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CURRENTS in theology and mission

Most Kind and Gentle Death

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Most Kind and Gentle Death

Only a St. Francis could transform the final enemy into an intimate friend. He who talked to the birds and flowers bade even death to praise God (LBW 527, stanza 6). For him death had become a welcome escort to lead God's child back home to heaven. But only in this sense, and only because the resurrected Christ has blazed the trail as our forerunner, can the grim reaper become most kind and gentle.

Hiromasa Mase alerts us to our frequent denial of death and proposes that only those who face up to death can live a full life. Instead of feeling trapped on an inescapable trip to death, we ought to perceive the significance of our life from the standpoint of death. Living and dying are both part of the created order. If death can become a communal event, those who die and those who are with them at death share an awareness of their common destiny and have their whole being illuminated by the goal of death. The hospice movement offers the possibility for terminally ill patients and their families to be supported by a caring community in action.

Martin Luther held that all people have a right to education, and his influence accounts for the rapid rise of public education in Protestant nations. **Norma Everist** believes that Luther's theological views on justification, Scripture, and the priesthood of all believers account for his stance on education. The Reformer's educational method was inductive and Socratic; he was sensitive to children's activity and inquisitiveness. To follow him means to love and educate children through home, state, and church.

Our final article on Mark this year offers a way to interpret his many miracles. **Stanley N. Olson** observes that Mark does not reject all attention to miracles, but he subordinates them to the cross. Teaching, forgiveness, and miracles are all evidence that the kingdom of God is present in Jesus. Miracles are unusual instances of God's working and demonstrate that God is at work in real life

and mundane matters, such as ill health and parental anxiety. The article concludes with a theological survey of the Gospels for Pentecost 2-8. These miracle stories highlight the nature of trust in the midst of stress, faith as the way to perceive God's working in the everyday world, and God's ability to use us to share his kingdom even if our own faith is weak.

Mark Wegener presents for us a lucid analysis of Northrop Frye, a celebrated literary critic of the Scriptures. While historical criticism and structuralism look through the text to penetrate the space "behind" it, Frye has tried to map the space "in front of" the text. Myths are not untruths nor are they stories about the gods. Rather, myths are the stories that tell a society what is important for it to know. Frye identifies the Exodus and the Resurrection of Jesus as "comic myths", in which the hero overcomes all obstacles to his desired objectives. Each phase in biblical revelation is not an improvement on its predecessor, but a wider perspective on it. Each phase is a type of the one following it and the antitype of the one preceding it.

How does the church meet the world — as an institution or as the people of God? **Curtis Beaird** sees institutions as dependent, conforming, helpless, self-centered, and compromising. The church, on the other hand, is characterized by the pooling of gifts, by its risking nature, and by its caring disposition. This article offers members of congregations and other ecclesiastical groupings an opportunity for self-analysis. Try this on for size: Any organization constructed to relieve God's children of responsible freedom dies even as it is built.

Christian unity begins in friendship. For all the value of ecumenical dialogues and interdenominational organizations, friendships allow us to live out Jesus' command to love God with our whole self and to love others as ourselves. **Travis DuPriest,** in fact,

insists that our friendships are outward and visible signs of God's inward and invisible gift of undeserved love. Through Christ — and through friendships! — a glimpse of heaven is ours today.

Edgar Krentz identifies for us his first choices in commentaries for each of the books in the New Testament. In future issues we hope to present similar bibliographic updates for other areas of theology, ministry, and mission. **Elizabeth-Anne Vanek** provides one poet's interpretation of Psalm 91, and **Roger Fjeld** writes this issue's presidential column.

In our tradition "Alleluias" are hidden during Lent, only to reappear with the mighty words, "The Lord is risen." At Easter this year, face up to your own death, taunt it, and compel this kind and gentle friend to join our most uncommon chorus: "Oh, praise him! Oh, praise him!"

Hallelujah!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Death and Dying: Towards an Ethic of Death

Hiromasa Mase
Keio University, Tokyo

The word death has become almost unmentionable in the West, particularly in the United States, according to Arnold Toynbee. "Death is 'un-American'; for, if the fact of death were once admitted to be a reality even in the United States, then it would also have to be admitted that the United States is not the earthly paradise that it is deemed to be (and this is one of the crucial articles of faith in 'the American way of life')."[1] Instead of "die," present-day Americans tend to say "pass on" or "pass away." In this euphemism lies hidden a loss of belief in human dignity. If we are aware of human dignity, should we not act like human beings and come face to face with death?

The Oblivion of Death

Towards the end of his essay, Toynbee says that our sense of dignity may be outraged by knowledge of our mortality; yet, so long as we retain some sense of dignity, we ought to die like the human beings we are, and not like one of "the beasts that perish."[2] Disregarding death is equivalent to evading life. Death is so much a part of life that the two should be conceived as forming a single whole. If life is the foreground, death is the background and sets its mood and tone. As the LCA social statement, "Death and Dying," puts it, living and dying are both part of the dynamic processes of the created order.[3] Therefore, only those who are honestly addressing the fact of death can lead a full life. Death is, indeed, the mode in which we live.

Death is dealt with in such a sanitary way in modern society, however, that we are usually kept far away from it. As soon as a person dies in a Japanese hospital, he or she is carried away to a storage room to be burnt to ashes the next day. It is considered improper to touch a dead or dying person on the street until an attendant from the city health department arrives on the scene. An ethic of death cannot even be discussed in such an environment. Japanese people in the old days used to "give water" to a dying person. That is, they moistened the lips of the dying person with a wet swab of cotton. In so doing, they passed the moment in silence. To moisten the lips of the dying person was all they could do. This habit of "giving water" (*shinimizu wo toru)* is proof that a moral practice for death and dying once existed among the Japanese, who must have thought it a source of shame to leave the dying person to someone else. Today, however, there exists no such practice or virtue. Bio-ethics, the

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[1] Arnold Toynbee, "Changing Attitudes towards Death in the Modern Western World", in *Man's Concern with Death,* ed. by Arnold Toynbee and others (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), p. 131.

[2] Ibid., p. 132.

[3] "Death and Dying: A Social Statement of the Lutheran Church in America," adopted by the Eleventh Biennial Convention, Louisville, Kentucky, September 3-10, 1982, p. 1.

A new recognition of death.

"ethics of life" as it is called, is taught everywhere, but nowhere is there taught a "thanato-ethics" or ethics of death.

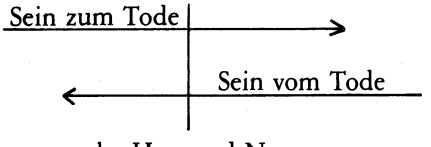
In an age in which life can be manipulated, our interest in protecting life grows stronger. But since death is the reverse side of life, why should we not talk about death without hesitation as part of life? Why should we not improve our clinical studies of death and conduct death education at school and at home as well? If we do not feel the need to do so, perhaps it is because we have become oblivious to the necessity of dying and indifferent to the psychological misfortunes that could befall us.

Reverse Conception of Death

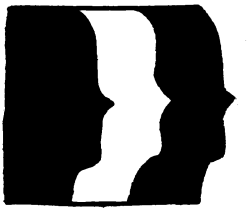
The full-bodied recognition of death as "a mode of life, a way to be," was stated clearly by Martin Heidegger in his existential analysis of death. Heidegger, in dealing with the question of how life in its relation to death could be understood, produced quite a new understanding of death, based on an analysis of time *(Zeit)* as working backwards from death.[4]

Death is sure to be viewed as a misfortune if it is perceived as based on physical time. From the perspective of physical time, human life definitely moves towards death. In this sense, human life is, in Heidegger's terms, "Sein zum Tode." Heidegger points out, however, that a new recognition of death can be achieved on a completely different level by considering our being from the opposite side of physical time. We are thus able to see our being from the standpoint of death, what Heidegger calls "Sein vom Tode." By this is meant that we can recognize the fact that our own being is illuminated by our death. In other words, in existential anticipation the future is brought into present. "Heidegger does appear to believe that, in a quite literal sense, a human being *is* already its future, its 'not-yet'; and thus he finds no difficulty in concluding that *Dasein's* end is already present while he is alive," writes Paul Edwards in his *Heidegger on Death*.[5]

I call this a reverse conception of death, a conception which indicates a very modern way of thinking that calls for attention. It shows, firstly, that only as beings inseparable from death do people have an authentic way of living, and secondly, that we can experience Time in existential self-awareness from the reverse side of physical time.



[4] Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit.*
[5] Paul Edwards, *Heidegger on Death* (La Salle, IL.: The Hegeler Institute, 1979), p. 19.



From a religious point of view, this conception of the Here and Now is known as the Eternal Now – the Now which is connected with eternity. This experience of Time in the Here and Now is an experience of the world *sub specie aeternitatis* (from the point of view of eternity).

Religious conceptions are always endowed with a goal or *telos. Telos* in Christianity usually refers to the kingdom of God and in Buddhism to *nirvana,* both of which are symbols of eternity. The kingdom of God is the symbol of the state of blessing over and above time, while *nirvana* is the symbol of the state of blessing through emancipation. Both indicate that the aim of human life should be supreme bliss, endless serenity and eternal peace of mind. In Buddhism, however, *nirvana* is not conceived as an ontological state; for, in part, *nirvana* is not known. It cannot be known as a Beyond. As radically open as Buddhism is to the salvation reality of *nirvana,* Buddhism is closed to a transcendent reality. For with the appearance of *nirvana* all knowing comes to an end, and reality disappears. "Do we not have here an amazing coincidence with eschatological faith," asks Thomas Altizer in his eassy, "Nirvana and the Kingdom of God." "For the appearance of the Kingdom of God brings an end to the reality of the world; for the God of eschatological faith is the God of the End, and therefore the manifestation of his Kingdom occurs only through an annihilation of 'reality', and he is known in faith only through an abolition of self, of existence *(Dasein)*, and of sin."[6]

Whether in Buddhism or in Christianity, the "Here and Now" means the Eternal Now, and for a believer, to live now is to live the 'now' of the Eternal Now in one's subjective self-awareness. So it may well be said that the question of death and dying is already solved in the Buddhist's or Christian's life, which therefore is a life of fullness. Thus it is nonsense to talk about life beyond death; for fullness of life means that eternal life has already begun in the Here and Now. That is why Basho, the *haiku* poet, when asked by his disciples to write his final *haiku* on his deathbed, said that he would not write it since he had always written every *haiku* as if it would be his last. Living like this, with a heightened appreciation of life because the fact of death has been honestly faced, deserves to be called "living to the fullest."

Death is not an event which puts an end to life. Death does not lie in the future, but in the Here and Now, and affects every act in the life of a person who is living *vom Tode* rather than *zum Tode.* This is what the Japanese Zen Buddhist Basho and the German existentialist Heidegger wanted to show us.

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[6] Thomas J. J. Altizer, "Nirvana and the Kingdom of God", in *New Theology No. 1,* ed. by Martin Marty and Dean Peerman (N.Y.: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 161.

Death can be a communal event.

Dying Within a Caring Community

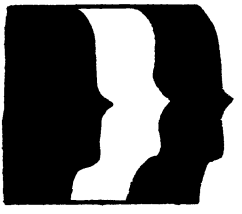
In a particular way, death means the isolation of the deceased since death is a lonely affair. Aspects of aloneness characterize *Dasein* in its being-unto-death. Death, however, need not be an isolating event which occurs only to a given individual. Instead, it can be a communal event. In this way the one who is dying and those who are with him at his death share an awareness of their common destiny and confront the acceptance of death. This is a very important factor in our investigation of death. Instead of dying alone and lonely we need to experience dying in community, that is, a caring community. As Daniel E. Lee's study book published by the Lutheran Church in America, *Death and Dying: Ethical Choices in a Caring Community,* puts it: Sometimes those who are near death express fears and doubts. Sometimes the situation calls for praying together and sharing familiar and meaningful words, including cherished passages of Scripture. Sometimes the dying person may wish to say goodbye. Sometimes no words are needed, for simply being there and sharing the moments in silence is the most meaningful thing of all. And sometimes the touch of a hand and tears shed together bring comfort. To be ourselves and to be open and responsive to the dying person is all we can do. This exactly what caring community is all about.[7]

In any case, theology teachers can and should play a role in developing such caring communities. By the same token we should pursue the question of death, not as an individual problem, but as a community issue for those on the health care team, including the physicians, nurses, family members, pastor, friends and neighbors. This health care team has a significant role to play in the healing process. Dying within a caring community may have spiritual benefits and even reduce pain.

From a philosophical viewpoint, pain is much more emotional than physical. Aristotle, for example, excluded pain from his list of the five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. A caring community ministers not only to the senses but especially to the emotions and therefore provides an environment in which death is not lonely and in which therefore the pain of dying is shared and thereby reduced and made tolerable. After all, an individual life, in the context of a caring community, is a life of solidarity and sharing, and death is not looked upon as unnatural.

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[7] Daniel E. Lee, *Death and Dying: Ethical Choices in a Caring Community,* (N.Y.: Division for Mission in North America/Lutheran Church in America, 1983), p. 58. The LCA social statement on "Death and Dying" is printed here as "Appendix B."



Is Life Good and Death Bad?

Hospitals are supposed to help people live, not die. But does "helping people live" necessarily have to mean prolonging the dying process by artificial means and not letting them die? Modern medical treatment can sometimes seem to be playing with life by abstracting illness as mechanical dysfunction. Physicians may sometimes seem indifferent to the illness as an affliction of the whole person. A mechanical theory still underlies medical treatment. The approach taken by the physician is the same mechanical one which Descartes proposed. Since the development of life-prolonging machines, physicians have become insensitive to the humanity of their patients; physicians always feel obliged to take remedial action in every case and can not just relate personally to the patient.

"Health care is not limited to curing disease and repairing injury," says Daniel Lee in his *Death and Dying;* "equally important is caring for and relating to the patient as a person."[8] This dual function is strongly emphasized in the LCA social statement, "Death and Dying."

Modern medicine, however, still continues its treatments as if life were good and death bad even in the case of a patient who has turned into a vegetable, so to speak, and can no longer really be considered a human being. Modern science often can predict the length of time a person will live, in the manner of divine Providence, but by prolonging life it is challenging divine Providence. Is this not *hubris* on the part of medical science?

It is certain that we die. Even after having one's life prolonged by medical techniques, one finally does die. Alone in a hospital with the terror of death, one ends one's life. Rare today is a physician who is willing to talk in a warm, personal way with a dying patient or a friend with whom a dying patient might reminisce and share the joys and sorrows of life. In fact, the process of dying has been made quite lonely and mechanical. 70-80% of those who die in city hospitals in Japan do so in a mechanized, de-humanized environment.

What is the Modern Way of Dying?

As death in the hospital becomes increasingly common, clinical studies of death have made progress in finding ways to die humanely in hospitals. In all these studies the importance of caring for and relating to the patients as a person is stressed. The need to "care" along with "cure" is emphasized. In the case of terminally ill patients, such as those suffering from an incurable form of cancer, it is said to be the ideal that they go home before the "last moment" and die in the

[8] Ibid., p. 55.

Hospice programs.

company of their loved-ones. I certainly concur and would say that my mother's death at home on her own *tatami* mat, soaked, as it was, with family memories, was much preferable to my father's death, his life having been prolonged artificially by various means in a hospital. Everyone around my mother "gave water" to her by moistening her lips with a wet swab of cotton and shared her last moments in silence. For most dying patients the kind of loving environment my mother enjoyed is probably best found today in a hospice.

A hospice is a medical institution where terminally ill patients and their families are supported by a caring community in action. Along with physicians and nurses, hospice programs typically involve chaplains, social workers, dieticians, and other health care professionals. These programs deserve our support.

