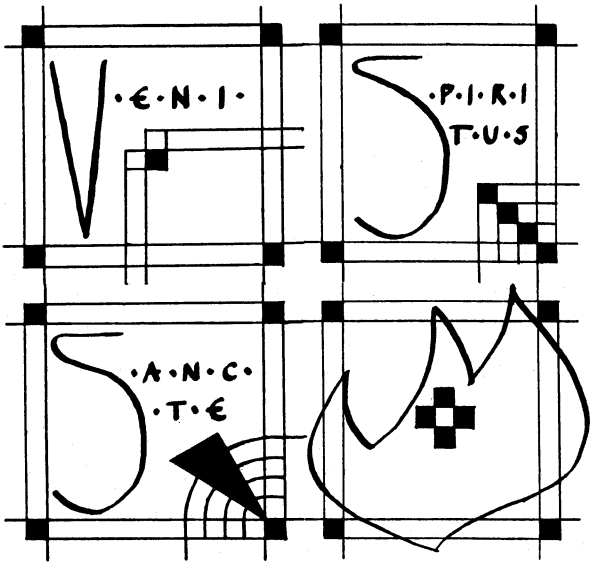
Do secrets and pondering hearts make us any less an evangel? Hardly, in fact, these holy ways may be our divine insurance, as it were, that we don't make too much of ourselves or that we don't spread the wrong story. The same holy woman I mentioned earlier says that she must remind many pastors and laity that they are called to work with God, not to be God. And that's the real point. Always our work as evangels, no matter how charged, is to be a kind of John the Baptist: someone who readies the road, as Archbishop Anthony Bloom puts it, for Jesus, then gets out of the way.

That's hard. It's really harder than shouting, or urging, or telling someone what he or she needs to do, or being like Coleridge's ancient mariner, constantly elbowing people to tell them what you have experienced. It's hard to let God walk down the road alone; we want to be there so badly at least on his left and his right taking in a bit of the glory.

The gifts, the special relationships, and the intensified relationships God gives us, then, are for exactly that — special personal gifts, for creating more special relationships, and for making more real and sure our affection for God. The way we thank God for these gifts, these holy treats, is not by shouting or elbowing or anxiously wishing that someone else would have what we have. All of these lead to self: "*I'm* not doing God's work," "*I'm* not living up to my promise," "*I'm* letting the group down," and so forth, as though *we* were doing God's work.

No one does God's work but God.

We are called, in the strong sense of vocation, to do human work: teach, preach, sell cars, clean house, doctor, nurse, offer produce, farm, research, sell insurance: "To do the work God had given us to do." Our special gifts of the Holy Spirit remind us that we do this work for a reason — and not alone. Our work is God-given, and we work with absolutely no distance between ourselves and God. No amount of talking or coercion does the real work of God: others discover that, as Paul put it, our lives are hid with Christ in God, when we in our human, everyday, insignificant way, show kindly affection one to another.



The Orator

I AM God's voice
crying out into the night,
slicing darkness with urgency,
rushing like a whirlwind
to storm your contentment.
I clamour, I declaim
with marvellous fecundity,
roaring like a rhetorician,
no soap-box orator
but a veritable Cicero,
a resurrected Churchhill
who demands
blood, sweat and tears,
deliverance from the Hun.

Does no one hear?
My tirade wakes the dead
but you sleep on,
immune to my grandiloquence.
See the signs of the times,
heed omens of disaster
that you may know
what *will* befall.
Awake, I say!

I change my tune,
becoming soft, subtle,
pleading like a lover
who stands forlorn
on separation's shores.
Gently, I caress your stubborn brow;
the furrows tighten
and you curl
into your cocoon,
leaving me
out in the cold.

I AM God's voice
whispering in your dreams,
disturbing midnight's silence
as I probe beneath the covers
to find your hidden self.
You toss and turn
but I squirm
into your heart
and will not be still.
You shut your ears
but I am there,
close as your own thoughts,
constant as the rhythm
of your blood.
My whisper echoes
like the oracle
but there is no deception —
my only revelation
is the truth
of what you are

When will you hear?

Elizabeth-Anne Vanek
Chicago, Illinois

A Book Worth Discussing: Liberating Faith*

Jay C. Rochelle
Assistant Professor of Worship and Dean of the Chapel, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

You have no doubt encountered the compelling simplicity of Bonhoeffer's thought in the terse but inviting prose of *Life Together* or *Cost of Discipleship,* the most read of his books. I have never forgotten my first days of reading *Life Together,* twenty-five years ago as an undergraduate. I read that book and *Cost* for the first time at lightning speed; the reading was an attempt to enact the way the words cascaded over me like a refreshing fall of water, strong and urgent yet powerful to slake some inner thirst. I have never felt less than that thrill in reading Bonhoeffer's works. My ministry is in many ways indebted to Bonhoeffer's work and example — even to naming a former campus ministry "The Community of the Spirit" with explanatory brochure citing Bonhoeffer's use of the term.

Did I say "term?" I meant, of course, *reality* — for the one sure thing in reading Bonhoeffer is that you are touching both the heart and the mind of the man. It is said of Noah that "he was a righteous man in his generation;" the Talmudic sages argued that in a better generation Noah might not have been so righteous, while in a lesser one he would have been a giant of faith; his righteousness was equal to the age. So it was with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and surely this is why his writings continue to fascinate us: his life and his work were married.

The thrill of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is in his clarity of purpose and simplicity of expression. Kelly is correct when, already on page 18, he tells us that DB's basic interest and spiritual search are "to discover the concrete, communal locus of the Christian life." Kelly puts into words my own felt debt to DB when he says, "If the theology of Bonhoeffer can have an uplifting effect on people, it is due to the strongly experienced sense of freedom and zeal for justice that his life and his writings have been able to evoke" (p. 31-32).

The book is in six chapters; the first chapter is the brief biography which seems to accompany most books on Bonhoeffer these days, a precedent set many years ago when John Doberstein began *Life Together* with a brief biography. This is important for some books on Bonhoeffer precisely because his theology and his life are so totally intertwined.

The theme of the book is in the title: liberating faith. Kelly devotes chapter 2 to a consideration of Christ as center of the liberated life, following the title of the English version of the Christology lectures. Chapter 3 discusses the liberation of faith and this glides into Chapter 4's consideration of faith as the liberating

**By Geffrey B. Kelly. Introduction by Eberhard Bethge. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. 206 pages. Paper. $8.95.*

power within and for the church. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the form of spirituality called for by the liberating faith discussed in the first four chapters, and Chapter 6 is a potpourri of junctures and correlations between the author's interpretation of Bonhoeffer and liberation theology, with thoughts concerning the Jews, solidarity with oppressed, and the search for nonviolence under the sign of the cross. So much for an outline.

Chapter 2 is the key chapter to the book. In it Christ is evoked as the "end of egocentricity" (p. 36), the figure in whom we are enabled to forget ourselves and be turned outward in service toward others. Freedom may involve sacrifice, in fact usually involves sacrifice, because it means relationships with others. In fact, the only way in which Christ can be known is through relationships. Thus, Bonhoeffer has given us a Christology which is relational and personal rather than ontological. The familiar theme is struck that Christ exists among us as Word, Sacrament, and Community, while yet maintaining the hiddenness of God. Christ always becomes Christ *for me*. Christ reveals to us the meaning of discipleship and, in going to the cross, has placed Christians in the tension of living between "the penultimate and the ultimate," that is, with the tension of knowing that God's future is pointed toward the unity of all people in joy and life, yet living in the everyday reality where this is not yet true. Through this line of reasoning, DB opened for us a way to view Christ in a concrete, earthy, gutsy, "religion-less" way in virtue of the crucifixion.