The first modern hospice was St. Christopher's in London. When visitors today ask how St. Christopher's began, they are told the story of the young Pole who was dying of cancer in a London hospital. "There ought to be a better way to take care of people in your condition," a nurse said to him one day. When that cancer patient died he left his savings of over a thousand dollars to begin a fund to start a hospice for the terminally ill. The young Pole said to her, "I will be your window in such a building." A staff member of St. Christopher's adds, "With that as a start, we had no choice but to go ahead and create a place where patients could be surrounded with a more pleasant life."[9]

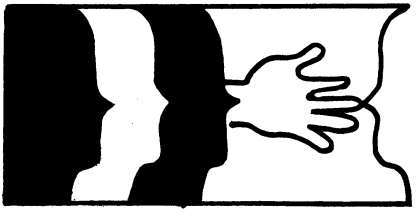
St. Christopher's opened in 1967, and two years later a home-care program was cautiously instituted. Since then, hospice programs have developed throughout Europe and the United States. There are now more than 1,000 hospice programs in the U.S., and the number is growing rapidly.

Japan has them too. The first one was Seirei Hospice at the foot of Mt. Fuji. The Japanese public has paid much attention to this hospice. Seirei's program combines home care by visiting nurses with hospital care in specially equipped units. The doctor, who in the case of Seirei is a Christian, as well as the nurses, the pastor, and the other members of the health care team, care for and relate to terminal cancer patients as persons. Since the objective of Seirei's program is the pursuit of life to the fullest, the families of patients are allowed to stay with them so that patients and members of their families may experience the dying process together and share the time that remains. Home care is strongly emphasized because patients can thus be freed from the awful feeling that "this place is the end." In short, patients are allowed

[9] Parker Rossman, *Hospice: Creating New Models of Care for the Terminally Ill* (N.Y.: Association Press, 1977), p. 84.

free movement in and out of the hospice. This concept of a "hospice without walls" brings us back to the basic idea that patients should die on their own *tatami* mat like my mother. Therefore I would say that a hospice is the most suitable locus for an ethic of death in modern society.

In Japan cancer is the number one cause of death. Fortunately the cancer patient can best be cared for at a hospice in the final stages of the disease. Eventually a common way of dying in Japan will be in a "hospice without walls." If the same holds true for the U.S., then, as the LCA social statement "Death and Dying" recommends, "death education" should start being done at home, at school, and at church without further delay.



Luther on Education: Implications for Today

Norma Everist
Associate Professor of Educational Ministry,
Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA

There are three main sources which give us a glimpse of Luther the reformer of education. The first two are primary sources written by Luther. The first, "Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of All the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools," was written in 1524. The second, "Sermon on the Duty of Sending Children to School," was addressed to preachers, having been sent under the name of the Honorable Lazarus Spengler, Counselor of the City of Nuremberg. It was to be read among citizens of that area in 1530. The third source is a work written in the United States in 1889, entitled *Luther on Education* by F.V.N. Painter, including his translation into English of the above works by Luther. Painter at the time was Professor of Modern Languages at Roanoke College.

It is not my purpose here to criticize Luther on his social stands in general, nor do I wish to criticize him on the basis of our present educational situation or the present field of developmental psychology. He is a man of his time, and we are people of ours. Compared to our present situation, his writings are full of old prejudices: rantings against the papists, negative references to Jews and Turks, primary attention to men, with women and children subordinate. We cannot use Luther, a man of his time, in a prescriptive way for our day.

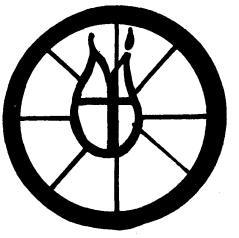
An example of an inappropriate use would be Luther's words in his letter on behalf of Christian schools, "In my youth this proverb was current in the schools: 'It is no less a sin to neglect a pupil than to do violence to a woman.' It was used to frighten teachers. But how much lighter is this wrong against a woman (which as a bodily sin may be atoned for), than to neglect and dishonor immortal souls, when such a sin is not recognized and can never be atoned for?"[1] To conclude that we should consider sexual abuse insignificant would be an inappropriate use of Luther. As with St. Paul, where considering the times, we find remarkable the Galatians 3:28 passage, so with Luther we find a remarkable man of his times speaking to this world on the reformation of education as well as religion. We hear him follow the above quote by remarking passionately, "O eternal woe to the world. Children are daily born and grow up among us, and there are none, alas! who feel an interest in them, and instead of being trained, they are left to themselves."[2] These words pierce the heart of his time, but they penetrate our hearts as well.

We must also read Painter in his context, a time when large numbers of Roman Catholics imigrated to these

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1 Martin Luther, "Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of All the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools" 1524 in F.V.N. Painter, *Luther on Education.* (The Lutheran Publication Society, 1889) St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928. p. 178.

2 *Ibid.,* P. 178.



shores, establishing parochial schools. He had a belief and a fear that "it is the purpose of the Papacy to secure universal supremacy . . . every Catholic layman, whether he realize it or not, is bound by his connection with the Church to yield in all things obedience to the Pope. His ballot and the education of his children are subject to the Roman pontiff."[3] Such fear of allegiance to Rome lived on for decades in this country, at least until the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960.

Luther: A Man for His Time

Some have said Luther brought about as important a reformation in education as in religion. There is a divergence of opinion among Protestant and Roman Catholic writers when they characterize the essential elements of medieval education. This divergence of opinion extends to their portrayal of the condition of education in 16th century Europe. It is true that during the century before the Reformation schools probably were as numerous as during the century following. However, for the greater part of the Middle Ages there were three well-marked social classes: clergy, nobility, and peasants. Painter says, and others agree,[4] that no general effort was made to reach and elevate the common people by education. Knowledge was held in and dispensed from repositories, often monasteries. Through careful dispensation, the clergy retained power over both peasants and nobility, because they kept salvation and knowledge in their hands.

It is true that the waning Middle Ages came close to the decisive emancipation which the Renaissance and Reformation were soon to bring about. What the Reformation contributed is the right of all people to exercise liberty of conscience.[5] The Reformation places *evangelical* Christianity against *ecclesiastical* Christianity, for the aim and end of all the church's activity is not the institution but the person. Knowledge is not the property of some, retained and dispensed primarily for the sake of glorifying the institution. All people, Luther would say, have the right to education.

Painter notes that after the Reformation, the center of culture moved northward. Intellectual freedom brought about by the Reformation flourished in Germany and England. Protestant nations were the first to establish a system of public schools to oppose papal teaching, which had made education a function of the church. This tradition of public education, which developed among Protestant nations after the Reformation, proved to be the foundation of public education in the United States. The Puritans, in 1647, just one

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3 F.V.N. Painter, *Luther on Education.* (The Lutheran Publication Society, 1889) St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928. p. 35.

4 Gustaf Marius Bruce, *Luther As An Educator.* Minneapolis: 1928. p. 24.

5 Painter, p. 10.

Education becomes the interest...of the church.

century after Luther's work, in the General Court of the Massachusett's colony, passed the following order:

> It being one chief object of the old deluder Satan to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue . . . that learning may not be buried in the graves of our fathers in the Church and Commonwealth, it is therefore ordered that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall report to him to write and read . . .[6]

Other colonies followed the example of the Massachusett's Commonwealth, and thus popular education in this country sprang directly and quickly from Protestant principles.

Education and Its Relation to Daily Life

Luther was an educator, a professor, theologian, pastor, husband, father, and church leader. Throughout his life, by his own definition, his identity as teacher was central. The activities he engaged in for teaching and for promoting education were substantial, but his contribution to education cannot be separated from his work as a theologian. In his theology we find clues to his essential beliefs about education, especially in the concepts *sola gratia, sola fide,* and *sola scriptura.*

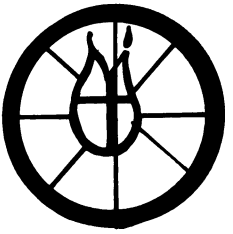
His insistence upon justification by grace through faith means the gospel is no longer an external matter. Through forgiveness of sins, and the joy that comes with the soul's restoration to its Creator, the Christian conscience is transformed. The Christian conscience does not need an infallible ecclesiastical authority to authorize an interpretation but can discern and appropriate truth on its own. This establishes the foundation for people to exercise their right of liberty of conscience and provides a basis for inquiry in education.

In Luther's concept of Scripture as the rule of faith, and in his insistence that it be placed in the laity's hands, Christians were not severed from the teachings of the past. With the restoration of Scripture to the laity for their study, Scripture became a potent force.

Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers creates a connection between religion and daily life. The freedom Christian people experience thrusts them forth into the world in their vocation. Yet how can people fulfill those vocations without education? No one can be left in ignorance, no matter what their class. Education becomes the interest of the state no less than that of the church. Its aim should be to fit the young for

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 71-72.



useful living in every relation. In his address to mayors and aldermen Luther writes,

> "Now if (as we have assumed) there were no soul, and there were no need at all of schools and languages for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one consideration alone would be sufficient to justify the establishment everywhere of the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order to maintain its temporal estate outwardly the world must have good and capable men and women . . . . Now such men must come from our boys, and such women from our girls."[7]

> "If the government can compel such of its subjects as are fit for military service to carry pike and musket, man the ramparts, and do other kinds of work in time of war, how much more can it and should it compel its subjects to keep their children in school."[8]

Luther goes on to make a more personal appeal to those charged with governing the people:

> There must be civil government. For us, then, to permit ignoramuses and blockheads to rule when we can prevent it is irrational and barbarous. Let us rather make rulers out of swine and wolves, and set them over people who are indifferent to the manner in which they are governed. It is barbarous for men to think thus: "We will now rule; and what does it concern us how those fare who shall come after us?"[9]

This is an issue, too, for our day, when many people believe nuclear warfare to be inevitable. Can you imagine Luther's words to those who say, "We will now rule; what does it matter what comes after us? Who cares if we educate our children?" But for Luther, a schoolmaster was as important to a city as a pastor. He could do without mayors, princes, and noblemen, but not without schools.

Luther was familiar not only with the importance of education, but also with its difficulties. He says,

> An industrious, pious school-master or teacher, who faithfully trains and educates boys, can never be sufficiently recompensed, and no money will pay him as even the heathen Aristotle says. Yet the calling is shamefully despised among us, as if it were

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7 Martin Luther, "To The Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools" 1524 in *Luther's Works,* Walther I. Brandt, ed, Volume 45, *The Christian in Society II* Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, p. 368.

8 Martin Luther, "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School" 1530 in *Luther's Works,* Robert C. Schultz, ed, Volume 46 *The Christian in Society III* Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, p. 256-7.

9 Luther, "Letter" in Painter, p. 182.

Luther...repeatedly urged the establishment of schools for girls.

nothing, and at the same time we pretend to be Christians. If I had to give up preaching and my other duties, there is no office I would rather have than that of school-teacher.[10]

Although Luther mentions only boys here, he repeatedly urged the establishment of schools for girls, which besides religious instruction were to include reading and writing. He says, "And would to God each town had also a girls' school, in which girls might be taught the Gospel for an hour daily, either in German or Latin." Luther declared that the maintenance of civil order and the proper regulation of the household require "the establishment of the best schools everywhere, both for boys and girls."[11] Although he often spoke only of sons, this inclusive position of Luther on the education of daughters is remarkable for his time. Even in my lifetime people have wondered aloud what is the point in sending daughters to college.

This was a significant breakthrough. No longer was education merely for boys who might enter the priesthood. No longer was education merely for nobility. Luther goes beyond mere pity for the poor. He assumes they can learn. He cares about the rich, the poor, men, women, boys, and girls from all stations of life. He honors them by his care.

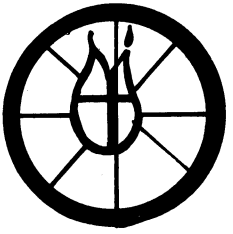
This was not an incidental interest. It was directly related to his theology. "Just as certainly as the call to God's kingdom seeks to lift us infinitely above everything that our everyday duties by themselves could give us, just that certainly the call does not take us away from these duties but more deeply into them."[12] This call is the forgiveness of sins. Life organized around the forgiveness of sins encompasses Luther's idea of call. It is primarily gift, and only secondarily duty. From such a call, from such forgiveness, the Christian is able to move forth into vocation.[13] Education for vocation is education for life and throughout life.

The Role of the Home

Luther's clear conception of the constitution of society was a stable triangle: family, state, and church. The functions of each together constituted the sum of human duty. The base of the triangle is the family, in which the young are to be trained for civil life and the kingdom of God. Luther makes this connection in his exposition of the Fourth Commandment in his *Large Catechism:*

> Out of the authority of parents all other authority is derived and developed[14] . . . For what is a city but

[10] Painter, p. 142-3.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.
[12] Einar Billing, *Our Calling,* translated by Conrad Bergendoff. Rock Island: Augustana Press, 1958. p. 6.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 8 and 11.
[14] Phillip E. Pederson, *What Does This Mean? Luther's Catechisms Today.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979. p. 79.



a collection of houses; what is a principality but a collection of towns and cities . . . where the father and mother rule badly, and let the children have their own way, there neither city, town, village, district, principality, kingdom, nor empire can be well and peacefully governed.[15]

The ongoing care for and education of children in the home, city, and province was a consistent concern for Luther. In this he might be compared to Horace Bushnell who, in the mid-19th century, challenged Jonathan Edwards in New England. Edwards' prevalent writings emphasized the total depravity of humanity. In light of his anthropology and his understanding of God's sovereignty, Edwards believed nothing could be done for children but to hope and pray that they might experience conversion during seasons of revival. Otherwise they would be lost.

Horace Bushnell more and more began to trust the influences of family life and a Christian home without giving up his belief that human nature was corrupted by sin. He came to believe and state as his philosophy of Christian education: "that the child is to grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise."[16]

In this Bushnell and Luther had a lot in common. Luther believed the child was sinful, but he was committed to ongoing nurture of the baptized child of God. He also realized the difficulties of the task. He says,

> Some parents are so lacking in piety that, like the ostrich, they harden themselves against their own offspring. There is no irrational animal that does not care for and instruct its young in what they should learn — except the ostrich. In my judgement, there is no other outward offense that in the sight of God so heavily burdens the world or deserves heavy punishment as this very sin which we commit against the children by not educating them.[17]

On another occasion Luther remarked;

> Such great works your (children) can do . . . if you send (them) to school . . . (think of your child as) a foundation and cornerstone of temporal peace on earth . . . it is a shameful contempt of God that you do not bring up your children to such an excellent and divinely appointed calling, and that you strengthen them only in the service of appetite and avarice, teaching them nothing but to provide for the stomach, like a hog with its nose always in filth, and do not bring them up to this worthy station and of-

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15 Painter, p. 114-115.

16 Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (1888) New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967. p. 4.

17 Luther, "Letter" in *Luther's Works Vol. 45.* p. 353.

Becoming a parent is risky business.

fice. You must either be insensible creatures, or else you do not love your children.[18]

For people of his time, who no doubt worried about their children in the world (not unlike parents today who bid the church youth program keep their children safe from the world, for they fear they cannot), Luther says, "But you say, 'How if it turns out badly, so that my son becomes a heretic or villian?' For as people say 'education means perversion.' Well, you must run that risk; but your labor is not lost."[19]

Becoming a parent is risky business. Luther bids mothers and fathers, perhaps especially fathers, to take it seriously. "No one should become a father, unless he is able to instruct his children in the Ten Commandments and in the Gospel, so that he may bring up true Christians."[20] In our time the temptation is to use Luther's "As the Head of the Household . . ." material for a proof-text to show fathers should indeed be heads of households, otherwise the family and nation will disappear in avarice. But Luther did not write so much to prove men should be heads of households as to say to all heads of households what they should do for the care and education of their children. I shall not be persuaded we have accomplished the latter until I see as many articles on child care in *Field and Stream* as in *Working Women.*

Luther has more to say about parents and children:

> Parents are not free to do with children as they please . . . This is a sad evil, that all live on as though God gave us children for our pleasure or amusement, and servants that we should employ them like a cow or ass, only for work, or as though all we had to do with our subjects were only to gratify our wantonness.[21]

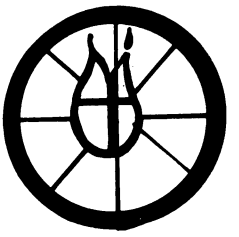
Whose is the child? The child is God's and not ours: not our possession, product, or protege. Luther said that our children are not so entirely our own that we can withhold them from God: they are more God's than ours. Through education our children enter into the world's work in risky, bold ways, but always held carefully in the hand of their creator, redeeming, God. "God is a wonderful lord. His business is to take beggars and make them into lords, even as he makes all things out of nothing, and no one can disrupt him in his work."[22]

Luther and Methodology

For Luther, the Word of God was central. The soul can do without everything except the Word of God. When one has that, one has food, joy, peace, light, art,

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18 Luther, "Sermon" in Painter p. 248.
19 *Ibid.*, p. 236.
20 Painter, p. 119.
21 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
22 Luther, "Sermon" in *Luther's Works Vol. 46.* p. 250.



righteousness, truth, freedom, and every good thing in abundance. But this did not keep people protected from the world. On the contrary, "Whoever is to teach others, especially out of the Holy Scriptures, and rightly to understand this book, must first have observed and learned to know the world."

Luther called for humane discipline rather than brutal adherence to authority. He made an invaluable contribution with his use of the Socratic method: the "What does this mean?" question, a radical question. In 1529, Luther prepared the catechisms: first, a set of posters, with clear, concise explanations, which became the *Small* and *Large Catechisms* as we know them today. They spread across Europe, ideally suited for church and family needs. One edition which reached England had a great impact on students at Cambridge and Oxford Universities. The catechisms contributed to an international revival of Christian religious life at all levels of society, from the peasant farm in Germany to the educated classes at top levels of English society. Because of their widespread use, Roman authorities felt compelled to place the *Small* and *Large Catechisms,* together with about 20 other works of Luther, on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1529, the first year the catechisms were published.

It was not long before governmental approval of the catechism, by this time translated into every European language, evolved into governmental control. The catechism became a weapon in the hands of church and state authorities to enforce loyalty to Lutheranism and obedience to state regulations among the clergy. Failure to know the catechism, that is, not being able to recite it, was sufficient reason in some areas to keep people from Holy Communion. Just that quickly was the inductive, evangelical "What does this mean?", Luther's love and passion for the people, turned into a burden to keep them from the benefits of their faith.[23]

The joy of learning was Luther's passion. He proposed to utilize the natural activity and inquisitiveness of children in his educational methodology. In his letter to mayors and aldermen, Luther says,

> Now since the young must leap and jump, or have something to do, because they have a natural desire for it that should not be restrained (for it is not well to check them in everything), why should we not provide such schools and lay before them such studies? By the gracious arrangement of God, children take delight in acquiring knowledge, whether languages, mathematics, or history. Since we are preaching to children, we must also prattle with them.[24]

Luther emphasized languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, but also his native

[23] Pederson, p. 22-24.
[24] Luther, "Letter" in Painter, p. 198 and 155.

Luther's style of teaching was not abstraction, but observation.

language, German, which he introduced into public worship. He encouraged its use in primary schools. He felt strongly that Christians should learn the languages of others, "For when God wished through the apostles to spread the Gospel abroad in all the world, he gave the languages for that purpose."[25] He said he should like to bring up people as can be of use to Christ in foreign lands. This is a word for our time for we have less study of foreign languages today than 20 years ago in many schools in our land. Even diplomats do not know the language of the people in whose lands they serve, Iran being a recent tragic example.

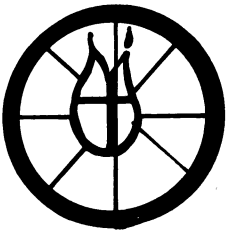
Luther's style of teaching was not abstraction, but observation. His style was concrete, full of images drawn from his surroundings and words of the common people. He was aware of the times in which he lived: "We are at the dawn of a new era, for we are beginning to recover the knowledge of the external world that we had lost through the fall of Adam." Luther was not afraid to learn about this world in which we live, as he reveals in a critique of Erasmus' methodology:

> Erasmus is indifferent and does not care to know how fruit is developed from the germ. But by the grace of God we already recognize in the most delicate flower the wonders of divine goodness and omnipotence. He commanded and the thing stood fast. See that force display itself in the stone of a peach. It is very hard, and that germ it encloses is very tender; but, when the moment has come, the stone must open to let out the young plant that God calls into life. Erasmus passes by all that, takes no account of it, and looks upon external objects as cows look upon a new gate. Shall we not instead of dead books, open the living book of nature? Not the shadows of things, but the things themselves, which make an impression on the sense and imagination, are to be brought before youth, by actual observation . . . These concepts of experiential education, scientific observation would be important in modern education. (People) must know and examine things themselves, and not simply be contented with the observation and testimony of others.[26]

Luther also had an understanding of what I call the learning community. He was sensitive to the interrelatedness of learning. He says,

> Every man is born from someone's son, educated as someone's pupil, governed as someone's subject, supplied as someone's customer, married as someone's husband, nurtured as someone's parishioner, and finally blessed as someone's father, only to

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 184.
[26] Painter, p. 163-164.



begin this common human life cycle for another socially conditioned child of God. Indeed, to spin this web of human interdependence even more intricately, man participates in most of these complimentary relationships simultaneously, and is as actively engaged in shaping the lives of others as they are in affecting his.[27]

Luther's love of music was remarkable and permeated his views on education. He insisted on musical aptitude and accomplishment as an indispensable qualification for the teacher. Luther says, "Satan is a great enemy to music . . . Music is a semi-disciplinarian and schoolmaster. Music must of necessity be retained in the schools. A school-master must be able to sing, otherwise I will hear nothing of him."[28] When I was teaching at an interdenominational seminary, and in the midst of encouraging the Lutheran students to chant when leading the liturgy, people would come up and ask, "Do you have to be able to sing to be a Lutheran?" For those who would plead lack of skill, Luther has this to say, "I would not give what little skill I possess in music for something great."

Looking back over the breadth of Luther's concern for education and the consistent fervor with which he encouraged it, the great Reformer accomplished scarcely less for education than for religion. He laid the foundation of an educational system, beginning with the popular school and ending with the university. He related, for the first time, one's external calling as a Christian to one's temporal calling as a citizen: education was to fit the person for life in the world. He demonstrated the necessity of schools to both church and state. Luther also made great improvements in method, without the insights of developmental psychology. He sought to adapt instruction for children to their capacities, to make learning pleasant, and to awaken the mind through skillfull questioning.

This profound belief in the value of education for the general good of society led to Luther's advocation of compulsory education, administered by the state. His philosophy would have an effect in our country, coming to fruition in the time of Horace Mann, who early saw that the peculiar character of the American government would demand a broad basis for education among its citizenry. Mann's position was that of secretary for the newly formed State Board of Education in the Massachusetts' Commonwealth. The controversies he would face were of another kind than Luther, for Mann believed there was a place for religious education in the public schools.

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[27] William H. Lazareth, *Luther on the Christian Home.* Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960. p. 132.

[28] Painter, p. 165.

Lutherans have a strong heritage of schools.

People for Our Day: Questions and Controversies

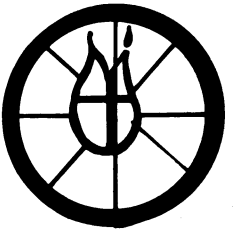
It is important that education take place in the language of the people. The translation of the *Small Catechism* into the languages of the Delaware tribe produced the first literary document in a Native American language. When Pastor Elling Eilsen, a Norwegian immigrant preacher working primarily in the Illinois Fox River settlements, recognized his people would need the English-language catechism for their children, Eilsen walked from Illinois to New York city in 1840 to purchase the necessary English texts.[29] Such was the zeal of the second generation immigrant families to live in the new world. Remembering the love of these people for education in the faith, it behoves us to ask this question: What is necessary by way of devotion, zeal, work, and love that the Scriptures and the faith might be taught to this generation and the next as our children live amid the complexities to be found in the last quarter of the 20th century?

Lutherans have had a strong heritage of schools, so much so that with the advent of the Sunday School movement 200 years ago, Lutherans were actually slow to accept and commit to this movement because they already had strong educational institutions. However, in time, the Sunday School came to be added to increase the breadth of Lutheran commitment to education. There remain Christian day schools, colleges, and seminaries. The concept of pastor as teacher is unusually strong in Lutheran seminaries. Lutheran higher education for men and women to carry out their vocation in the world remains strong in a day when other private colleges only vaguely recall their church origin. Lutheran church colleges maintain a strong connection between faith and daily life. Education is still for the purpose of all of life among one's neighbors in the world.

Recently leaders of Lutheran colleges gathered in Kenosha, Wisconsin, to reaffirm, wonder, and worry about what their place will be in the new Lutheran church. The advent of the new church raises again the question of the place education holds among Lutherans. Lutheran colleges are strong and diverse: Will they be reduced to competing with one another? For Luther the question was not either/or, but rather education in many forms, at all levels, and in many places.

The question of Lutheran Day Schools raises even thornier issues. The presence and commitment of Lutheran day schools was strong in the United States much before the 1960's and 70's rise in such schools as an alternative to busing to achieve integration in the public schools. This recent segregating

[29] Pederson, p. 26-27.



phenomenon sharpens the question for Lutherans. Does parochial education exist to protect and isolate our children from the world, or to strengthen them to fully enter the world? I believe Lutheran schools can enhance mission and ministry, for in places where they exist today in the American Lutheran Church, the numbers of non-white children is much greater than in the general composition of ALC congregations.

What is the place of Lutheran day school education today? We have moved beyond Painter's fear of Roman Catholic parochial education and can learn from an example of such a school in Chicago. It has long had a commitment to educating any neighborhood child. They require not "blind allegiance to Rome"nor that the child be a certain color, but that each person enrolling a child must bring their voter registration card. Such parochial education becomes not escape from the public world, but it puts Christ at the center of vocation and citizenship in the world.

There are controversies in other areas of education. In many places parents are seeking to educate their children at home. Do teachers need to be certified by the state? Who decides methods, curriculum, content? There are mail order houses which provide a very narrowly defined conservative Christian education. We ask the question again, "Whose is the child?" My children and your children, through God, are our children.

Whose Is the Child?

We do have a crisis in public education in the United States. School busing and school prayer are issues symptomatic and symbolic of our country's problems. In the past, we have depended on the public school to transmit a common ethic, which was a Protestant ethic. But today we live in a pluralistic society where it is not sufficent to transmit a general religion, an American civil religion. We have depended upon public schools to be the glue that holds us together. The crises in the schools, issue for issue, are symbolic of crises in our nation that have to do with identity and survival. During the 60's, school busing became an issue at a time when we were experiencing the fear and rage resulting from racism. The rise of values clarification coincided with a time of question, flux, and chaos in American ethics. We see a strong movement to restore prayer in public schools at a time when our dependence on divine providence is shaky and this country does not know what it believes. Our own identity cannot be saved by the public schools. The problems in the public schools are symbols of the crises in our nation.

How can Luther speak to this situation? It is not a time for children to hold the church and the land together, any more than they can hold a marriage together. Luther calls for us to love our children, to care for them, to educate

Who is the child?

them in a risky world. We are to help them learn from the world so that they can take their place in it, living out their vocation.

We are called on as citizens to discern who we are as a people. We must see who we are as a pluralistic people, beyond the melting pot. We are a people of many faiths who need to come together in a public world. We must discover how to live together safely as people of different faiths in God's public world. Only then will we be able to answer the question: Whose is the child?

In the midst of the pluralism of our culture we have the distinctiveness of the Christian message, which calls us in a different direction than that of privatization. We cannot say simply that the child belongs to the parent, not the state, giving our support to a voucher system of private education. Lutherans must raise up their heritage of commitment to public education — education for all.

My call is for home to fulfill its role. Mothers and fathers, remembering Luther's call, should teach their children. I call also for education in the church, not trying to copy, for one hour, the public schools. We act as though we have only one hour to influence the child, rather than seeing an entire life in the Christian community filled with possibilities for education. We can do in Christian education what the public schools cannot do, for we are that distinctive faith community. But then we need to commit ourselves to education in the public world as well. In fact, as we educate our children in the faith, perhaps part of their vocation is to go forth into the public world as they go to a public school. What better preparation for them to grow up in a public world?

Who is the child? Luther says the child is someone with whom we play and prattle. The great learned Doctor took time to observe as Piaget did. The child is not product, possession, problem, or protege. Whose is the child? These are questions we, in our alienated and privatized world, answer very ambiguously. Any newspaper will reveal that ambiguity. We can read of children overindulged and neglected, loved and feared. We see pictures of children lost: kidnapped, maybe murdered, vanished without a trace. "Have you seen this child?"

Who is the child? Whose is the child? — complicated questions for our time. They are questions directed to the issue of abortion. The woman's body is indeed hers and God's; but what about the father, the community? It reveals much about the place of children in our world when one argument for abortion states that it is better that the child not be born at all than to be neglected after birth. Mother Teresa bids us wisely not to fear our own children. These are complicated questions of responsible conception, mutual care, communication, and education for a community in a privatized world.

These questions are important questions for our day. They are posed for us as we become more privatized, concerned that our children get a good education to give them a competitive edge in today's economy. Luther's call is for interdependence. When our children go to school today in unsafe buses over unsafe bridges because we give our money for arms, Luther has a word for us. When our children go to school in condemned buildings and therefore become condemned children, Luther has a word for us. When children are marched up and down halls because that is the only way to keep them under control, when schools are described as battlegrounds and police dogs are called in: Who is the child and whose is the child? I can't handle my children, perhaps the teacher can; I can't handle my class, perhaps the principal can; I can't handle the school, perhaps the superintendent can, or the voters can. Whose is the child? The call for our time is to love our children through home, state, and church. Our call is to love all of them out of the common wealth of grace God has given us. And to remember the rich heritage of Martin Luther, a Reformer of education.



Christ for All of Life: Mark's Miracle Stories for 1985

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This article was prepared as a lecture for the Lutheran Conferences for Worship in the summer of 1984.

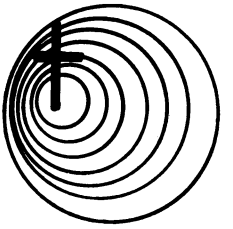
Mark is so intrigued with Jesus' miracles that they fill a third of the Gospel. Most of this material (individual miracle stories and summary reports about Jesus' miracle working) is in chapters 1-8. In the first half of the Gospel we also read that the disciples were sent out to do miracles, and we discover that the exorcisms of Jesus led to the charge that he was in league with Satan. The Markan miracle texts in this year's lectionary give the preacher an excellent opportunity to proclaim this very significant aspect of the gospel, and can help us challenge tendencies to narrow the gospel to some limited portion of human life.

Miracles and the Cross

Scholarly opinion has recently suggested two explanations for the presence of the miracle material in Mark. Some have argued that Mark's christology concentrates on Jesus as miracle worker. This theory suggests that the itinerant, wonder-working teachers of the period were seen as a distinctive type of individual with god-like characteristics. It is argued that these persons were such a distinctive type in the common experience and in the literature of the period that Mark's readers would readily have understood his presentation of Jesus in those terms. It is true that many other wonder workers and teachers were known in the New Testament period, and the writings of the Old Testament and of Hellenistic Judaism provide some helpful parallels to Jesus' work. But, unfortunately for this theory about Mark's christology, we do not find a well-defined stereotype of the wonder-working teacher which Mark could have used in this presentation of Jesus.