A problem shows up in this chapter. Kelly speaks of "thinking in two spheres," which he very kindly locates as a Christian problem; unfortunately, the development of a calcified doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in which the Kingdom of the Left (the political, governmental realm where God rules through law and order, and justice and civil righteousness are the norms) and the Kingdom of the Right (the ecclesial, organismic realm where God rules thorugh gospel and faith, and love becomes the norm) were radically separated for political reasons by defenders of the "German Christian" movement. It is a solidly Lutheran problem, and we should not be let off the hook. The problem is, however, not so much here but in the confusion I felt in reading the term "two spheres." It is possible to read Kelly as if he were saying "two spheres" in terms of religious and religionless interpretations of life, i.e. where one is concerned with the otherworldly in the former and this-worldly in the latter. This could be more clear; one gets the impression that Kelly slips back and forth between two different understandings, one in terms of the traditional understanding of two kingdoms and one in terms of this religion/religionless dialectic.

Second problem: Kelly argues that Bonhoeffer aimed for the overcoming of the dualities of this life in his interpretation of the figure of Christ (pp. 46-48). This is an arguable line of thought when one looks over the Bonhoeffer corpus, and I am not faulting Kelly for drawing this conclusion. The problem is in Bonhoeffer's writings themselves, and it is a problem I've never been able to solve to my own satisfaction. If Christ is the point at which one experiences the *coincidentia oppositorum* (to use the phrase of Nicholas of Lyra), then Christ has effectively supplanted the ultimacy of God and the ambiguities of which we're told in another part of this chapter — and indeed in Bonhoeffer's writings — are overcome in such a way that God might be known in him. But what does this do

to the motif of the *hidden* God? Is this not to argue for a form of total disclosure in Christ which renders God visible beyond the ambiguities?

My two quandaries at this point are, first, what happens to the ultimacy and the hiddenness of God in such a radical christocentrism? and second, where in fact does this leave the Jewish witness? Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures was christocentric in nature, and seems to have been so throughout most of his life (see e.g., *Psalms: Prayer Book of the Bible,* trans. James Burtness; and *The Old Testament as The Book of Christ,* trans. Martin Kuske). This fact needs to be taken into account when discussing his attitude toward the Jews, which has certainly been clarified in recent years by Eberhard Bethge and others; but the connection might well have been explored further between the christology as reflected in radical christocentrism — almost, one suspects, to the exclusion of a theo-ultimacy — and the development of concern for the oppression of the Jews, in this book. I repeat that this is not meant as a criticism so much of Kelly's book as it is a quandary left somewhat unrelieved by *Liberating Faith.*

Kelly picks up on the question of attitude toward the Jews in the final chapter, and he points out Bonhoeffer's shift in thinking to the reckoning that Christ's closest brothers and sisters were the Jews, along with the learning of a certain reticence about the triumphal portrait of Christ he himself earlier drew. One could only wish there were more about how he got from A to Z.

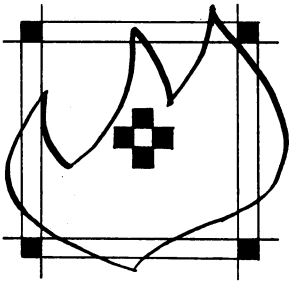
The book is an excellent introduction to the basic thought of DB. There is good discussion of the ways in which Bonhoeffer approaches faith (as a direct act, laying hold onto Jesus Christ, and not as reflection, preaching, or system by which we turn to God in Christ). An excellent footnote (no. 24 on p. 180) discusses the whole issue of faith-as-reflection and threads the way through this difficult aspect of Bonhoeffer's teaching, showing that reflection is a part of the Word-event as it intersects human intelligibility. In this way, reflection is seen not as activity by which we enter faith but one by which we express and internalize faith: rather like the classic definition of the uses of reason in evangelical theology.

The being of revelation, for Bonhoeffer, is the community of Christ. One either lives "in Adam," or "in Christ" in the community of faith. If one lives in the former mode, then people are objects to be manipulated; if one lives in the latter mode then others are known as they are known in God, and one breaks out of the self-love into love for others. In the end, there is no difference between being Christian and being truly human, for true humanity is lived toward others in hope and love. One might even live in "worldliness," provided that in that worldliness there is no loss of sight of the cross of Christ, for only through that vision is the worldliness salvaged from sinking into pure secularism. God and world are reconciled in Christ; therefore, the Christian must believe in both!

Chapter 5 is a jewel; it includes a clear discussion of what is a rather unclear topic, namely Bonhoeffer's concept of "nonreligious Christianity." Kelly points out the ambiguity in the use of "religion" and indicates its origin in the writings of Nietszche, Feuerbach and Barth. Though Bonhoeffer's critique cannot be held with the same vigor as he held it, there are still interesting and useful points for us today. Kelly proposes that Bonhoeffer is really contrasting religion and faith in the use of these

terms; I myself prefer to think that what Bonhoeffer meant by "nonreligious" Christianity is rather like what many seek today under the rubric of "spirituality:" interdependence, this-worldliness, a sense of dignity and responsibility, awareness, solidarity with the human community. Obviously, however, Bonhoeffer's own spirituality was not bereft of religious aspects: he wrote of maintaining his own faith through baptism, preaching, and eucharist, extolled the virtues of worship, confession, praise in community, was deeply imbued with a spirit of prayer and the discipline to pray. This he called the "hidden discipline," which of necessity — like so many of the theological terms — had to be quiescent in the world because of the need to listen rather than to speak, and because in so many cases it was difficult to speak in religious language and be understood. For Bonhoeffer, I think, religious language was a kind of shorthand he knew was no longer interpretable by the general populace and thus it was to remain hidden. The aim is clear: one lives toward a sense of the ultimate in the everyday, in the midst of the penultimates which we must deal with in our day-to-day existence. Bonhoeffer himself came late to the penultimates; a certain freedom occurred in his life, paradoxically, in the midst of his imprisonment; he was free at last to deal with the agenda most of us never leave: that of penultimate aspects of life; this was something which came late to him, since he was a model of the German theologian of the early twentieth-century.

Bonhoeffer remains a key figure for us because he made a pilgrimage of faith in an arduous time; Kelly's book is a lucid and well-written introduction to his thought, and it gives us the essence of the man: "It is Bonhoeffer's enduring significance to the church and contemporary society that in the most seductive threat to Christian faith in our century he was one with the Christ who suffers in all the victims of politically and militarily structured oppression" (p. 171).



Letters to the Editor

We hope to run this feature from time to time in order to encourage dialogue between our writers and our readers and to provide an additional point of interest. Because our printer requires a considerable lead time, letter writers are urged to send in their materials as soon as possible. The editor reserves the right to shorten letters where necessary.

Editor:

I found Ralph Quere's article ("Naming God Father,)" (Vol. 12, 1, pp. 5-14) well-written and very convincing. Based upon scriptural norms there is certainly a strong case for arguing that "Father" is a name for God rather than merely a metaphor, thereby making the addition or substitution of "Mother" erroneous. Quere argues consistently that none of these masculine names or pronouns means that God is male.