Other scholars have recently suggested a quite different theory, arguing that Mark is writing to *reject* a christology which focuses on the miracles. In brief, it is argued that several elements in Mark's Gospel can be best explained as a rejection of the importance of miracles. This interpretation reads the story of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi as a false confession because it is based only on the miracle working. Thus Jesus must tell Peter to be silent, and the narrative must continue as explication of the correct christology, namely a christology which focuses on Jesus' suffering and the cross. Any careful reader of Mark will agree that the evangelist places primary emphasis on the way of the cross, but it remains highly improbable that Mark would devote so much of his Gospel to presenting the miracle material if he really considered that emphasis heretical.

Neither theory is acceptable in its extreme form, but both give us important insights into Mark's understanding of the miracles. Mark is intrigued with the miracles and knows his readers are too. As we will see, these stories present important truths about the source and breadth of Jesus' authority. But it is also true that Mark will not let us have the



miracles without the cross. Mark does not reject attention to Jesus' miracles, but he does subordinate them to the message of the cross.

This subordination of the miracles to the cross can be seen when we read Mark as a narrative whole. Jesus is proclaimed Son of God at his baptism (1:11). A few verses later the disciples receive their commission to follow. In the following chapters many miracles are recounted and we learn much about what it means to Mark that Jesus is the Son of God. We also see the disciples' consistent failure to grasp who Jesus is. They don't even appreciate his ability to do miracles. Only with Peter's confession (8:27-30) does the narrative really begin to move towards its climax at the cross. In the transfiguration account, which follows Peter's confession, Jesus is again proclaimed as the Son of God and the disciples are told to *listen* to him. What they will hear if they listen is Jesus' repeated stress on the way of the cross for himself and his followers. The link of the Son of God title with the crucifixion is confirmed by the centurion's comment upon seeing Jesus' death, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Thus the narrative suggests that we cannot understand the miracles of the Son of God without also knowing that his sonship specifically includes his suffering and death. We would violently distort Mark's message if we divorced the miracle material from the cross by proclaiming the power and wonder of the kingdom and forgetting that our experience of the kingdom will be along the path of suffering. Mark shows his readers that even Peter and those other great figures of the past really became effective disciples only after the crucifixion. Only the cross enables them and us to understand Jesus and to follow him.

At the end of the chapter 10 we read the story of the healing of blind Bartimaeus. This text for the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost is one of the few miracles in the second half of Mark, and it combines the miracle and cross themes. In chapters 8-10, Mark's narrative includes a thrice-repeated pattern of passion prediction, misunderstanding by the disciples, and teaching by Jesus about the way of discipleship. Mark almost certainly sees symbolic significance in the Bartimaeus story which concludes this section. The disciples have been blind to what Jesus tells them, but the miracle shows that Jesus can and will heal their blindness. Bartimaeus' persistence in calling to Jesus represents ideal faith for Mark. Faith eagerly and actively seeks Jesus, the giver of salvation. Note especially how the story ends, ". . . he received his sight and *followed him on the way.*" *The way* is the way to the cross which Jesus had been outlining for himself and his *followers.* Faith permits the miracle but it also leads to the road of discipleship, the way of the cross. "Faith" and "following" are closely related themes for Mark. A sermon on this text could focus on the reali-

Discipleship is the purpose of Mark.

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ty of the life of faith. The blessings for the believer are real and earthly but they are experienced in the way of the cross.

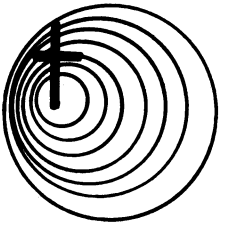
The Bartimaeus story is the last healing miracle in Mark and gives a good summary of the whole Gospel. The first miracle in Mark focuses on Jesus' God-given authority. Mark 1:21-28, the text for the fourth Sunday of Epiphany, recounts the healing of a demoniac in the synagogue. "Authority" summarizes what the crowds see in Jesus' teaching (v. 22), and it is the way they describe his exorcizing command. (v. 27) The latter verse is particularly interesting since the crowd's reaction links the teaching and the miracle together as united evidence of his authority. The miracle does not prove the authority to teach — no one is said to believe because of the miracle. Rather, the teaching and the healing go together. Both come from God. Similarly in 2:1-12, Jesus offers forgiveness to a paralytic, and when challenged about his authority for doing what is God's prerogative, he responds with a healing miracle. Teaching, forgiveness, and miracles are all evidence that the kingdom of God is present in Jesus.

The Purpose and Use of Miracles

Mark's joining of teaching, miracles, and forgiveness illustrates the breadth of Christ's authority and his claims. Indeed, discipleship is really the theme of Mark, not christology. Or, more correctly, discipleship is the *purpose* of Mark. Mark is not arguing against false understanding of Jesus, but he is attempting to present a picture of Jesus which will change people's everyday lives.

The miracle stories can help us speak of the Christian life in concrete, everyday terms. Most Christians would readily agree that Christ's claim affects all of life, but in practice that claim is often narrowed by spiritualizing or intellectualizing. Many of us Christians live as though faith were only a matter of personal and public religion. Or, we speak and act as though faith were primarily a changed world view, a better way of perceiving reality or a new ethical system. Both these tendencies are often linked with evident discomfort with biblical and with modern miracles. The miracle stories reveal the kingdom of God as a reality which touches such everyday concerns as ill health and parental anxiety. Our resistence to God's rule is such that we prefer to think and act as though the kingdom had nothing to do with most of life. The miracle stories stand against our inclinations. These accounts will not let us ignore the crucified Messiah's claims on the whole of human life.

Mark's church had experienced Christ at work in their midst. They knew the reality of his power and the way of the cross. Apparently they saw their own experiences and the miracles of the New Testament as closely linked, whether or not they would have called their own experience miraculous. We too have experienced Christ at work, yet we may not



connect the miracle stories with our own Christian experiences. We tend to see the miracle stories under a narrow heading such as "unexplained healings" or even, "symbolic stories." That limits our vision. Miracle stories should be understood in terms of "changed lives" or "the impact of Christ" so that we can see their continuity with our own experience of the life of faith.

We have, I think, distinguished miracles too much from the rest of Christ's work, then and now. Obviously these stories intend to report something distinctive, but it is not the involvement of God which makes them unique. Mark and his fellow Christians assumed that God was always and everywhere at work. These events we call miracles were seen as unique because they were *unusual* instances of God's working. This distinction permits us to link the miracle stories to our own experiences of the Christian life. The miracles are so unusual that it is hard to accept them. But would we not say the same about other supposed instances of God's dramatic working? Are we not a little skeptical when some convicted felon claims that his or her life has been changed by Christ, or when someone tells us that God clearly guided them to some major decision? Are we not reluctant to speak of God's action at any specific point in our own *everyday* experience? Does our difficulty in accepting the miracles reflect our difficulty seeing any contact between God and the real world where we live? We deceive ourselves if we think the miracle stories can easily be separated from the other claims that New Testament faith makes about God's work. If we are unwilling to grant the possibility of God's involvement in mundane matters like those in the miracle stories, then we are in danger of losing the gopsel.

It is inappropriate to speak of God "intervening" in the everyday world, as though God were usually uninvolved. Perhaps a new look at the unusual, the miracles, can help open our eyes to God in the usual, the profane, the ordinary. The New Testament does not restrict God either to astounding deeds or to a deeply personal relationship with individuals. Faith is not just an inner comfort; it also changes human reality.

A Sermon Series for Pentecost 2-8

As the Pentecost season begins, the lectionary provides an excellent opportunity for a sequence of sermons that emphasize the miracles. Whether you announce a special series or not, there are seven texts here which fit together well. Keeping the whole set in mind can help you produce a sequence of sermons faithful to Mark and significant for the life of your congregations. The Markan texts for Pentecost 2, 3, and 4 will help set the scene for Mark's use of miracles. The texts for Pentecost 5 to 8 permit you to proclaim four aspects of the miracle material itself.

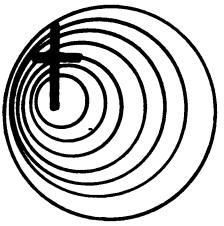
Things are different for those who follow Jesus.

Pentecost 2: Mark 2:23-28. This is the familiar story about the disciples picking a little grain on the Sabbath and then getting some flack from the religious leaders. Part of a set of five conflict stories in 2:1-3:6 (the first and the fifth contain miracle stories), this story is the only one of the five in the lectionary for 1985. In defending what his disciples have done, Jesus draws a parallel between himself and David. Unlike the other Synoptic versions of this story, it is not said that the disciples had eaten the grain. In fact, the Greek in Mark implies that they just broke it off to make a path. Thus, unlike the other Gospels, the point here is not that human needs outweight religious rules. The point is that Jesus, like King David, has special authority. The actions of the disciples are justified because of Jesus' presence. This is also quite clear in the immediately preceding story — the one about the impossibility of fasting when the bridegroom is present. Things are different for those who follow Jesus. Old customs do not have the same power any more. Why? Because Jesus is Lord. He has unique, God-given authority, and those who are under his rule are ultimately subject to that authority, not to any rules or laws.

For a sermon theme, try this — Christ moves us beyond customs and rules to concern for human need, and behind both to life under his lordship. Two verses from the second lesson for this Sunday support this theme, "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake . . . . For we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to ourselves." (2 Cor 4:5, 7) The authority of Christ governs our whole lives. We are free to live and serve, free if necessary to ignore human law and custom.

Pentecost 3: Mark 3:20-25. The text for the third Sunday after Pentecost presents two erroneous conclusions about Jesus which point us to a correct conclusion. Jesus' family hears what he is up to, and they come to get him — having concluded he is out of his mind. The scribes are even less kind. They suggest his amazing feats are the result of a compact with the devil. Jesus' response is harsh and to the point. He claims to be completely on the side of God. Far from being in league with Satan, Jesus has bound Satan and is now freeing his slaves. That is the meaning of the exorcisms and the outcome of the testing in the wilderness. (1:13)

Having straightened out the christological issues, Jesus turns to the discipleship issues. There is one eternal sin, namely to acknowledge that Jesus has authority such as no human has, but to credit the source of that authority to the forces opposing God. This sin is unforgiveable in that one thereby places oneself outside God's kingdom. Such persons have rejected the very agent by



which God would forgive them. Only repentance and faith can bring them back. Jesus also points out that his real family are those who do the will of God — those who follow him on his way.

How does this speak today? I think there are many in the world and even in the church who think Jesus is a little bit crazy. We have all heard the suggestion that some Christian teachings are unhealthy: "We all need a positive self image. We have to feel good about ourselves before we can even think of being concerned for others. How is it possible to deny our selfhood?" Such thinking sounds sensible, but it may mask an attitude which is far from the way of the cross that Jesus emphasizes in Mark. Evaluating by our own criteria, we may conclude that God's way looks like the evil way and thus put ourselves outside the realm of forgiveness.

Pentecost 4: Mark 4:26-34. This pericope has two parables about seeds and a comment about parables. The first parable is usually called "the seed growing secretly." The agronomy may not be very accurate, but the point is clear — we marvel that the seed kernal becomes the full ear or head of grain. There is promise here, and hope, and warning. Hold this parable up whenever your congregation is filled with anxiety about what they must do — forgetting that it is God who works through them. They may also be paralyzed by their failures — forgetting that God's word does not fail.

The second parable, "the mustard seed," offers hope in a different way. It contrasts small beginnings with amazing results. The First Lesson for Pentecost 4 reports the metaphor from Ezekiel 17:22-24 where God takes a sprig of cedar and grows a great tree. That analogy is more our style. We are more likely to talk about small acorns and mighty oaks than about mustard plants — in fact, when I walk soybean fields with my dad, mustard is one of the weeds we pull! But maybe that is part of the point here. Is it accidental that Jesus talks about a lowly plant, a big weed? "Take heart," he seems to say, "the result of your planting will be far beyond your efforts — but don't expect them to be glorious." The kingdom of God is a place of hope and humility, not pride.

The seed here is likely the Word of God (4:14), and the hope is for our proclamation of God's amazing, loving rule in this world. The revelation which came in Christ is a mysterious thing. Few believed, few followed. The disciples are among the insiders who know. (4:11, 34) With Mark, we also are insiders, for we know the mystery of the cross. We can maintain our hope. We are not guided by human failure but by God's power. In the face of failure and evil, we need not narrow the gospel and say that God, after all, is really interested only in our hearts. Limiting God's claim might seem to be a way to prove that the gospel has not failed, but the cost is too great. No, in hope we can cling to the great claim of

the gospel, that all aspects of human life are and will be different because of Christ. This is the secret that all of us disciples know (4:34), though we may be no better at living out that knowledge than were the first followers.

Pentecost 5: Mark 4:35-41. This is the first of four successive miracle texts in the lectionary. No sooner has Mark presented the disciples as insiders who know the secret of the kingdom than he takes us on a stormy boat trip where Jesus has to say to the disciples, "Are you still without faith?" Their question revealed that they did not yet understand the mysterious connection between Jesus and the rule of God, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" This story functions as an appeal to the reader to respond to Jesus in an appropriate way. We are challenged to consider whether we, like the disciples, are living contrary to what has been revealed. In Mark, the failures and misunderstandings of those first followers function to keep the discipleship-call open for the reader. This miracle text anticipates the abrupt ending of the Gospel at 16:8. Will we live according to God's revelation in Christ, or will we live in fear and therefore fail? That is the question which still confronts us today.

The verb *epitimein* in v.39 is rendered "rebuke" in the RSV. The context suggests that "command" is a more appropriate translation. The image is that of creation — God commands, it is done. Who is this? He's the one who comes from the Creator. The Second Lesson is 2 Cor. 5:14-21, a text which describes Christians as a new creation. From these two elements we might develop the theme of Christian life as the restoration of God's intention for us. This fits well with the miracle stories' message about the impact of the kingdom on all aspects of life.

We must be careful with that theme of creation restored, however, so that we do not make it such a glorious promise that no place is left for the cross in following Jesus. The miracle story itself helps us keep that balance. Storm served as a metaphor for life's difficulties then as it does now. Mark may well have intended this story to nurture trust in the midst of stress and persecution. Jesus can be trusted despite the circumstances of our lives, despite the evident resistance to the kingdom of God. The World Council of Churches, coming out of the chaos of World War II, took a ship with a cross mast as its symbol. The important part of that symbol is the cross, Jesus' cross. Don't just jump on any ship in time of difficulty. The point is to be with the crucified one, on the way of the cross.

Note that this story does not promise understanding or complete satisfaction — the disciples are saved, but they still confront the mystery. The First Lesson is Job 38:1-11, the section where Job hears the voice from the whirlwind telling him he is asking questions beyond his grasp. God remains God. But our lives are changed!

Narratively speaking, Mark's theme here is *lack* of faith. If you choose that for your preaching theme, be cautious not to berate and accuse. Hold up a mirror where the congregation can see their lack of faith and hold up Christ as the one with power to change that.

Pentecost 6: Mark 5:21-43. Mark delights in framing one story with another. He has placed the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage in the middle of the story of Jairus. Narratively, this provides time for the daughter to die and for a messenger to come to Jairus, but Mark has a theological purpose in the combination. The two stories are linked by a number of factors. Each story

uses the verb *sozein* which means both *to save* and *to heal.* Both stories deal with life: the life of the girl and the woman's gynecological problem — her ability to give life. The girl is twelve years old and the woman has had the problem for twelve years. Both miracles are accomplished by physical contact with Jesus. These details show that we are to read the stories as companions.

The effect of all these linkages and the framing technique is to make "seeking faith" the point of both stories. The woman is told that her faith has saved/healed her. She has shown her faith by seeking Jesus and touching him. After the daughter's death is reported, according to the RSV, Jesus tells Jairus, "Do not fear, only *believe."* Because of the link with the other story, it would be quite legitimate to translate with the full force of the present imperative. "*Go on* believing." Or, in paraphrase, "You showed your faith by seeking me, now continue in that faith."

Active faith enables the Son of God to restore life. Our faith, our following, is an openness which makes it possible for God to work in us. Mark does not mean that faith will always get us a miracle for ourselves. Even though we desparately need one, that may not be what God will work in us. But faith is broad confidence in God which opens us to God's working, whatever form that takes. The point of these paired miracle stories is to call disciples to faith, not to teach us how to get a miracle.

This is a tough text if you're preaching to a typical congregation where some suffer from debilitating chronic illnesses and where faithful, praying parents have seen their children die. It may help such persons if you explore positive meanings of the text which do not mock their suffering. It may also help if you acknowledge that you too struggle to understand the message of Jesus for such situations. This text does not say that adequate faith will guarantee a miracle for the believer. Mark also must have known Christians who were chronically ill or had dying children. He does not want to imply that proper faith will suddenly and in every case reverse those problems. But, the miracle story certainly shows that such earthly problems are the concern of God and an area where God may work, and it suggests that faith is important there.

Perhaps one might use the theme of Lam. 3:22-33, to complement the Gospel text — the reminder that the Lord's mercies are new every morning and that God does not willingly afflict people. Lamentations reminds us to trust in the middle of our grief and suffering. The writer does not pretend that the problems are unreal or that they will go away. But, like the Gospel writer, he knows that faith is relevant to these difficulties.

Nevertheless, if it were my child dying, I would still be troubled by these stories and find the explanations unsatisfactory. This may be the place where the mystery of God's way is hardest to accept. Remember, though, that you don't have to solve the problem of evil in your sermon. Your goal is to proclaim gospel also for those who are struggling with evil — open them to active, seeking faith for their whole lives.

Pentecost 7: Mark 6:1-6. This is the text about the home folks who take offense at Jesus. He can't do as many miracles as they want, and he marvels at their unbelief. Mark likes to make his points by contrast, and this story contrasts sharply with the picture of active, seeking faith in the double miracle story which precedes it. The people in Jesus' home territory are amazed at what he's been doing, but then they start thinking

— "Why he's just one of us, one of Mary's boys. Who does he think he is anyway?"

The contrast is the main point. Faith receives miracles, unfaith does not. But Mark doesn't mean to make it quite that sharp. Remember, Jesus calmed the storm though the disciples lacked faith. And even in his home town, Mark admits that Jesus "laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them." Faith is important, it's vital. Can Jesus bless those who will not seek his blessing? Well, yes. But expectancy, confidence, following is more fruitful soil for God's working. Mark takes human involvement in God's work with utmost seriousness.

Picking up on this and on last week's concern with miracles that don't happen when needed, make use of the Second Lesson, 2 Cor. 12:7-10, Paul's story of a non-miracle. Three times Paul asked God to remove the thorn from his flesh. But there was no miracle. What Paul did get was the assurance that God's strength was manifest in his weakness. Paul didn't berate himself for lack of faith, rather he went on to tell how God was at work in him.

Both Jesus in his hometown and Paul in Corinth were dealing with people who had preconceptions about what God would do for true believers. Those folks apparently implied that Paul was not among the greatest of the Christians because he was not much of a miracle worker. Paul said that he did do miracles, but that was not the point. The point is the working of God. The people where Jesus grew up seem to have been less concerned with God's working than with the agent of that working, and they were not impressed with what they saw. By looking at externals, they had missed God at work. The text calls for a sermon which will open eyes to God at work in the familiar, the mundane.

This *hometown* theme may have had a particular point for Mark's church. The hometown folk may represent the Jews who had not become Christians. Mark may be telling his church that those non-believers let their own conceptions and evaluations get in the way, the hometown standards made them miss what was really important to them. Thus only a few were healed. Are we the home folk today? Are we like Paul's opponents in Corinth? Are we the ones who think we know the standards for judging what Jesus could and would do? Are we missing his work just because of preconceptions which narrow our vision? Is our God *too small?* Are the newer converts who urge us to loosen up our worship and to witness more freely the only ones who now see the miracle worker among us? Or is it only the Christians in the third world with an understanding of the faith that we call radical and revolutionary? Are we the unbelievers and they the soil where God can work?

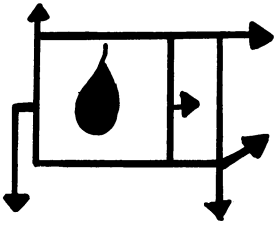
Pentecost 8: Mark 6:7-13. Jesus sends the twelve out two by two. Their mission parallels Jesus' own — exorcizing, healing, preaching repentance. If they are rejected, they are to move on. Just as the first eight chapters of Mark stress Jesus the miracle worker, so miracles get top billing in this story of the disciples' commissioning. The first verse reports that Jesus sent them out and gave them authority over unclean spirits. The closing verse says they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. Not even preaching gets that double mention.

A few things to remember about this text: Mark saw this commission as applying to his own church. In fact, the details probably reflect mission practice in Mark's time. Secondly, these twelve are

the misunderstanding failures we have just been reading about. How could Mark dare report it? We don't even know if these characters could have passed their first quarter courses in seminary! Third, the missionaries are instructed to travel light — the point is reliance on God. What matters is doing God's will, not their own comfort and security. This anticipates the Markan theme of readiness to suffer and die as we follow Jesus.

If the mission of the twelve applied to Mark's church, it applies to ours. We too can experience Christ's authority in us and marvel at God's work through us and others. We too, if our eyes are open, can see blessings which can only be called miraculous.

If Jesus sent out the bumbling disciples with such good results, we can have confidence for our own work as pastors and people, and we can be encouraging to our congregations. God can use us to share his kingdom even though we all have weak faith and many failures in our history. Tell the folks to go out, relying on the power of God — and they will see the power of God. What they will see is God at work in the whole range of our human life. They will see souls saved, bodies healed, relationships strengthened, war made less likely, government made more compassionate, and much more. We are to convey not just words but also the impact of the gospel on everyday life. This text commissions not only preachers and speakers but also healers, helpers, sharers, lovers. In the work of all such Christians we can see the work of God, we can see miracles. Celebrate miracle working in your congregation. Celebrate God's involvement in every phase of the lives of the people.



Literary Criticism and Biblical Religious Language: Insights From Northrop Frye

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For over four decades Northrop Frye has been using the categories of literary criticism to investigate the impact of the biblical writings and the Judeo-Christian theological traditions. In many ways he and his brother, Roland Mushat Frye, were ahead of their times. For while most biblical studies were being conducted according to the principles of "historical criticism," the Frye brothers were appropriating the Bible according to the principles of "literary criticism" – an approach which is now being adopted with relish by biblical exegetes.[1]

Anatomy and Code

Northrop Frye's career is bracketed by two substantial interpretive books. The first, published in 1957, is *Anatomy of Criticism*.[2] Here Frye laid out his own prospectus for doing criticism, a proposal intended to bring together and synthesize several otherwise competing approaches. He intended to study literary works as unified wholes, emphasizing their place in the larger complex of Literature-with-a-capital-L. In addition, he would concentrate not so much on the "centrifugal" movement of a work of art (that is, how it is shaped by and in turn shapes the outside world) as on each work's "centripetal" movement (that is, the inner structure and texture of the work itself).

The second of Frye's books to be considered here, published in 1981, is *The Great Code*.[3] His agenda in this volume is simply to attempt "a study of the Bible from the point of view of a literary critic" in order to throw some "real light on how or why a poet might read the Bible."

Four presuppositions undergird Frye's literary approach to the Bible: 1) The Bible provides the "code" for the culture of Western civilization. Human beings must interpret their history and environment; such interpretation requires language; it requires sorting things into categories; it requires labeling and picturing categories.

> Man lives, not directly or nakedly in nature like the animals, but within a mythological universe, a body of assumptions and beliefs developed from his existential concerns . . . The Bible is clearly a major element in our own imaginative tradition, whatever we may think we believe about it (*Code*, xviii).

Wherever critical interpreters turn, they find biblical images and labels being used, and the Bible is the code for understanding those cultural images.

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1 See William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, in *Guides to Biblical Scholarship*, edited by Dan O. Via, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970).

2 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). Hereafter cited as *Anatomy*.

3 *Northrop Frye, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1981). Hereafter cited as *Code*.

2) The Bible must be read as an aesthetic unity. Biblical scholars and historians have proven that the Bible is not a unified writing, that it is a collection of often disparate documents composed and compiled over a thousand year span. Yet the Bible as such has always been read as a unified whole. "What matters is that 'the Bible' has traditionally been read as a unity, and has influenced Western imagination as a unity." *(Code,* xiii).

3) The thematic or imaginary (in the sense of "being portrayed via images") unity of the Bible enables it to serve as a force for unifying people's perception of their world. A unified perception of this sort ultimately is necessary for the morality which binds people together in a caring fashion.

4) This religious morality can be examined most successfully when the Bible is studied literally as literature, which is not the same as studying it literally as history or literally as dogma. In other words, the proper focus is on the world in front of the text, between the text and the reader, not on the world behind the text, between the text and its author.

With these four presuppositions in place, it is time to turn to the four rubrics under which Frye conducts his decodification of the Bible, namely, "language," "myth," "metaphor," and "typology."

All literature, biblical, or otherwise, is a function of language. Using the rough and ready distinction which divides "language" into "sound" and "sense", the accent here is on the latter; not vocabulary and syntax, but discourse and speech.

In this sense, the history of language can be divided into three cyclical ages, each leading to the next and then returning to the beginning. The first is the mythical or hieroglyphic age, in which words are the signs which link the subject and the object ("this is that"). The second is the heroic or hieratic age, in which words express the thoughts of the subject ("this is put for that"). The third is the vulgar or demotic age, in which the subject's words describe the object ("this is like that").

Which of these types of language does the Bible represent? All three can be found in the book of Genesis. The opening chapters would fit well in the "mythical" column. The "heroic" column would contain some of the Abrahamic legends. And the Joseph novella could be put into the "vulgar" column.

However, such a piecemeal apportioning of the biblical text is not what Frye has in mind.

> The linguistic idiom of the Bible does not really coincide with any of our three phases of language . . . . It is really a fourth form of expression, for which I adopt the now well-established term *kerygma,* proclamation . . . .
>
> *Kerygma* is a mode of rhetoric, though it is rhetoric of a special kind . . . . It is the vehicle of what is traditionally called revelation, a word I use because it is traditional and I can think of no better one *(Code,* p. 29).

In other words, because the Bible presents itself as the proclamation of a revelation, it must be thought of as a special kind of rhetoric, because of the authority derived from its implied Author.

But mention of an "implied Author" with its overtones of divine revelation is not far removed from the concept of "myth". Myth, legend, saga, history, fiction — all have in common the fact that

they are narrative, plotted literature. What distinguished myth from the others is its social function. Myths are "the stories that tell a society what is important for it to know, whether about its gods, its history, its laws, or its class structure" (*Code,* p. 33). This is what separates ancient myths from profane folk-tales; this social function is what gives myths their character as sacred revelation.

In this case Frye has adopted the heuristic device of classifying myths into generic plots related to the four seasons. The myths of spring are comedy. The hero overcomes all obstacles to his desired objectives, and the largest possible number of characters are included in the happy ending.

In the summertime plots, the dream-like stuff of romance, the hero undergoes an adventurous quest. The journey is fraught with battles between the protagonist and his antagonist, but in the end the hero is exalted.

The autumnal myth is tragedy, where the hero is isolated from his environment. The characters are believable and, like the real people they represent, finally succumb either as the result of violating moral law or as the result of the inexorable force of external fate.

Finally, the myths of winter are irony and satire. Here the characters are caricatures, and the hero undergoes absurdities. These plots of alienation require wit or humor in their authors plus an object of attack in a fallen society (*Anatomy,* pp. 158-239).

Again it is possible to pick examples from the Bible which fit these mythical plots. The story of Jesus' resurrection has been classed as comedic. Tobit comes close to being an adventure or romance. King Saul has been called "one of the most tragic figures of the Old Testament," and the book of Job is often compared to the classical Greek tragedies. The anti-idolatry rhetoric in the stories of Bel and the Dragon is as near satire as the Bible gets.

Yet what is needed is to identify a controlling myth for the Bible as a whole. Of the four seasonal myths outlined above, the best candidate for plotting the total sweep of the biblical narrative is comedy. Consider: the Bible is structured along a series of U-shaped plots. The downward swoop of a fall is followed by the upward swoop of restoration, which is followed by another down and then another up, and so forth *(Code,* p. 171). The two primary models are the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and the Resurrection of Christ from the dead.

> To summarize: If we follow the narrative of the Bible as a sequence of events in human life, it becomes a series of ups and downs in which God's people periodically fall into bondage and are then rescued by a leader, while the great heathen empires rise and fall in the opposite rhythm. At a certain point this perspective goes into reverse, and what we see is something more like an epic or romantic hero descending to a lower world to rescue what is at the same time a single bride and a large host of men and women. In this perspective the *sequence* of captivities and redemptions disappears and is replaced by a unique act of descent and return. But the act, if in itself unique, has many symbolic settings *(Code,* p. 192).

If the springtime myth controls the biblical narrative, and if exodus and resurrection are its leading comedic plots, what other metaphors are to be found? Metaphor is not merely incidental to the Bible, but integral to what it does and is.

More specifically, the central biblical metaphors can be clustered around five basic bodies of imagery: the paradisal (featuring trees and water), the pastoral (including the wilderness, and sheep), the agricultural (especially grapes and grain, and symbolic meals of bread and wine), the urban (the city of Jerusalem, also highways and roads), and the human (with the sexual imagery of bride and bridegroom, also the super-human angels).

More important than delineating the biblical metaphors, however, is the realization that the Bible itself is one capacious metaphor. That is, its power comes more from the manipulation of its own internal images than from its outside referents.

In another context Frye has used the incident of Moses and the burning bush to illustrate this idea: The visual impact of the bush aflame, like the visual impact of the biblical metaphor(s), has a centripetal effect: Attention is focused inward on the thing itself, riveted there by the authority inherent in the spectacle. When the impact is shifted from the eye to the ear — when the Lord speaks to Moses, and when direct address replaces metaphor in the Bible — then the auditor is sent into action.[4]

But if the Bible as a whole is structured according to a comedic mythic pattern, and if it must be understood as an all-encompassing metaphor, what is the glue that holds its individual images, events, and documents together? The answer is typology.

There are two ways of structuring events chronologically. On the one hand lies history, which normally links events together in a chain of cause and effect. History must always be looking backward, because all that can be known is the past.

On the other hand, there is the sequencing of events according to the pattern of type and antitype. Because the nation of Israel was never very successful politically, its "historical" recollections were neither complimentary nor powerful enough to sustain its people's hopes. Consequently the biblical authors did not recreate their actual environment as much as they created an imaginative culture and civilization. The key to unlocking the genius of the Bible's imaginative civilization is its choice of types and antitypes.

Typology is always forward looking. If the type is located in the past, then the antitype is placed in the present; and if the type is in the present, then its antitype must be in the future. So typological literature must always be optimistically forward looking (*Code,* pp. 83-84).

In the mythical phase of literature, where the Bible as a whole must be positioned, verbal symbols serve as archetypes. They group themselves around commonly shared images and devices and issue in conventional genres. To be effective, such generic archetypes must recur again and again in an almost ritual fashion; also, they must give expression to commonly held dreams and desires (*Anatomy,* pp. 95-115).

Consider the birth of a son to an aged mother. The motif starts in Genesis (16-21) with the birth of Isaac to barren Sarah. It is replicated in Judges (13) with the birth of Samson to the wife of Manoah. It pops up again in Isaiah (54): "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear . . . ." The type finds its antitype in the birth of John the Baptist to aged

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[4] Northrup Frye, "Agon and Logos," *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 211-212.

Elizabeth according to the Gospel of Luke (1). Later the motif is repeated by Paul in his letter to the Galatians (4).