It is at this point that I have to disagree. Maybe for theologians or biblical scholars calling God "Father" and "he" does not mean that God is male. But for the vast majority of Christians who hear that God sent "his" Son and who pray to their "Father" God is most certainly male. No amount of good teaching will correct this understanding of God which people have gained from childhood on. How do you explain to a four year old that God is not a "he" like Daddy even though we call God "he" and "Father"? As long as we continue to name God only as Father and to use only masculine pronouns about the Deity, we will continue to have a male God.

I speak from my experience as a pastor who deals with people on a very practical, day-to-day basis. What good is the theological correctness of naming God Father if it continues to perpetuate a patriarchal church which excludes women and all those who are the marginal ones? If human fatherhood is an analogue which derives its name from God the Father as its source, where is the source of human motherhood? What affirms women in the church if only masculine terms qualify as "true" names for God?

I am not arguing that God did not indeed reveal Godself as Father in the Scriptures. What I am arguing for is that maybe it is time for a name change. With Scripture as our norm we can certainly find strong and convincing arguments that God came for those on the outside, including women, the poor, and the sick. To name God only "Father" is to limit all of who God has indeed revealed Godself to be.

Yours in Christ,
Susan Candea-Kromm

Pastor, St. John's and Immanuel Lutheran Churches, Ellis, KS

Editor:

Many thanks again for all *Currents* from Vol. 1, Number 1 on! That's what I call a theological journal for today!

The latest issue is, as its predecessors, fascinating from cover to cover. The two statements that I am questioning occur in the excellent presentation of Ralph Quere.

The first occurs on p. 7: "The Creator is not a creature — except in the man Jesus who is also God." The statement as quoted is patently, even if unintentionally, not true. "Except" implies that the man Jesus is a creature. Evidence going back to Chalcedon ("begotten, not made") and to our Lord himself (John 8:58) is so massive as to make citations unnecessary. I'm astonished that a theologian as careful as Quere should slip up like this.

The second statement that I question appears on p. 13: "Or, as in the Lord's Supper, cup means the wine in the cup and the blood of the covenant the wine *signifies* (Matt. 26:26)." (Emphasis mine). The evidence alluded to in the previous paragraph applies here too, going back to our Lord himself (in the Verba). Again, I believe this was a slip.

These slips are, of course, irrelevant to the author's important point: masculine references to God do not make God male.

Cordially in Christ our Lord,
Delvin E. Ressel
Ch. Col, USAF, Ret

Book Reviews



WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY? By Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M. New York: Paulist Press, 1984. 108 pages. Paper. $4.95.

This thin popular volume proposes to describe for non-professionals the current goals, accomplishments, and state of "Biblical Archaeology." It succeeds admirably in this purpose.

Two chapters discuss the uses and abuse of archaeology and detail the process and procedures of an excavation project. Four chapters deal with excavations which have figured in recent news, Ebla, Jerusalem, Capernaum and Nabratein. This is done in an authoritative, knowledgable, and well-written manner. A notable exception that proves the rule is the statement that "Capernaum was destroyed in the 7th century and was never rebuilt." (p. 59) Excavations by V. Tsaferis begun in 1980 discovered that the city was rebuilt several hundred meters to the east. Perhaps this volume was written some time before its publication in 1984. This only demonstrates the rapid advance of our knowledge.

The final chapter details the striking advances in methods and goals in the last two decades. Here we register a demur. Is there an imbalance here in the severe critique of "biblical archaeologists" of the past and the praise of current mid-80's work? "Biblical archaeology" suffers by the comparison but both reflect the then contemporary state of the art. It remains to be seen just how many of the far superior questions currently being asked are answerable by the data left us by the millennia. Yet we do expect current archaeology will fare somewhat better a generation from now than "biblical archaeologists" do today.

The bibliography is a fine set of suggestions for further reading in the popular and professional literature.

Carl Graesser, Jr.
Christ Seminary-Seminex
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Berkeley, CA

GENESIS 1-11. By Claus Westermann. Translated by John J. Scullion S. J. Minneapolis: Augusburg, 1984. xii and 636 pages. Cloth. $29.95.

GENESIS, WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO NARRATIVE LITERATURE. By George W. Coats. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. xiii and 322 pages. Paper. $21.95.

These two commentaries on Genesis form a complementary and epoch-making addition to the study of the first book of the Bible, perhaps indicating a transition to what will be known as the generation of scholarship after Gerhard von Rad.

Westermann's volume is the first of three on Genesis (volume 2 is scheduled for 1985 and volume 3 for 1986) to be translated from his massive *Biblischer Kommentar.* Famous for his contributions to form criticism on the prophets in general and Second Isaiah and the psalms in particular, Westermann's discussion of the form and structure of the primeval history is supplemented by truly extensive bibliography, a new translation with detailed textual and grammatical notes, exhaustive verse by verse commentary, and hermeneutical suggestions entitled "Purpose and Thrust."

Now retired from Heidelberg, Westermann has long been known for linking blessing to creation and distinguishing it from God's saving actions in history. He reports relevant literature from the ancient Near East, but also compiles information from anthropology, the history of religions, and other disciplines. Time and again he pauses to recount the history of exegesis or to write an excursus on Adam, Eve, the mark of Cain, the landing of the ark on Ararat — and many other subjects. He expounds not only the text of J and P, but also the story behind the text: in his view the myth that underlies Gen. 6:1-4 had as its leading motif the elevation of the human race by super-men or semi-gods who were the fruit of the union of gods and women. He contrasts this attempt to raise humanity's status with Gen. 11:1-9 (the Tower of Babel), where people attempt to transcend human limitations by means of technology.

He argues that Gen. 3 is not to be understood as the fall of historical individuals, but that it deals with primeval representatives of the human race and as such has no insuperable contradiction to modern, scientific research into the origins of the human race. Gen. 3 speaks of human beings and their limitations: fallibility, disobedience, sin, and separation from God.

Westermann uses the familiar distinction between the Yahwist and the Priestly writer, but he puts more weight than usual on the theology each writer inherited. "With every single theological, ideological, or ethical trait we must put the question, 'Is this characteristic of the theologian J (or P) or rather of the tradition at hand (= available) to him?' " He searches both for the tradition history that antedates the literary sources and the meaning that "R" (Redactor) gave to the whole we call Gen. 1-11.

At times Westermann's thoroughness exhausts the reader, and his opinions do not always seem to be the only possible conclusions on the basis of the data cited, or the line of argumentation is occasionally hard to follow. For some people 104 pages on Gen. 1:1-2:4a is just too much! However much one struggles with its bulk and with its specific conclusions, one cannot but be grateful for the inexhaustible treasure contained in this well-translated and superbly printed commentary.

While of much smaller size, the Coats' volume reflects the mature results of form critical research. This book is part of a commentary series (The Forms of the Old Testament Literature [abbreviated FOTL]) that restricts itself to formal or structural analysis and eschews fresh translation, verse by verse commentary, textual criticism and the like. Heretofore, Old Testament form criticism has had its greatest success with poetry, especially the Psalter and the Prophets. Now a new precision in describing narrative genres has been achieved.

Coats provides compact, yet complete and authoritative definitions of saga (primeval, Gen. 1-11, family, e.g. Gen. 12-25, heroic, e.g. J's story of Moses), tale (= the endangering of the ancestress in Gen. 12), novella (= Joseph story), legend (= Abraham's virtuous faith in his near sacrifice of Isaac), history (= Deuteronomistic history), report (= brief record of a single event, e.g. Gen. 35:8), fable (principal figures are often

plants or animals), etiology (= explanation of a situation or name), and myth (rare, but cf. Gen. 6:1-4). The volume concludes with an exquisite, six-page glossary of form critical terms.