Virtually all the major images in the Bible can be found linked together as type and antitype. Typologically the biblical literature proceeds through seven stages of revelation: creation, revolution, law, wisdom, prophecy, gospel, and apocalypse. "Each phase is not an improvement on its predecessor but a wider perspective on it . . . each phase being a type of the one following it and the antitype of the one preceding it (*Code*, p. 106).

To summarize: Frye's approach is to interpret the Bible in terms of its literary characteristics: its primitive poetic language, its comic mythical plot, its centripetal metaphoric images, its generic typological sequences. These are the factors which account for the Bible's immeasurable impact on the shape of Western civilization. This accounts for its continuing appeal some twenty centuries after its compilation.

Bible and Religion

It is no exaggeration to say that Frye's literary-critical approach to interpreting the Bible dovetails neatly with exegetical methods that have come into prominence during the past twenty years. After decades characterized by an "eclipse of biblical narrative" it was inevitable that the pendulum would swing back toward an appreciation of its essentially narrative structure.

Futhermore, the literary-critical approach does what other exegetical methods seemingly cannot do. Historical-critical methods, for example, tend to look through the texts in order to reconstruct the actual historical events which lie behind the biblical records.

> The first goal of all history is to present a "corpus of ascertained fact" that answers the questions "What actually happened, and why? . . ." However, the historian is concerned with more than the corpus of facts. He want to illuminate the past, to understand the events, and to interpret them.[5]

Structural-criticism too, although it is often allied with literary-critical studies, tends to look through the text to uncover and decode, not the history behind the events recorded in the text, but the structures of the mind which lie behind the author of the text.

Thus both historical-criticism and structuralism attempt to penetrate the space behind the text. Literary-criticism, of the type Frye practices, attempts to map the space in front of the text. It focuses on the rhetorical, linguistic, and the thematic interplay which shapes the reader of the text.[6]

Literary-critical theories have the potential for putting the authority of the Bible, and thus the authority of all religious language, on a sounder foundation. According to this approach, an aesthetic work of art forms its own context; it is self-contained and draws the reader into itself. And once a literary work has been experienced, the readers' post-aesthetic experience is different from their pre-aesthetic experience. For

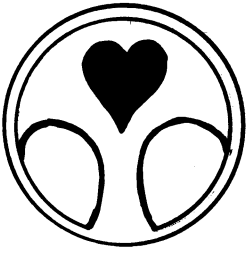
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5 Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method,* in *Guides to Biblical Scholarship,* edited by Gene M. Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 35-36.

6 Among numerous summaries of current exegetical methods, this outline can be highly recommended: Patrick R. Keifert, "Mind Reader and Maestro: Models for Understanding Biblical Interpreters," *Word and World,* 1 (1981): 153-168.

their new literary experience forces them to unify their vision of life in a new way.

That, of course, is precisely the approach that Northrop Frye has been pushing. That is the approach which offers the possibility of pushing religious language to its ultimate, to the point where it can suggest something beyond human finitude, beyond death, to the divine. Human language can never make the leap, of course. "Yet perhaps it is only through the study of works of human imagination," suggests Frye, "that we can make any real contact with the level of vision beyond faith." *(Code,* pp. 231-232).



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Christian Hope For Ailing Institutions

Curtis Beaird
First Baptist Church, Gatesville, Texas

Paul described the church as the body of Christ. This lively organism of vision and caring lives daily the risk of losing itself in the world. It can be no other way. The risk is increased when Christ's community seeks to live at peace with and enjoy the approval of the local deities. The compromises required to accomplish this transforms the community into an institution. The institution centers on itself and its need to belong. Eventually, the people of God are willing to submit to a dependent institutionalization. Paul's word to the Romans remains a calling, "Be not conformed to the world; but be ye transformed . . ."

Transformation, confession, repentance and celebration are continual needs of the church.

As long as the church focuses on fitting into the world institutionally, it can do little more than conform to the world. When the church meets the world as the people of God, the church will counter the culture or, at least, provide an alternative to culture: love offered as an alternative to manipulation; compassion rather than control; truth before the lie; relationships chosen above attachments; flesh and blood preferred to celluloid images; God blatantly countering idols. The church may remain an institution, but the people will not be institutionalized.

The institutionalized are dependent conformers. They have traded away their freedom of choice to what appears to be a higher power. They believe what they are told and do little independent thinking. Their hope is placed in God as he works through others, never through themselves. To be open to the Spirit of God implies a great risk. Institutions exist to reduce our risk and transfer our responsibility to a few people.

Institutionalization leads people to believe they have a right to be loved. Self-care is seldom considered a possibility. "My responsibility" is a rare statement made by institutional women and men. The institutional person uses the word "they" much of the time. "They should set up a fund for . . . They should fix up, paint up and clean up . . ." The indiscriminate use of "they" is a disclaimer of helplessness. The institutionalized have eyes but no hands. They see what needs to be done but assume only a faceless, voiceless "they" have the authority and power to accomplish the task. At best the task envisioned will be reported. "Somebody needs to fix that," so says a card-carrying member to a card-carrying, dues-paying member. "They should," comes the reply, "But they won't." And so it goes, worthy, necessary projects are envisioned and reported but the dependence encouraged by the organization insures the project will be forgotten until "they" find the time to do it.

In this way institutionalization denies "calling." The "whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might" is rendered useless. Hope finds no home in the helpless disciple.

Community on the other hand is created by the pooling of gifts and strengths. Community may function as an institution, but it is formed by the grace of God. The center of life for the individual and a lively institution is Jesus Christ.

An organization that centers on itself encourages the use of but a few gifts. It soon turns these into idols and thereby renders them useless. The person is reduced to a personality. Created in the image of God becomes created in the image of my constituents.

The past forty years have seen the advent of at least three ministerial stereotypes. The building boom of the 1950's spawned the religious statesman. County seat towns and red brick churches danced in his head like sugarplums. The building program was the key to the ministerial kingdom. The consolidating 60's and disillusioned 70's produced the ministerial manager. During those years counting the riches of the kingdom and controlling the chaos seemed primary. The gospel according to pragmatism was asked to carry the day. It looks as if the desperate 80's have spawned the celestial celebrity. This magnificent, distant smile dismisses the ambiguity of being human, makes promises no one can keep and renders the biblical metaphors of shepherd and servant counterfeit. Escape seems to be the current institutional product offered to its frightened people.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your position in the power structure, institutions die and are reborn as communities. The restless Spirit of God has never allowed his people to remain in bondage for long, not even when the prison was of their own making. Biblically, renewing his promise to his people was a regular habit of God. The prophet's call to recommitment always signaled the dying of an institution and the birth of a community based on a clearer vision of God.

Essentially, institutions die because God's people are not meant to be helpless and dependent. He created his children to be free. Any organization constructed to relieve his children of responsible freedom dies even as it is built.

The frustration people feel when they cannot find out who is in charge is a mark of the presence of God's spirit. The disgust we feel when a worthy project goes unattended, the irritation we experience when we search for someone with the power to do or the permission to grant is nothing less than the restless Spirit of God.

In community the distance between seeing and doing is radically diminished. The power to care is God's gift to each disciple. No one can claim impotence at the point of compassion. To do so is to deny the one who first loved us and called us into being. Love waits for no committee report. Calling finds the way through red tape. If disciples delegate this power to compassion, they risk the chilling of their hearts. If they deny the efforts of their hand, they lose the Psalmist's hope, "Establish thou, O Lord, the work of our hands." The church attending to the lively presence of Jesus Christ nurtures the heads, hearts, and hands of each disciple. In such a community we discover the personal ministry that requires no legislation. We find liberty and permission already granted. We awaken to a calling that grows out of a long-term covenant with God rather than a short-term contract with the present. In community we discover that vision brings with it the power to accomplish.

Friendship: A Way Towards Christian Unity

Travis DuPriest

Associate Professor of English at Carthage College in Kenosha, WI, and assistant to the rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Racine, WI

> "From among the disciples, the Lord appointed seventy-two, and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit." (Luke 10:1)

During my sabbatical leave from full-time teaching I did quite a bit of traveling — to Los Angeles; Chicago; Cambridge, England; and Toronto. In each place I was a stranger. In each place I was befriended.

In Los Angeles, a retired black couple answered the request of their pastor to take in a visiting priest. In Chicago, a former student invited me to sleep on a pallet in his apartment after my Wednesday evening seminar and to help him open the Divinity School coffee shop every Thursday morning at 6:30.

In Cambridge, the friend of a cleaning woman for the college I was a member of made room for me in her small home. In Toronto, amidst a series of guest rooms in various colleges, a sister whom I'd met a year earlier in Cambridge, invited me often to eat, worship, and talk with her and her community.

I experienced firsthand the ancient tradition of hospitality, a discipline sometimes practiced almost unawares. And in each city, with each individual, family, or couple, I became friends. In fact, along with the numerous professional acquaintances, learning experiences, and the excitement of my own research and writing, I remember most fondly the late night talks with Dave in Chicago, the early morning talks over too many cups of coffee with Joe and Betty in Los Angeles, the evening discussions with Mrs. Earl in Cambridge, and the prolonged luncheons and teas with Sr. Frances in Toronto. In each instance, and for a variety of reasons, I had conversations about faith and religion and the church. Upon reflection, what strikes me is not that a number of conversations were on specifically religious topics — Dave is a graduate student in ethics, Betty is on the vestry of her church, Mrs. Earl is a "cultural Anglican" and moderately interested in the views of an American, Sr. Francis is a teacher of medieval studies and a member of a religious community, and I am an ordained minister — but rather that these people who had taken me in and with whom I had become friends represented a spectrum of religious traditions — Lutheran, Episcopal, African Methodist, Church of England, and Roman Catholic. And in Los Angeles I revived my acquaintance with a friend who describes himself as an agnostic with a Presbyterian heritage; we too talked about faith, religion, and the church.

I suspect that my experience is simply a microcosm. Most of us, in our daily lives, work with, talk with, socialize with

numerous people of other traditions, form friendships with people who belong to different Christian denominations and whose understanding and practice of faith differs from our own.

But it is in such pairing, such coupling, that unity has its beginning.

Christian unity begins in friendship.

Cicero knew this in antiquity.

St. Bonaventure knew this as he reconciled the "Spiritual" and the "Relaxati" factions within the Franciscan order in the 13th century.

Ailred of Rievaulx knew this in his monastery in the fourteenth century.

Mary Ward knew this as she bravely set out to visit the pope to defend the apostolic work of women in the early 17th century.

Jeremy Taylor, Anglican priest and bishop, knew this as he wrote his "Discourse on Friendship" amidst the strife of the interregnum.

In every age and every time friendships have warmed men's and women's hearts, even during ungodly circumstances. Throughout the centuries, Christ has continued to bless pairs, sent out as lambs among wolves.

Christian unity is somewhat like the eagerly-sought-after notion of community. Most of us would agree that while community needs much work to keep going, it is often something that simply cannot be built, no matter how hard human minds and hands and hearts may work at it. Most of us know stories, first or second hand, about disillusioned seminarians, or clergy, religious, or laity who have wanted and needed genuine community but who have not succeeded in achieving it.

Yet we know, as well, first or second hand, of those wonderful, special, mystical, grace-filled moments when — lo and behold — a community, almost miraculously, is formed unawares. I shall never forget how desperately friends at my seminary wanted but never really had community. How utterly blessed I was to become a part of a community which evolved during a long weekend when a group of us from many different seminaries was examined before ordination by our diocesan commissions and committees.

Community is a gift. Christian unity, likewise, is a gift. Free, undeserved, and unexpected. "Reunion," as former Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey once put it, is "the prize."

Yet we want it, yearn for it, bend toward it, now. And we anticipate it. As the eucharistic liturgy always anticipates the banquet in heaven, so do special moments and times such as shared communion and convenant relationships between churches bring a kind of return to Pentecost when each person spoke in his own language but yet was understood by everyone. "Thank God," as a Greek Orthodox archbishop has said, "the walls we build on earth reach not to heaven."

So, to remind the world — and let's face it, to remind us within our specific denominational families — God creates pairs, friends in an unfriendly world. Friends who are to go to all the towns and places Christ himself is to visit. Friends whose friendship does the work of a John the Baptist, that is, the work of the one who comes before rather than after Christ, as Anthony Bloom puts it — making way, tidying up, sweeping the clutter off the street, offering and receiving hospitality, and then — God help us — disappearing so that Christ can walk down a straight, narrow, clean, uncluttered path. So that Christ is not encumbered with our walls and divisions.

None of this is to say that the various official ecumenical dialogues are not good. They are, and we thank God for

them and for the work of the World Council of Churches which in some circumstances, such as the Coptic Church of Ethiopia, is the primary means of support amidst oppression. Our task forces and commissions are exciting and necessary. The "interim eucharistic sharing" between Lutherans and Episcopalians can be a model in gospel trust and fellowship. The Anglican-Roman Catholic statements and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic statements on baptism, eucharist, ministry, and authority are landmarks in church history. These documents of truth need, though, the documents of trust which come from within, from the heart.

Friendships form these trusts, make vivid in the world, a headstart fellowship, and enliven our written statements. As Krister Stendahl, a Swedish Lutheran Bishop and former professor of New Testament at Harvard, once stated, "If it hasn't happened in the churches, it hasn't happened." And as Quaker writer Thomas Kelly puts it, being convinced intellectually of something is far from experiencing it. It is one thing to say you believe in God, another "to experience the love of God . . . feeling it bathing me, brooding over me, opening up to me deep responses, and sending me out into the world with a new and vital love for God and my fellow man."

The real work of Christian unity first, last, and always, begins in the quietness of the human heart, where Christ is given birth, as Erasmus would say, and where each person potentially magnifies the Lord as Mary would say. Christ, the lover of souls, becomes our friend, and our spirits rejoice. The human heart and soul is the birth place of unity.

And this unity-with-Christ gives rise to what I would call the sacrament of friendship, a sacrament most certainly instituted by Christ which, as St. Bonaventure writes, is an aid to the mind on its journey to God.

Friendship, pure and simple, whereby one person — a bit selfishly, yes — finds in another a reflection of himself or herself but also — unselfishly — an extension of self, so that our small selves become enlarged. Friendships allow us no longer merely to quote but to live out Jesus' summary of the law — that we love God with our whole self, love ourselves, and love others as ourselves. Herein, as Thomas Kelly would put it, we experience first hand the Trinity because we know and feel that the Father begets the Son and that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Friendship is not a grand program, yet in authentic friendships — to paraphrase Jeremy Taylor — sorrows are allayed, passions eased, oppressions discharged, calamities given sanctuary, doubts counseled, minds clarified, thoughts emitted, and meditations improved. These are the virtuous rewards of friendship — between single persons, with married couples, and among persons of different denominations.

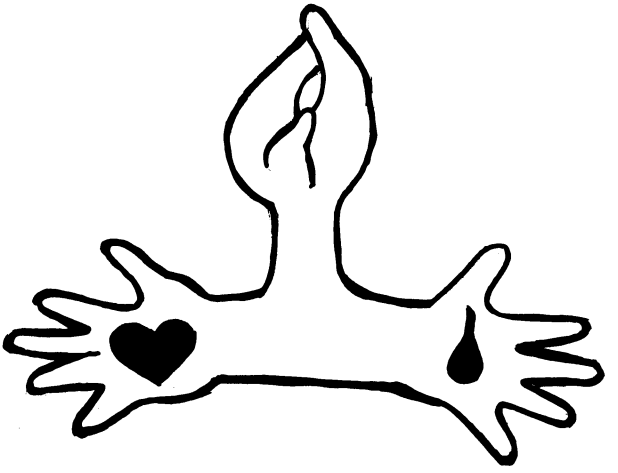
Then, through our friendships, Christ walks in and, as it were, our particular friendships broaden into ever-widening circles of friendship. Christ's spirit in these circles of friendship includes more and more people. The arbitrary lines we draw seem out of place, not a part of God's design. Our towers of Babel crumble into God's rekindled Pentecost.

Christ's work as shepherd is to find more and more land, more and more sheep.

No miracles occur in the way the world wants miracles to occur. Our friendships will not make the evening news. Yet a great miracle will occur — the curtain in the Temple will be torn, and men and women of different backgrounds and

postures of faith no longer will bare false witness, but stand side by side, arm in arm before Christ — no longer arguing or debating, but feeling and enjoying the sweet embrace of God.

O Lord God, King of the Universe, may our small, particular friendships remain small in that they keep us humble and out of your way. But may they like a sacrament be outward and visible signs of your inward and invisible gifts of undeserved love. May the sacrament of friendship give us solace and strength so that one friendship becomes many and that, in the end, we, like Paul, may discover that unity was among us all along and that in your kingdom on earth, as in Heaven itself, you embrace and are all in all. We thank you that our walls cannot reach to Heaven and that through Christ and friendship a glimpse of Heaven is ours today.



New Testament Commentaries: A Recommended List

Edgar Krentz
Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of New Testament
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

New commentary series and a host of individual commentaries have appeared since I published a list of recommended commentaries for the New Testament some years ago *(Currents* 3 [1976] 110-111). The list that follows takes account of that flood of commentaries, though a surprising number of the volumes from the 1976 list will appear again. All are in print.

I usually list two commentaries for each book, selected by the following criteria. The first commentary will be based on the Greek text, will use the full panoply of tools of critical scholarship, and will contain references to recent scholarly literature and debate. The second will normally not demand the use of Greek, will be critical in approach, and will differ in method and approach. The third volume (if given) is a monograph that provides an orientation to the background and thought of that volume (or writer). Many of these volumes date from before the time of inclusive language. Elimination of those works would at present time make a commentary list impossible.

The list, written for those in professional ministry who are compelled to wrestle with New Testament texts each week, is realistic: only English language titles are included. Space does not allow a discussion of the reasons for inclusion. Readers interested in such evaluative comments are urged to supplement this list with the chapter on "Individual Commentaries" in Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Books for Pastor and Teacher* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984) 56-94.

All titles can be ordered through Fortress Bookstore, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, (312) 752-1766. A complementary list is given in "So You Want to Buy an Old Testament Commentary" by Ralph W. Klein (*Currents* 11 [1984] 237-242). (I hope to provide a listing of extra-biblical texts useful for biblical interpretation in the near future.)

Core Collection

One Volume Commentaries

The Jerome Biblical Commentary. Ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968. $52.95. OR

Peake's Commentary on the Bible. Ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley. London, etc.: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963. $34.95.

Recommended Bible Dictionary

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. 4 vols. New York & Nashville: Abingdon 1962. Supplement volume, 1976. $112.00 5 volume set.

Matthew

Hill, David. *The Gospel of Matthew.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. $8.95.

Schweizer, Eduard. *The Good News According to Matthew.* Tr. David E. Green. Atlanta: John Knox, 1975. $18.95.

Kingsbury, Jack Dean. *Matthew,* Proclamation Commentaries. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977. $4.25.

Mark

Anderson, Hugh. *The Gospel of Mark.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. $8.95.

Nineham, Dennis Eric. *The Gospel of St Mark.* The Pelican Gospel Commentaries. Baltimore: Penguin, 1963. $6.95.

Achtemeier, Paul J. *Mark.* Proclamation Commentaries. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975. $3.50.

Luke

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Gospel According to Luke.* The Anchor Bible, vols. 28 and 28A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981-1985. $18.00 ea.

Danker, Frederick W. *Jesus and the New Age According to St. Luke.* St. Louis, MO: Clayton Publishing House, 1972. $12.00.

Maddox, Robert. *The Purpose of Luke-Acts.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982 (American distributor: Fortress Press). $22.50.

John

Barrett, Charles Kingsley. *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text.* 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978. $28.95.

Lindars, Barnabas. *The Gospel of John.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. $12.95.

Kysar, Robert. *John, The Maverick Gospel.* Atlanta: John Knox, 1976. $6.95.

Acts

Haenchen, Ernst. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971. $28.50.

Neil, William. *The Acts of the Apostles.* New Century Bible. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981. $6.95.

Krodel, Gerhard. *Acts.* Proclamation Commentaries. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981. $3.95.

Paul

Bornkamm, Günther. *Paul: Paulus.* Tr. D.M.G. Stalker. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1971. $15.95.

Keck, Leander, E. *Paul and His Letters.* Proclamation Commentaries. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. $3.95.

Romans

Käsemann, Ernst. *Commentary on Romans.* Tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980. $22.50.

Barrett, Charles Kingsley. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.* Harper's New Testament Commentaries (= Black's New Testament Commentaries). New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957. $13.95.

Donfried, Karl P., ed. *The Romans Debate.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977. $7.50

1 Corinthians

Conzelmann, Hans. *1 Corinthians.* Hermeneia. Tr. James W. Leitch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975. $21.95.

Barrett, Charles Kingsley. *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians.* Harper's New Testament Commentaries (= Black's New Testament Commentaries). New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1968. $17.95.

Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology.* Good News Studies, vol. 6. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983. $7.95.

2 Corinthians

Furnish, Victor Paul. *II Corinthians. Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary.* The Anchor Bible, vol. 32A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984. $18.00.

Barrett, Charles Kingsley. *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.* Harper's New Testament Commentaries. New York, Harper & Row, 1973. $13.95.

Theissen, Gerd. *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity.* Tr. John H. Schutz. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. $19.95.

Galatians

Betz, Hans Dieter. *Galatians.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. $27.95.

Cousar, Charles B. *Galatians.* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox, 1982. $13.95.

Sanders, Edward P. *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. $19.95.

Ephesians

Barth, Markus. *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary.* The Anchor Bible, vols. 34, 34A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974. $16.00.

Mitton, Charles Leslie. *Ephesians.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. $6.95.

Kirby, John C. *Ephesians: Baptism and Pentecost. An Inquiry into the Structure and Purpose of the Epistle to the Ephesians.* Montreal: McGill University Press, 1968. $12.50.

Philippians

Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Philippians.* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983. $19.95.

Martin, Ralph P. *Philippians.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980. $5.95.

Sampley, J. Paul. *Pauline Partnership in Christ: Christian Community and Commitment in Light of Roman Law.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980, $9.95.

Colossians & Philemon

Lohse, Eduard. *Colossians and Philemon.* Hermeneia. Tr. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris. Philadelpha: Fortress, 1971. $19.95.

Schweizer, Eduard. *The Letter to the Colossians.* Tr. Andrew Chester. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1982. $13.50.

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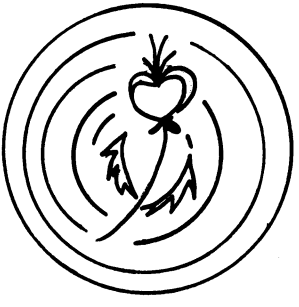
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Psalm 91

I lie awake
fearing terrors
which grip me fast
till break of day —
shadows on the wall
(real and imagined),
plagues stalking
through the dark
to contaminate
the sleeping children,
scourges that wreak havoc
on all we love
and own,
untamed lions, dragons,
sirens
which wail with urgency
into my soul . . . .

I throw
the sweat-soaked sheets
into morning's wash,
but terror fleets by
like an arrow
aimed at the heart —
barbed words, a poisoned pen,
the cruel bureaucratic squeeze
that saps life and empties purse,
snares set
to trip my darlings
while they play,
bombs which destroy,
mutilate for no purpose,
the ingenious skill
of the torturer . . . .

Who will save me
from the adder's sting,
remove boulders from my path
lest I stumble?
Under whose wings
will I find
feathered shelter
when disaster nears?

I seek to know the name
I must invoke
that I may cling
in trust . . . .

Elizabeth-Anne Vanek

Book Reviews



INHERITING THE LAND: JOSHUA. By E. John Hamlin. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. xxiii + 207 pages. Paper. $6.95.

Rarely in recent history have so many commentary series been launched as in the past half decade, and this volume marks yet another series. What is distinctive about this series is reflected in its series title. It seeks to be international (authors from a variety of countries who attempt consciously to relate the Scriptures to many cultures) and theological (the emphasis is on message and application rather than on historical or literary details).

This approach allows Hamlin, whose ministry was in Thailand and Singapore, to proceed in interesting ways. Though he works section-by-section through Joshua, he dwells primarily on significant themes. Some are very insightful (cities of refuge, comparison of Rahab and Achan); some are traced through the entire Old and New Testaments (place of harlots, covenants); and some allow introduction of materials from Third World backgrounds (wilderness as discipline, the gods).

However, this approach has some distinct drawbacks. The thematic sometimes moves a goodly distance from the text itself (as in the discussion of idolatry in the Achan pericope), and sometimes becomes a mini-theology of the OT built around Joshua. The heavy emphasis on liberation seems both forced and too generalized to be helpful. Least clear was Hamlin's attempt to deal with the several "levels" of the text (Joshua, ninth century, Josiah's time, Second Isaiah).

As a correction to the "Latin captivity" of the church, the vision behind this series is challenging and exciting. As a theological contribution to Joshua studies, it is welcome. However, as a commentary on Joshua, it leaves many gaps.

Henry Rowold
Hong Kong

A NEW CONCORDANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. Edited by Abraham Even-Shoshan. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984. 1242 pages. Cloth. $39.00.

First published in Israel in 1977-1980, this concordance to all the Hebrew and Aramaic words in the Old Testament is a major break through. Among its innovations are the provision of several definitions for each word and a correlation of them with the listing of the word's occurrences. Since each occurrence is numbered, the editor can tell us that definition "a" fits occurrences 1-5, definition "b" occurrences 6-9 and the like. Although the definitions are in modern Hebrew, users without a knowledge of this language can at least get quick data on where words are used with similar connotations. The numbers with the entries provide helpful resources: one can discover in a flash that the word Yahweh occurs 6,639 times or the verb choose 172 times. It will also make it harder to omit an occurrence inadvertently.

This concordance supplies a listing of synonyms so that a scholar can easily pursue an entire semantic field. It also has a way of helping the reader pursue phrases (e.g. "man of God", "other gods", and thousands more) which are found in other concordances — if at all! — only with great difficulty. Hebrew and Aramaic words are provided in one listing, a

feature that will keep one from forgetting to check occurrences of a root in Ezra and Daniel.

As with Mandelkern's concordance, words are listed according to grammatical form (all the references to "my horse", then "your horse", "his horse", etc.), but the new concordance's listing of definitions, synonyms, and phrases make it far superior, in my judgment, to this old standby. Lissowky's concordance lists words strictly according to their sequence in the Bible regardless of their grammatical form ("horses" might be followed by "my horse", then by "a horse" and then by "my horse"). While this arrangement can at times be advantageous, as can Lissowsky's far larger type, it must be remembered that Lissowsky is by no means complete, restricting itself primarily to nouns and verbs.

Non-Israelis will wish they had access to the modern Hebrew definitions and will be confused for a time by chapter numbers being provided in Hebrew numerals, but their entree into this major new tool will be eased by a masterful thirty-seven page introduction to the concordance in English, written by John H. Sailhamer. I found that in less than a hour I knew how to use Even-Shoshan with speed and accuracy.

Perhaps this book will seem too technical to many readers, but its availability in an American edition is a significant boon to professional biblical scholars. And we know that alert *Currents* readers would want to know why.

Ralph W. Klein
Christ Seminary-Seminex
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

RICH AND POOR IN THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS: AN EXEGETICAL–SOCIAL INVESTIGATION. By Carolyn Osiek. The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series. No. 15. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983. xi and 184 pages. Paper. $6.00.

Osiek carefully indentifies herself as an historical exegete and forswears any intention of using sociological models in her analysis. She concentrates narrowly on the question of the rich and the poor in the community from which Hermas comes and she does not lose sight of the importance of theological themes in this apocalyptic work.

She has chosen to work in detail with Mandate 8:10 and the Second Similitude but also devotes two chapters to an investigation of other material from the Shepherd that deals with her topic. On the basis of comparative analysis of secular and epigraphic literature, she concludes that the rich that Hermas addresses are upwardly mobile artisans and craftsmen, not learned members of the upper social classes or members of established groups of wealthy persons such as the *ordines.* The fact that this document survived and for some time enjoyed quasi-canonical respect indicates that there were other communities who defined the "rich" in this same way. Osiek does not attempt to relate her conclusions to the New Testament reference to the rich and the poor, except in a passing way.

Herbert T. Mayer
Pilgrim Lutheran Church
St. Louis, MO

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JUDAISM. VOLUME ONE: INTRODUCTION; THE PERSIAN PERIOD. Edited by W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein. Cambridge: University Press, xvi and 464 pages. Cloth. $59.50.

The Persian period for Judaism begins with the defeat of Babylon by Cyrus and ends with the coming of Alexander. This is the time of the Chronicler, of Ezra and Nehemiah, of Third Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi, and, perhaps, of Job, other wisdom literature, and the final collecting of the Psalms.

The editors have invited an international and interconfessional team of scholars to trace out the lay of the historical and theological land in terrain made difficult by insufficient evidence and scholarly controversy. Sharply contrasting views emerge in the erudite surveys of secular and religious Jewish history by Peter Ackroyd and Morton Smith. While Ackroyd, for instance, thinks it inappropriate, on the basis of present evidence, to conclude that Ezra failed, Smith believes that the Persian authorities recalled him for attempting to compel divorce of all foreign wives. Gunther Wanke and Hartmut Gese sketch out what is known about prophecy, the psalter, and wisdom literature in this period.

The history and religion of Persia are also surveyed, as are the non-Palestinian Jewish communities at Elephantine and throughout the Diaspora. Essays deal with geography, numismatics (the first coins found in Palestine stem from the 6th century B. C. E. and were minted in Greece; local coins began to circulate in the 5th and 4th centuries), calendars and chronology, and the co-existence of Hebrew and Aramaic, the latter being dominant in commercial, legal, and administrative spheres.

Subsequent volumes in this most important series will deal with the period from the destruction of the temple to 250 C. E.

Ralph W. Klein
Christ Seminary—Seminex
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS. By Donald Guthrie. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. 281 pages. Paper. $4.95.

Leon Morris is editing a series of volumes to replace some of those published around 25 years ago in the Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series. Donald Guthrie, like Morris, is a veteran British evangelical scholar. Both are well known through their many publications.

Guthrie's commentary on Hebrews is thoroughly sensible, and perhaps almost predictable. That is to say, it emphasizes the doctrinal (the superiority of Jesus over the prophets, the angels, Moses, Joshua and the high priests), seeing "exhortations" clustered in the final three and a half chapters. It emphasizes the connections with Biblical Judaism and slights, I think, connections with other forms of Judaism (whether of Qumran, the rabbis, or especially Philo). The original audience is regarded as Jewish rather than Gentile in background, so the worldview is historical (and horizontal) rather than spatial (and vertical).

This volume is supposed to be up-to-date and take into consideration changes in our needs and situation. It is a bit dismaying therefore to find Guthrie using "man" and "men" so frequently and unnecessarily.

Nevertheless, once oriented to the writer's biases, the reader can plunge in and learn much from this very solid treatment of Hebrews. The new Tyndale is a worthy offspring of the old.

Robert H. Smith
Christ Seminary-Seminex
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Berkeley, CA

WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JEWS AND JUDAISM. By Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein. Waco: Word Books, 1984. 336 pages. Cloth. $13.95.

This is a very useful, reliable, and readable survey of just what the title indicates: what Christians should know about Jews and Judaism. The book can be read through as a whole — it holds the reader's attention easily — or used as a reference work for information on par-

ticular subjects. Topics covered include the basics of Jewish belief and ethics; the nature and meaning of Jewish worship, including special sections on the Sabbath and the various festivals of the Jewish year; the Jewish life cycle (birth and circumcision, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, marriage, death and remembrance); the dietary laws; the origin and present situation of the Jewish "denominations" (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist). Also included are chapters on the Holocaust and the Jewish response to it and on the State of Israel.