After providing form critical outlines of the Pentateuch, Hexateuch (= Pentateuch + Joshua), the patriarchal theme (Gen. 1-50), and the primeval saga as a whole (Gen. 1-11), the author expounds individual pericopes, giving an analysis in each case of the genre, its structure, its setting, its intention, and relevant bibliography. Some of his most creative work is on the Joseph Novella (Gen. 37; 39-47), which he sees as the work of a literary artist and not as the product of oral tradition. This story functions as a bridge between the patriarchs and the Exodus, it illustrates the breach and reconciliation of a family, and in chaps. 39-41, called a digression, it presents a wise administrator whose characteristics can edify future generations. While Coats follows the documentary hypothesis through much of Genesis, he denies the usual distinction between J and E in the Joseph story though he admits small additions by a priestly redactor.

Our few summary remarks only scratch the surface of the wealth awaiting all students of Genesis in these two books. Congratulations to the authors and the publishers!

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THE LANGUAGE OF CANAAN AND THE GRAMMER OF FEMINISM. By Vernard Eller. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. 64 pages. $2.95.

Vernard Eller says this book is an even-handed and a political treatise on language and style; the finished product is an uncritical apologetic for a style of language that has political implications.

The book is predicated on a separation of language and culture that betrays a shallow understanding of Wittgenstein; it invokes Barth's concern with "the language of Canaan," but ignores the aniconic character of that language; it claims to distinguish levels of language in the spirit of Douglas Hofstadter but does not attend to the dynamic/systemic character of levels that are both within language and between language and world; and it imposes a value-based hierarchy that is ignorant of the "nesting" essential to adequate hierarchical-structural explantion of systems (including language) as constructive processes.

The use of language is a political act that cannot be understood apart from its socio-cultural background. That Eller ignores this background is evidenced in his definition of "sexism", by which he effectively exonerates anyone who does not intend to demean women or deny their identity. Sexism is more than individual bias or prejudice. It involves the perpetuation of structures that oppress women by systematic denial of power and voice. What Eller does is sexist because it canonizes language dominated by male imagery.

For Eller, using "their" with "everyone" as antecedent is equivalent to spelling "through" as "thru"; both are inadmissable violations of rules. He correctly insists that the shift in spelling would cause attentive readers to stop and wonder. If it is intended to cause the reader to stop and wonder, it is an effective use of language! In the case of inclusive language, to pause and become aware of political implications has everything to do with the topic at hand, especially if the topic is "language" or "God". Feminists have always had to pause and become aware of political implications in male dominated language.

Calling attention to Barth's point about "the language of Canaan" does not help Eller come to terms with "biblical ways of thinking and speaking." Barth suggested that we read the Bible along with the newspaper; the hermeneutic circle of liberation theology suggests that our interpretation has to be grounded in our action in our world. Acting in the world modifies both the world and our interpretation, which in turn modifies our action in and on the world.

Words are sexist apart from intent, because of the structures they perpetuate. Sexism itself has more to do with structure than intent. Modern feminists say that the established grammar reflects a reality that we can no longer accept. It renders women invisible.

The relationship between God and humankind is described biblically in terms of human relationship, including that of a mother to her child. There is no basis for saying that God has to be "masculine" for the "figure" of God's relationship with humankind "to work." There are bases for arguing that to restrict God to masculine imagery is to ignore part of biblical imagery and to render both God and the imagery more difficult to understand. To restrict God to masculine imagery is to reveal a stake in perpetuating structures necessary for a male dominated world. In biblical terms, that is nothing less than idolatry.

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TYPOS: THE TYPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW. By Leonhard Goppelt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. 264 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

Goppelt's famous book, originally a doctoral dissertation, presented in 1939 at the University of Erlangen, is in English at last, thanks to the labors of D.H. Madvig. He has translated the edition of 1965 which carries a fresh section on "Apocalyptic and Typology in Paul," bringing the discussion up to that date.

Since his death in 1973, Goppelt's works have been making their way into English. Widespread use has been made of his *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times* and of his *Theology of the New Testament* (2 volumes). Our thanks to translator and publisher for adding *Typos* to the corpus of Goppelt works available in English.

In Chapter 1 (Introduction), Goppelt writes that Paul was the first person to use the Greek word *typos* (adj. *typikos*) as a term for the prefiguring of the future in prior history, and he presents a rapid review of the history of exegesis as a context for the ensuing discussion of typology.

Chapters 2 and 3 review Palestinian Judaism (apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and the rabbis) and Hellenistic Judaism (Philo, Aristobulus, Letter of Aristeas, 4 Maccabees, and Wisdom of Solomon). Goppelt discovers a wealth of typological interpretation in the rabbinic presentation of eschatology: creation/new creation, Adam/perfected humanity, Moses/redeemer, David/Messiah, Edom and Amalek/Syria and Rome, Sabbath/world to come. Goppelt summarizes by describing the Biblical interpretation in the pseudepigrapha and rabbis as basically literal-symbolical-typological, while Philo's is basically symbolical-allegorical. Philo speaks of "types" but when he does he is contrasting them not with "antitypes" in future history but with "archetypes" in the invisible realms above.

Chapter 4 and 5 focus on the synoptic Gospels and Acts and the way they view Jesus and the Church.

Paul (Chapter 6) says that God dealt in a typical way *(typikos)* with Israel in the wilderness, in a fashion that is a pattern for his dealings with the church in the last days. Paul speaks much about redemption but little about redemptive history. He deals with the church's relationship to

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Christ, more than he does with Christ's person or work in and of itself. The only typology regarding Christ which Paul develops is the comparison with Adam.

Goppelt treats Hebrews in Chapter 7 and the Gospel of John in Chapter 8. Goppelt discusses Acts, James, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude in a series of appendices.

From beginning to end Goppelt struggles against the view that the Gospel is a philosophical or apocalyptic scheme. History is not a mechanical process in which one cosmic event triggers another. We have to do with the living God, with his faithfulness from age to age, his electing call, his revelatory word, his seeking our faith.

It is easy to disagree with Goppelt on some detail. For example, Hebrews and the Gospel of John seem to exhibit strong signs of gnosticizing or platonizing modes of thought. Or to put it another way, the spatial and vertical dimensions seem at least as powerful as the horizontal and historical in these writings (and in Ephesians and in numerous hymns in the New Testament). But whatever disagreement one may have, we must speak mostly and overwhelmingly of gratitude at the appearance of this classic study of the Old Testament in the New.

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A TRANSLATOR'S HANDBOOK ON THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS. By Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida. London, New York, Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1983. 364 pages. Paper. $3.90.

Anyone who is serious about reading Hebrews in the original Greek and indeed anyone who enjoys words and reads Hebrews in English will revel in the treasures gathered in this handbook. Designed especially for translators wrestling with details of the text and the difficult task of rendering it accurately into other dialects and languages, this book and the series in which it stands must be commended to a much wider readership.

The author of Hebrews enjoyed words and sentences, and his (or her?) work is carefully crafted. The handbook is a marvelous linguistic companion, although its comments are devoted to the smaller bits and rarely suggest how one paragraph connects with another. Vanhoye's conclusions on the structure of Hebrews are presented in a very brief appendix of a page and a half.

But what we have here is a mine of unusual commentary on the words and phrases of Hebrews, not historical commentary telling us how Homer or Isaiah or Philo or Origen used these words but a commentary alerting us to some of the ways our contemporaries in other cultures think and speak and hear.

In the discussion of 4:12-13, the authors do not discuss the possibility that the section may be part of an early Christian hymn. That kind of comment is not their concern. They focus on the words. They remind us that it is easy to translate the more palpable things of creation such as "joints and marrow" in many languages but far more difficult to translate what we call "soul and spirit." In some cases "soul" means "What causes life" and "spirit" is "that which reaches out to God." What does it mean to call what God has said "sharper than a two-edged sword"? "Two-edged" in some languages refers to a liar or hypocrite. What must we try to convey? That "there is nothing in the total personality which can possibly be hidden from the revealing nature of what God says."

These discussions are accessible to all. The entire book is clearly written. Not a single foreign word of any language interrupts the march of English across the pages, although the authors have worked with the original biblical languages and numerous modern tongues.

We so easily miss what the Bible says because we are familiar with the words. This book could be read devotionally. It mulls over the words, cracks them open, reveals their meanings, compels readers to thing again, envision anew.

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ANATOMY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL. By R. Alan Culpepper. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. 266 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

This is two books for the price of one. That it is two books is also the price of our being near the birth of the movement to read the Scriptures with the techniques of narrative analysis. Culpepper knows that few have been educated equally in literary criticism and in Biblical Studies. He therefore takes pains to introduce his intended readers (biblical scholars) to a communicational model adapted from Seymour Chatman (and before him from Roman Jakobson), which shows how a story is transmitted from an author to a reader. And in addition to teaching about narrative analysis (or literary criticism) he has written a book about the Fourth Gospel.

Every story presupposes a teller, the story, and an audience. Chapter 2 focuses on the teller or "Narrator and Point of View," distinguishing among real author, implied author, and narrator, and discussing a broad range of possibilities surrounding the matter of point of view.

Chapter 3 ("Narrative Time") inquires into the ordering of material in the Gospel, the way some parts of the story are told more quickly than others (duration), and how some events are repeated (frequency).

The plot of the Gospel (Chapter 4) revolves around Jesus' achievement of his goals of revealing the Father and of authorizing the children of God while his fortunes apparently change for the worse. By means of characters (Chapter 5) seven different responses to Jesus — and to the Gospel itself — are held up to scrutiny, and the reader is gently swayed to the evangelist's perspective.

Chapter 6 on "Implicit Commentary" takes up the very important matter of the author's use of misunderstanding, irony, and symbolism. Misunderstandings warn the readers not to mistake superficial for real meanings. Irony summons the reader to share the author's elevated point of view on the story. Symbolism is another way the author communicates to the reader that things are more than they seem to be.

In Chapter 7 Culpepper discusses "The Implied Reader" and infers from a careful reading of the text that the readers were expected to know most of the characters in the story. The readers did not live in any of the places named in the Gospel, knew Greek but not Hebrew or Aramaic, used the Roman rather then the Jewish system of reckoning the hours of the day, knew the Old Testament but not its regulations about ritual purity. The author was working to move his Christian readers to accept his own understanding of Jesus as the divine revealer, to share his concept of authentic faith, and to see Jesus as the divine *Logos* (descending and ascending).

Culpepper has no axe to grind against historical study, and quotes with approval (pp. 29-30) a criticism of the New Critics, who taught that novels and poems are to be understood only in terms of intrinsic categories and that knowledge of the historical context or situation of the author is neither useful nor relevant. Culpepper most certainly does think that the techniques of literary analysis developed painstakingly over the years by teachers of "secular" literature have been unduly ignored by biblical scholars, and he is in the vane of those who want to remedy our ignorance. He has done a real service in producing this volume with its clear introduction to difficult matters.

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Correction:

The price of *De Septuaginta: Studies in Honor of John William Wevers on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* is $25.00, and not $45.00 as we indicated in our February review (p. 60).

FROST AND FIRE. By Elizabeth-Anne Vanek. Canton, Ohio: Life Enrichment Publishers, 1985. 136 pages. Paper. $4.95.

Drawing on her own theological insights and biblical scholarship, Elizabeth-Anne Vanek presents the reader with two casts of characters in this book of poetic meditations. Nicodemus, Thomas, Mary, Martha, Barnabus, as well as non-biblical characters act out their familiar scenes, but the poet changes the perspective of the biblical narrative for the reader. Thus, those poems are like favorite melodies transposed into a minor key, haunting the reader with the intimate revelations of the actors and their sudden recognition of the overwhelming presence of God.

Vanek's dominant theme is expressed simply in "A Sign": "The sun burns bold / while snowflakes fall . . . / strange harmony of frost and fire, / eloquent homily / that . . . / all things / are possible indeed." These signs, echoing the message of the Gospel of John, direct those who experience their mystery to belief in the divine nature of Jesus. Vanek's New Testament characters search for signs — the wounded side for Thomas, the rolled up pallet for the cripple, the paradox of rebirth for Nicodemus. But many of her poems concern those caught in a 20th century search for signs — the mother of a feverish child; the pet-like, obedient surgical patient; the 15 year-old, not quite innocent Debbie; the couples living in seemingly incongruous but concentric circles.

Often these characters find no overwhelming presence of God, but an aching void within themselves. They are dulled to despair by unanswered petitions, convinced of God's absence. Vanek dares to speak of despair, of the inability to comprehend signs. She deplores that we must celebrate "Eucharist / tamed into / thin / flavourless / wafer / of comfortable rite," and we must keep the baby in the cradle "because he is safer there . . . easier to worship there . . . less demanding there."

When Jesus speaks through the poetry, complaining, laughing, and taunting, Vanek challenges the reader to view him through different eyes. He has a sense of humor. In the empty tomb, Jesus performs a "marvellous conjuring trick / . . . Houdini-style . . . / The head cloth He rolled up / into a spherical joke." They all thought he was dead. "But He, chortling, said: / . . . THE LAST LAUGH IS MINE / FOR ALL ETERNITY . . ." The reader is consistently left in awe of the divine humanity of Jesus, his will to touch the lives of his people, and the inexpressible anguish he suffered to do so.

This book is a very powerful acclamation that sign seeking is universal, and that waiting for what is possible, sometimes in frustration, is worthwhile.

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ANTIOCH AND ROME. By Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier. New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1983. 242 pages. Cloth. $9.95.

Meier and Brown dig away like a couple of eager archaeologists. They dig a hole here, dig a hole there, and after digging a series of probes, trenches, or squares — all some distance from one another — they try to reconstruct the whole which the various pieces represent, filling in the gaps by acts of the imagination.

Meier has analyzed the ancient Christian texts associated with Antioch (reports in Acts and Galatians, the Gospel of Matthew, and the letters of Ignatius). Brown has probed documents related to Rome (especially Romans, 1 Peter, Hebrews, and 1 Clement).

At the outset they suggest that it is not helpful to think in terms simply of Jewish Christianity (not interested in the Gentile mission) interacting with one another and struggling for ascendancy in the early church. (That way of construing the dynamics of early church history casts Paul in the role of hero and victor.)

Instead the authors propose that the New Testament itself shows *at least* the following types of what they call "Jewish/Gentile Christianity".

Group One, consisting of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts, insisted on full observance of the Mosaic Law, including circumcision (e.g. ultra conservatives at Jerusalem and the Jewish

Christian missionaries opposed by Paul in Galatians).

Group Two, consisting of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts, did *not* insist on circumcision but did require converted Gentiles to keep *some* Jewish observances (e.g. the Jerusalem apostles James and Peter).

Group Three, consisting of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts, did *not* insist on circumcision and did *not* require observance of Jewish food laws (e.g. Paul).

Group Four, consisting of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts, did not insist on circumcision or observance of the Jewish food laws and saw no abiding significance in Jewish cult and feasts (e.g. Stephen and the Hellenists, the authors of Hebrews and the Gospel of John).

Starting with these assumptions about the varieties of groups and positions in the NT period, the authors attempt to sketch the history of two prominent early Christian communities.

Histories of the early Christian church are notoriously weak and conjectural in their treatments of the decades after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Luke and Josephus provide guidance up to that point and then leave us in the lurch. Leonhard Goppelt *(Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times)* and others made a fresh start by assigning early Christian documents to various geographical areas and then analyzing the forms of Christianity displayed in those documents in order to cast light on the final third of the first century and the first half of the second.

Meier and Brown recognize that the time is ripe for a fresh synthesis regarding Antioch and Rome. They have filled in many blanks, suggesting a fresh imaginative construct regarding early Christian history, and interpreted important early documents along the newly-suggested trajectories and in terms of their hypothesis regarding several groups in the earliest church. Their book is informative and powerful and will provoke admiration, gratitude, and controversy.

Part of what makes the work especially interesting and provocative is the authors' consciousness of the ecclesiastical relevance of their historical scholarship. They strongly disagree with vigilanteeism in the Roman Catholic Church which aims at a pure and uniform teaching, and they offer a portrait of a rich and healthy diversity present in the church from the beginning.

They also disagree strongly with those presumably Lutheran and Protestant scholars who regard Paul's law-free gospel as "the dominant factor in the Christian mainstream" and who exalt Galatians or the entire Pauline corpus as a canon within the canon. In these investigations of Meier and Brown, Peter emerges as the great bridge figure, holding the center, mediating among the various parties and persons to the right and left. He functioned in the 80's and 90's of the first century as the great founder and authority for the Christian mainstream both at Antioch and at Rome.

This is an important book both for its information and its provocation.

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CHRISTIANIZING THE ROMAN EMPIRE. By Ramsay MacMullen. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984. viii and 183 pages. Cloth. $18.00.

MacMullen, Professor of Roman History at Yale University, has published a notable series of books in recent years. His most recent is a logical sequel to his book *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (Yale, 1981). In that volume he described the character of non-Christian religion in the Roman empire on the basis of inscriptions, archeological evidence, and relevant ancient texts. The last two chapters dealt with conversion and the dynamic (i.e. expanding) eastern cults. An Epilogue, "The Manner of Death of Paganism," pointed to a problem: just when did conversion cease and life in the new religion begin? Did Christianity prevail because it was intrinsically better, or for another reason?

The present volume seeks to solve the problems that MacMullen posed some four years ago. He defines conversion as that "change of belief by which a person

accepted the reality and supreme power of God and determined to obey Him" (p. 5). After sketching what paganism believed in Chapter II (the summary will surprise many not conversant with the ancient world), MacMullen makes clear that Christianity differed from the religions about it in its "inherent antagonism." The Christian God was antagonistic to all other gods and to any who did not give him allegiance. In most other respects Christianity would not appear strange to its world; its liturgy, morals, monotheism, and organization all look familiar.

Then what converted people to Christianity? The going answer is "superior teaching or doctrine." MacMullen challenges that perception. Most pagans knew little, if anything, about Christianity. What teaching or preaching there was took place to small groups of people in homes, shops, etc. Christian intellectuals had little effect on their world. The sort of intellectual conversation described in Minucius Felix was rare. Indeed, it was even dangerous to give evangelistic sermons in public.

It was rather the experience of great divine power in miracles that converted people prior to Constantine. MacMullen presents a long series of citations from the fathers and other pertinent literature to support that view. Exorcisms, laying on of hands, and some spectacular events were the great powers that drew people to Christianity.

It all changes with Constantine. Converted by a dream, Constantine had tremendous effect. He ordained toleration for Christianity. The church became wealthy under his (and his family's) patronage. Tax breaks were decreed. To be a Christian became stylish — and it promised social and financial rewards. In short, people converted to Christianity for the same reasons that their descendents converted to Islam at a later age. After A.D. 407 non-Christians were even viewed as outlaws, a threat to the state, and proper objects for violence. Coercion became a mode of conversion.

MacMullen means to write history, not theology (according to his own disclaimer, p. 1). At several places in the book he laments the spotty character of the sources. He admits to being surprised by some of his own findings, but argues that the historian must go where his sources take him. (I wonder what he thinks of theology, since he implies that theologians act otherwise!).

Be that as it may, this is a book that teachers of the New Testament and early church history dare not overlook. Its revisionist conclusions compel a reexamination of the sources and received opinion.

MacMullen often writes mystifying little notes. I cannot refrain from noting his reference to the "highly mysterious goings-on in the apartment house across the street" in Paris (p. vii). The historian in me feels cheated at such a tantalizing reference. But such little touches give the book a human face. If you have any bent at all for history, you will enjoy this book — and learn from it too. You cannot ask for much more.

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ÖKUMENISCHE DOGMATIC: GRUNDZÜGE. By Edmund Schlink. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983. 828 pages. DM 98.

This book is Schlink's *Lebenswerk.* As Heidelberg professor of systematic theology he has been "Mr. Lutheran" in European ecumenism during the post-war years. He was the invited Lutheran "peritus" for the sessions of Vatican II. When saying "ecumenical" in Europe, however, one must remember that the term there is focused on the three great confessional traditions: Roman, Evangelical, Orthodox. Practically that means Catholic, Lutheran-Calvinist, and Greek Orthodox. So his *Ecumenical Dogmatics* is ecumenical only in terms of those three confessional traditions. The spread presented by American (or, for that matter, world-wide) denominationalism is not "on camera" here.

Schlink asks: Where to start an *ecumenical* dogmatics? His answer: At the gospel of Jesus Christ, this historical human being, and his fate. Gospel is both "the action of God to and through Jesus"

and the "active Word whereby Jesus acts today."

Central to this dogmatics is a theme that Schlink has pursued for many years in the theological marketplace, viz., paying attention to the *form* of theological assertions. Primary is the awareness that all (Christian) theological assertions are in response to God's address to us in the Gospel. Thus human response to God's address takes the form of worship (prayer and doxology); to fellow humans it is witness (confessing and teaching). When we get to doctrinal statments the form is dogma (assertions about our confession) and dogmatics (teaching about the dogma). Schlink's special gift is his work with "Strukturveränderung," the structural shifts that occur when Christian speech moves from one "Grundform" (primary form) to another. The usefulness of this structuralist procedure has gotten hardly any attention in ecumenical discussions. Schlink's dogmatics here seeks to make up for that neglect.

So then, how to proceed? First of all, be clear of the task of ecumenical dogmatics. It cannot be centered in merely one of the three confessional traditions and then including as much as possible of the other two hook or crook. Nor can it be antiquarian, i.e., going back to the church's early centuries when things were ostensibly more unified. Nor can it be a least-common-denominator of what gets current consensus, nor a Schleiermacherian unifying of theological assertions around religious experience.

Instead Schlink follows this route: 1) Start with the Bible's *manifold* assertions about God's saving action. Do not try to harmonize the diverse statements, concepts, or historical epochs within scripture itself. 2) Give attention to the differences and contradictions in dogma within the individual confessional traditions themselves. 3) Check the *de facto* role which Bible and dogma have in the life of a particular confessional church. 4) Check the canon-within-the-canon of each of the three groups as that is reflected in the terms chosen to be central for their theological speech. 5) Brainstorm the "not-yet," the possibilities for new dogma from the Bible's manifold assertions. This has current relevance as the gospel moves into new territories of the planet (Africa and Asia). 6) If all of this has been done well, we will have *new perspectives* for assessing congruence and incongruence among the partners in dogmatics. For structural differences surface that are not substantive contradictions, but are capable of translation from one structure to another. 7) Finally, push for the "elementare Grundstrukturen," the elemental structures in which faith comes to expression, for "in theological speech about sinners, the form is not the *doctine* of sin, but *confession* of sin. The foundational structure for speech about God is not the *doctrine* of God, but the *worship* of God."

Schlink offers only *Grundzüge* here, the fundamental outlines of an ecumenical dogmatics. "The full job," he says, "is endless, but not hopeless." Witness the 828 pages for just the basic outline.

Should this *magnum opus* be translated into English? After vacillating between yes and no, my current answer is affirmative. First on the negative side: 1) It is European in its ecumenical ballpark with its focus on the three classical confessional traditions. English-speaking Christianity in the North American continent and in the younger third world churches is much more diverse, on the surface, at least, by virtue of its being filtered through American denominationalism. Schlink doesn't reckon with this. 2) Since it thus bypasses the evangelicals as prime ecumenical partners, good though it is, is it good enough for the English-speaking/reading public? In this public evangelicals, though not a confessional tradition, are a major voice. In fact, if one were to count all the evangelicals within the major main-stream confessional traditions, they might be the majority voice. 3) It is long and almost impossible to abridge. It is itself an abridgement, *Grundzüge,* and non-fictional works of such length do not have, I suspect, a promising sales future for publishers.

On the positive side: 1) It is Schlink's *Lebenswerk* and Lutheran publishers in America have some calling to render it into our language just as an act of historical theology if nothing else. For he was "our" #1 ecumenist in Europe for a whole generation. 2) His new tool, structural

analysis of theological statements with an eye to their grounding in our response to God's address, is a gift to the ecumenical scene and relatively unused as far as I know. Might that grounding in the language of worship, prayer, doxology, repentance, witness, and confessing have hookups with the pragmatic bent of American Christianity? Perhaps. 3) Finally, for Lutherans of the USA this ecumenical dogmatics would be a fine follow-up to the monumental ecumenical event of 1983, the joint statement on Justification by the USA Lutheran/Catholic dialogue team. Therefore, *imprimatur,* let it be printed.

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Crossings
St. Louis, MO

DEATH AS DEPARTURE. By Godfrey C. Nicholson. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983. 231 pages. Paper. $10.50.

The subtitle further defines the topic: "The Johannine Descent-Ascent Scheme." And the fact that this is a volume in the SBL Dissertation Series prepares the reader for the approach and format: history of research, canvas of the literature, definition of terms, exegesis of relevant passages, cautious conclusions.

Nicholson's study is solid, and his presentation is clear and forceful. He shows that the scheme of the descent and ascent of the Revealer is basic in the Fourth Gospel and that the death of Jesus (and much besides) cannot be understood apart from that scheme.

One place where Nicholson breaks fresh ground I have trouble with him. I wonder whether he is stealing a leaf from Markan studies when he examines the disciples in John's Gospel and finds them wanting, even in the opening resurrection narrative (John 20:1-18). Here his exegesis runs against the grain of the obvious meanings, as he concludes that Peter and the Beloved Disciple "believed" only that Jesus' body was missing.

He has not examined carefully enough the possiblity that the author of the Fourth Gospel is not completely enthusiastic in his recommendations of the Spirit-Paraclete in the post-ascent period. Nor has he done very much in the way of linking descent-ascent in the Fourth Gospel with the use of the same scheme in other Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.

Nevertheless, this study is painstaking and very useful. It is good to have it.

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

Briefly Noted

Interpreting a document in the light of its social setting is one of the most recent fruitful developments in biblical studies. In **What Are They Saying about the Social Setting of the New Testament.** (Paulist, $3.95), Carolyn Osiek gives a clear and coherent summation of the method and results of this development. She concentrates on the cultural interaction between Judaism and Hellenism, economic and social status of early Christians, and family structure and church organization. Christianity in Palestine may well have arisen among the poor and social outcasts, but in the urban culture of the eastern Mediterranean it attracted artisans, people we call middle class, and even some wealthy people. The author summarizes the dispute between Theissen (who holds that patriarchalism is operative in Christianity from the beginning) and Schüssler-Fiorenza (who holds that patriarchalism first emerges in late New Testament writings). This helpful book is an excellent road map into a promising new type of research. (Edgar Krentz)

Easter. (Winston, $19.95). Beautifully printed, full-color reproductions of masterpieces from the brushes of painters who flourished between 1300 and 1700 (with one exception) are accompanied by brief Scriptural quotations, leading the viewer-reader-mediator from the Last Supper, through the events of the Passion, to Easter, Pentecost, and Ascension. (Robert Smith)

After Fundamentalism. By Bernard Ramm. (Harper, $9.95). Let the author tell you what he's up to : "My basic methodology is to first review the impact of the Enlightenment on a given doctrine. Then I review how Barth handles the doctrine in view of the criticism of the Enlightenment. Finally, I show how Barth's stance may be a paradigm for evangelical theology." In R's opinion, Barth offers to evangelical theology a paradigm of how best to come to terms with the Enlightenment.

New commentary series proliferate. The most recent to appear is **A Good News Commentary** (Harper & Row, edited by W. Ward Gasque). Six volumes appeared at one time to initiate the series: **Mark.** By Larry W. Hurtado ($9.95); **John.** By J. Ramsey Michaels ($9.95); **Philippians.** By F.F. Bruce ($7.95); **1 and 2 Thessalonians.** By Earl F. Palmer ($6.95); **Hebrews.** By Donald A. Hagner ($9.95); and **James.** By Peter H. Davids ($7.95).

The volume by Hagner is typical. The full text of the Good News Bible is printed out, followed by an initial paragraph that summarizes the main point of each section and appended notes that clarify individual phrases and the like. The introduction treats the usual matters of author, time, place of origin, and intention. In addition, every volume is provided with a line map that illuminates the geographic setting of the volume. The theological position is conservative, but not obscurantist. Lay people will find the commentary very helpful and at times challenging. (Edgar Krentz)

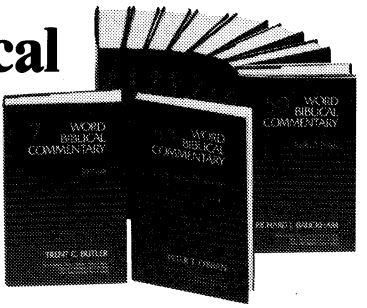
Have the Promises Failed? A Literary Analysis of 2 Baruch. By Gwendolyn B. Sayler. (Scholars Press, $10,50; $6.95 for members). S., a Lutheran pastor, produced this work as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Iowa. 2 Baruch was written at the end of the first century C.E. as a response to the destruction of Jerusalem. According to her findings, it vindicates God's power and justice and shows how the Jewish community could survive in the aftermath of the Roman destruction. God's covenants with Abraham and Moses were still efficacious, according to 2 Baruch, and the author — contrary to the usual apocalyptic mentality — had a positive assessment of life in this world. The book promises that leaders will arise to replace Baruch, and that the Torah is the basis for continued existence in the world.

The Communicator's Commentary is initiated with volume 9, Gary W. Demarest's interpretation of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus (Word, $17.95). The commentary is sermonic in character, containing as much personal witness (in the "I" form) as strict biblical interpretation. Based on the King James Version, it has many illustrative paragraphs, many of which will date rapidly. I cannot imagine the pastor who would use this material, unless he or she is so destitute of imagination as to be helpless before the biblical text. Save your money for works of substance. (Edgar Krentz)

God of the Lowly: Socio-Historical Interpretations of the Bible. Edited by Willy Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann. (Orbis, $9.95). The ten essays in this volume, first published in German, attempt to communicate a picture of "real" life in the biblical period. They eschew discussion of the relationship between God and individuals and focus instead on a socialist understanding of the biblical world. The authors conclude that the Bible has the poor as its real subject and that the two testaments offer hitherto undiscovered paradigms of a subversive praxis. They hold that an investigation of the economic, social, political, and idological situation of the biblical writers (a materialistic reading) is indispensable for an understanding of the texts.

The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Thomas Nelson, $24.95). 1890 marked the first publication of this complete concordance to the King James Version, and 1980 saw the 38th printing of this great tool, with some added features, by Abingdon. The present volume is different in that the type has been reset by computer, instead of reprinting it one more time by photo mechanical processes. This procedure allowed the correction of errors, the addition of cross references to other modern translations, and the achievement of clearer type and a much improved layout. One helpful feature of the original Strong's, retained in this edition is a 200+ page supplement, keyed numerically to the concordance, that

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Married & Mobile. By Kathy Haueisen. (Augsburg, $5.50). The author is currently a seminary intern, but the book was spawned by her own family's earlier struggle with four moves in five years. Our mobile society puts special strains on spouses who "trail along" on a move and on two-career couples. This well-written book will help many communicate their moving pains better, sort out their differing priorities, and assess the impact of moving on their marriages.

Creation in the Old Testament. Edited by Bernhard W. Anderson (Fortress, $6.95). Here are 10 major essays on the theological assertions about creation throughout the Hebrew Bible by prominent American (two by the editor) and German scholars. The most famous stems from Hermann Gunkel and was first published in 1895. It deals with the influence of Babylonian mythology on the biblical creation story. Other essays link creation to such themes as righteousness, wisdom, and liberation.

A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies. Edited by Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs (Eisenbrauns, $25.00). Collected in this volume are 22 essays by outstanding scholars dealing with 6 crucial areas: the date of Jeremiah's call; his relationship to Deuteronomy and the reform of Josiah; the foe from the North; questions of composition history (most of the debate has been about the prose "biographical" materials and the prose sermons); issues centering on his call and confessions, and new methodologies. While all of them have been published elsewhere before, many of the earlier publications are not easily accessible, and five of the essays appear here for the first time in an English translation. Perdue's masterful survey of recent scholarship is also published here for the first time. His even-handed summaries are quite valuable, as is his distinction between a psychological-biographical approach to Jeremiah and one more content to restrict itself to tradition-historical questions.

The History of Ancient Israel. By Michael Grant (Scribner's, $19.95). G. has written a number of histories about ancient peoples (Etruscans, Romans) and individuals (St. Paul, Jesus, the twelve Caesars), with no apparent specialization in Old Testament studies. His nine-page discussion of the patriarchs and his fifteen-page account of the conquest and the period of the judges — two of the most controverted eras in Israel's history — are largely a retelling of the biblical story, with little awareness of or reference to the enormous body of literature that has been developed about these times in contemporary scholarship. While he adopts the findings of historical criticism (e.g. a Second Isaiah [though he has him writing at the "same time" as Haggai and Zechariah], the source hypothesis in the Pentateuch, and a late date for Daniel), G.'s story of Israel from the earliest times to the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. simply does not measure up to such competitors as John Bright, Siegfried Hermann, and H. Jagersma.

New Testament & Mythology and Other Basic Writings. By Rudolf Bultmann. (Fortress, $12.95). Schubert M. Ogden has here collected and translated seven essays of B. (1884-1976) that were written between 1941 and 1961. The title essay is the single most discussed and controversial theological writing of our century. According to Ogden it shows that B. was, above all, a Christian theologian who did all of his work even as historian and exegete in the service of the church and its witness of faith. The other essays explain or defend the systematic theological position classically formulated in the programmatic essay.

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Naming the New Church

John H. Tietjen
President, Christ Seminary-Seminex

What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

Do you agree with Shakespeare's Juliet? A name for the new Lutheran church is among decisions yet to be made, presumably because more important matters need to be decided first.

Yet names can express identity and could help shape self-understanding. Look at the names we have given to our seminaries. The geographical designation in Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary says much about that seminary's mission to serve West Coast Lutheranism. Wartburg Theological Seminary connotes the founders' intention to ground that seminary solidly in biblical, Lutheran theology. Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago says much about that seminary's concentration on education that is theological in an urban setting. Christ Seminary-Seminex seemed a logical choice to exiles who sought to magnify Christ against an array of legalisms.

What is the identity, the self-understanding we want to express in the name of the new Lutheran church? To most people the word "Lutheran" has to be in the name. Some want to recover the adjective "evangelical." The words "evangelical Lutheran" appear in the names of most of the churches that are members of the Lutheran World Federation.

I fear that many of those who insist on including "Lutheran" in the name for the new church want it for the wrong reason. They want it because it will identify their church as a denomination separate from others. They want it for the very reason Luther railed against its use.

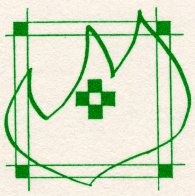
What is our identity? Are we one particular denomination among others in our world? Haven't we been telling ourselves that "Lutheran" means a confessing movement in the body of Christ rather than a denomination with institutional walls that separate us from others?

We could choose a name that expresses our understanding of ourselves as members of the one church of Jesus Christ who have a particular confession to make. Taking our cue from some others, we could call ourselves the "Church of the Augsburg Confession," adding our U.S.A. location to distinguish us from churches with that name in other parts of the world. It is precisely because the three uniting churches share a common confessional understanding that they are forming a new church and others who also call

themselves Lutheran are not involved in the process. The Augsburg Confession is determinative for that confessional understanding. Why not say so in the name of the new church?

There are of course other names by which to express that identity. "Evangelical Catholics" — that is how we have been designating ourselves more and more these days. Instead of one denomination among others we have been affirming our place in the one holy catholic and apostolic church throughout history and everywhere in the world. And because we make the witness of the Reformation our own, we make it clear that genuine catholicity is always evangelical. A name like "Evangelical Catholic Church" would give us an identity which we would have to work very hard to become.

Throughout our history in the United States we who call ourselves Lutheran have been struggling with our identity. Having left behind ethnic and cultural self-definitions, those of us who are forming a new church have found our identity in the confessional witness of the Lutheran confessional writings, particularly the Augsburg Confession. We are on our way to a more ecumenical understanding of who we are. The name we give our new church could reveal a great deal about who we think we are.



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