The final portion of the book is devoted to a historical and contemporary survey of Jewish-Christian relations, including both the darker and the brighter sides. The author himself has been very active in Jewish-Christian dialog, first as co-director of interreligious affairs for the Anti-Defamation League, and now as the president of an organization called the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews. He has specialized in relations to Conservative Evangelicals, an orientation which is reflected in the new organization and to a certain extent in the present volume. This is an element of strength in the book, since it means that he deals with Christianity in terms of its classic central affirmations, and takes pains to present Judaism in terms of its classic central affirmations as well. Highly recommended.

Franklin Sherman
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

REPORT ON THE SHROUD OF TURIN. By John H. Heller. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983. Cloth. 225 pages. $15.95.

Heller's is a first person account, a blow-by-blow description of how he first became aware of the Shroud, how as a hard-headed scientist he got sucked in almost against his will to doing research on a religious relic, how he felt and thought about the task and about other members of the team, what his role was, what conclusions he has reached and by what methods.

The book is a clear window into the inner workings of a) Heller's heart and head, and b) the Shroud of Turin Research Project.

Heller himself emerges as a man who brims with energy and humor, loves a scientific challenge, cares deeply about the truth, understands how to tackle a problem, knows what he does and doesn't know and is not afraid to tell you.

Heller's own specific role was to test Shroud fibers, especially those taken from two areas: the straw-yellow body image and reddish "bloodstains." As Heller proceeded, he was conscious of the verdicts of Walter McCrone.

McCrone of the Walter McCrone Research Institute of Chicago is the hero of all who question the authenticity of the Shroud. McCrone had examined fibers taken from the Shroud and declared that both body image and "bloodstains" were formed by iron oxide earth pigments and had furthermore stated his belief that the Shroud was the product of some pious medieval painter's workshop.

McCrone apparently relied on visual examination of the fibers. "I know blood when I see it through the microscope." He performed no chemical analysis, took no spectrogram, did not test the Shroud with x-rays for fluorescence or obtain any radiographs, did not examine it with infrared light. And he failed time and again to meet the members of the Project, even when he announced beforehand that he would gather with them in an effort to resolve differences. He simply sent word that he had looked at the fibers and could recognize blood when he saw it.

Heller describes the pains he took to examine the red particles on the fibers. He was not at all content to examine them visually. He applied a series of chemical and physical tests, and he gives the details of those tests and names the experts who worked with him and confirmed his results. He also consulted art historians and then tested for various kinds of organic and inorganic binders or vehicles for pigments.

Heller's conclusions: The reddish stains really are blood. The straw-yellow body image was produced by some kind of oxidation process and not by the application of any kind of paint. No known binder or vehicle for pigment has left any traces on

the fibers. Everything about the Shroud, the image, and the stains is consistent with its being the burial cloth of a crucified person. We do no know the age of the cloth or the process by which the oxidation of the image areas occurred.

The Shroud continues to fascinate, and this is one of the best books on that mysterious linen.

Robert H. Smith
Christ Seminary-Seminex
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Berkeley, CA

CRY OUT! By P.E. Quinn. Nashville: Abingdon, 1984. 205 pages. $10.95.

Quinn is a speaker for International Child Advocacy and Resources Enterprises, a program that focuses on the prevention and treatment of child abuse through education and therapeutic intervention. He traces a life of emotional and physical abuse that began with the break-up of his natural family and continued in his experiences with the welfare system where he was abused by those who were to care for him. His adoptive parents mistreated him emotionally and physically until they kicked him out "as not worth the trouble anymore." He became convinced that he deserved to suffer and be destroyed. Change came only when he heard the still small voice of God speaking through his memory of a dog he loved and of a childhood song, "Jesus Loves Me."

In his closing paragraph, he pleads: "Please join me and others in crying out for mercy and compassion on behalf of all children, everywhere. Speak up, learn, get involved. Our children need us desperately. Even more, we need our children — healthy and alive."

This book could help an abused child, a former abused child, a child abuser (past or present), or a parent (present or future). Our active and caring love for our children must reflect the perfect love of God who is love.

Roger M. Giese
Protestant Chaplain at
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
Boys Town, Nebraska

THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK. By Dorothee Soelle. Philadelphia: Westminster. 1984. 184 pages. Paper. $9.95.

A collection of writings and lectures, (including a "Liturgical Fantasia"), some quite recent, others from as early as 1973, show us the vitality, breadth and depth of this remarkable theologian. She was already seeing the implications for the very nature and naming of God while most of the rest of us were simply beginning to raise our consciousness. One might divide the book into those chapters which are about suffering and fear, intolerance and economic oppression and those about "women's issues" but one would then miss the subtle but overwhelming connections. Liberation and feminism . . . are inextricably bond.

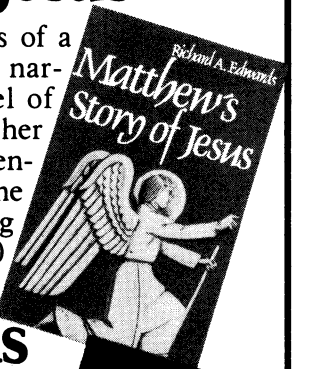
Speaking on the oppression of men, Soelle reclaims "verbal hesitiation," which often characterizes women as insecure. "In our sexist society, this kind of verbal hesitation is interpreted as a failing, as a lack of clarity and precision...but what this kind of searching for words actually reveals is a living relationship with language and a refusal to simply repeat what one already knows." It is obvious that she realizes women do not simply want to be like men...to have "an equal share of the pie as it is. They realize that they will have to bake an altogether different pie."

Likewise Soelle reclaims Mary. Although Mary has been a symbol of submissiveness she is also a symbol of subversion. "Raising someone up on a pedestal is a strategy of domination. Women are glorified, elevated and praised so that they can be humiliated, restricted, and blocked at every turn." But Mary also undermines the power of the ruling classes, thereby being subversive in the way police in Latin America use the word.

One has come to expect significant writings in liberation theology from Latin American and from Africa. Soelle writes from Europe and thereby provides a glimpse of our own future...or our present. In her "Rebellion Against Banality" she shows us how mass atheism takes over without a struggle. The results of areligiosity, as she sees it, is isolation.

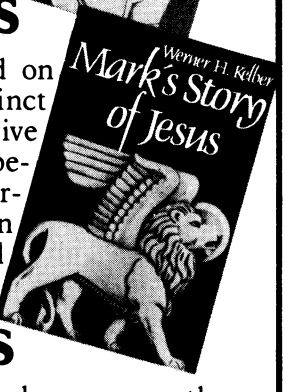
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Norma Everist
Wartburg Theological Seminary
Dubuque, Iowa

WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT WAR AND PEACE? By Thomas A. Shannon. New York/Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983. 131 pages. Paper. $3.95.

In a brief but thorough way, Shannon presents a broad analysis of the discussion of war and peace as it has developed within the Roman Catholic community.

He begins with a discussion of the development of the just war tradition. Here Shannon notes that most religions of the ancient world, as well as contemporary religions, have found a way to justify or accomodate themselves to the reality of war. The major elements of the present-day understanding of the Christian ethics of war were provided by Ambrose, Augustine, and Aquinas. While pacifism was always a modest option, the dominant tradition is that of sanctioning the participation of Christians in war.

Shannon then moves into an examination of Roman Catholic teachings from the end of the last century until the present. The whole issue has become increasingly complex in the aftermath of two world wars, Korea, Vietnam, the Holocaust, obliteration bombing, deterrence, the arms race, and nuclear weapons. He surveys the thinking of such people as John Ford, Gerald Kelly, John Murray, Paul Furfey, Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker, Thomas Merton, Daniel Berrigan, J. Bryan Hehir, Charles Curran, and Gordon Zahn.

The author also explores contemporary developments, particularly statements made by American bishops, Bishop Matthieson of Amarillo, Texas, stated: "We urge individuals involved in the production and stockpiling of nuclear bombs to consider what they are doing, to resign from such activities, and seek employment in peaceful pursuits." He also provides a commentary on the 1982 draft of the pastoral letter of the North American Bishops on the Morality of War.

After evaluating the questions about the theology of war, he turns to a proposal for the development of a theology of peace. It would include, in part, a spirit of internationalism, a spirit of trust, a spirit of freedom, and a spirit of love.

This book offers a wealth of thought-provoking material. While its emphasis is on the development and current status of Roman Catholic thinking, it will be helpful to all other Christians as well.

James W. Boldman, Jr.
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
East Chicago, Indiana

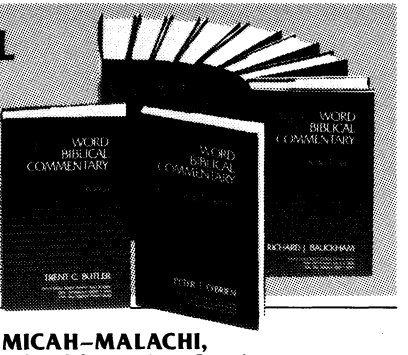
ATTENTION TO THE MYSTERY: ENTRY INTO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. By Yves Raguin. Tr. Kathleen England. New York: Paulist, 1982. 119 pages. Paper. $5.95.

This is a useful aid for those who want to develop spiritual practices to a higher level. However, the reader should be alert to the fact that the author's audience focus seems to swing from the novice to the expert. Some of his chapters contain some of the best suggestions "for getting started," while his chapter on the experience of God will be fully understood only by those who have had the experience. At the same time, it is one of the most lucid descriptions of that experience.

He defines the central core of spiritual life as the "awareness of this special loving relationship with God" (p. 21) or a "respectful waiting for the divine [interior] light." (p. 40) He stoutly defends celibacy

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as a better state for those who would achieve fuller attention to the mystery, and describes it as a "love encounter that far outstrips any other love."

The book can almost be described as a commentary on St. Augustine's spiritual principles. The author also draws on his acquaintance with many Oriental spiritual masters. The book will repay reading by any who hunger for a deeper understanding and experience of God's presence.

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THE ROOTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE AGE OF RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION. By Heiko A. Oberman. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, xii and 163 pages. Cloth. $13.95.

Was Reuchlin the father of Jewish emancipation, Erasmus the paragon of tolerance and the champion of human dignity, and Luther a bigoted anti-Semite? The answer to all three questions is no, says Oberman, a distinguished church historian at Tübingen. While Reuchlin sought resources for Christian theology in the cabala (Jewish mystical writings), he criticized the Talmud and was willing to allow Jews to be citizens only if they made wide-ranging improvements. Erasmus' thought was permeated by a virulent theological anti-Judaism. Luther's position is much more complex. Even the youngest Luther believed that the Jews as Jews had no future — his critique of Judaism as a religion is just as uncompromising in 1523 as it is in later years. Conversion would be the only route to salvation (baptized Jews belong unqualifiedly to the people of God) though he never expected a mass conversion of the Jews.

Luther saw a whole series of perils on the horizon: Jews, heretics, the pope, and the Turks. He called for a mustering of troops under the "captain Christ" since the devil was mounting the final apocalyptic offensive through his legions of Romans, heretics, Turks, and Jews. The reformer's remarks can be read as Jew-baiting material and added to the arsenal of evidence for his anti-Semitism only if we ignore his bracketing together of anti-Jewish writings and apocalyptic expectation. In addition, his bitterness is mitigated somewhat by the fact that what is said literally about the Jews holds true allegorically to refractory Christians and to the stubborn capacity for sin in all of us: "We miserable Christians are ourselves today's most conspicuous Jews."

Oberman's nuanced position does not exonerate Luther, but he notes that Luther moved beyond his predecessors in two important respects. First, he had strong influence on Justas Jonas and Andreas Osiander, who hoped for a common millennial future for Jews and Christians. Second, a hymn, apparently written by him, moves far away from the charge of deicide:

Our heinous crime and weighty sin
Nailed Jesus to the cross, God's true Son.
Therefore, we should not in bitterness scold
You, poor Judas, or the Jewish host.
The guilt is our own.

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Briefly Noted

A Handbook of Christian Theologians. Edited by Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman. (Abingdon, $12.95). The first edition of this work appeared in 1965 (cost then, $2.95) and contained biographical sketches and theological summaries of 26 leading religious thinkers, none of whom was Roman Catholic and only one of whom was from the non-Western church. This expanded edition (229 more pages) contains sketches and summaries of 12 additional men [sic] in the Euro-American academic tradition, including Chardin, Rahner, Thielicke, Ellul, Henry, Ricoeur, Schillebeeckx, Pannenberg [entry by Carl E. Braaten], Moltmann, Tracy, Cobb, and Küng, 6, of whom are Roman Catholic. A splendid way of getting au courant with who's who in the theological world!

The Rural Crisis and the Church's Ministry

Roger Fjeld *President, Wartburg Theological Seminary*

An urban sociologist described the anti-urban bias of the early practitioners of his trade by saying that Thoreau seemed to be their favorite model. While that is surely an exaggeration, it does point to a factor that was long a problem in American social thought. That was the tendency to idealize rural ways of life and to see urban settings as the antithesis of everything American. Nor were urban sociologists the only ones to invoke that bias. Some of the most powerful American writers in the 19th and early 20th centuries carried the same outlook, often picturing rural people and rural ways as good and characterizing the urban settings as evil, given to disorder. The same tilt toward rural values characterized many state legislatures and much governmental policy at both federal and state levels. In fact, the "one man - one vote" posture of recent years was an attempt to redress a continuing rural bias at a time when the vast majority of the American population is urban.

Is a reverse situation now developing? Has the mentality of both professional and amateur students of the American scene become so thoroughly urban that there is neither understanding of nor empathy for the crisis which now strikes rural America? Have urban models come to dominate our minds as thoroughly in this generation as rural models used to control our thinking? For conservatives that urban model might be a corporate executive or an urban yuppie; for liberals it might be laboring people, the urban poor, or the oppressed urban minorities. The point is not that one type serves as everyone's model but that all of the dominant models are essentially urban.

Nor is this just the problem of urban dwellers in regard to rural life. The leadership of one national farm organization has come under heavy fire from rural people for scheduling a national convention in the Hawaiian Islands and for trying to minimize the rural crisis. Those in the midst of the crisis see this as wanton disregard of the plight of some farmers by other farmers. For a farm organization to convene in a Pacific playground while foreclosure threatens members' neighbors is not unlike the times in recent decades when conferences about urban poverty were scheduled in plush hotel settings. The issue is sensitivity. The issue is concern. The issue is solidarity with a group facing new poverty.

What this suggests is that the current working models for assessing the problems of American society may be so thoroughly urban or cosmopolitan that they are not useful for understanding the particular plight of contemporary American agriculture. There seem to be few who understand, or even try to understand, the nature and extent of the present rural crisis. Many are simply ignoring the problems. Others at least acknowledge that it is not "business as usual" on the farm, but simplistically stereotype the people who are caught in crisis as speculators or as poor managers. Admittedly it is easier to see the poverty of the urban poor than to understand the economic issues that impoverish someone who has large investments in land, equipment, and production costs. But these issues need nevertheless to be understood, for the sake of those who are in the crisis.

What should the church do in relation to this set of rural problems? What special ministry is needed toward the individuals, families, communities now experiencing so much economic distress? Some things are clear. One is that we

need to offer consolation to and community with those who are losing their livelihood. When people lose their working place in society, whether that comes through loss of job, business, or farm, they experience a peculiar sense of loneliness. They need opportunities to grieve, to share, to regain perspective, to regain hope. The church has learned to do this is a number of settings and in response to a number of human crises. We need to equip ourselves to offer that ministry to the current victims of the rural crisis.

We also need to become advocates for economic justice for the farmer. The church has developed the rationale and the ability to practice advocacy on behalf of people in a variety of settings — it is time to apply that ministry to the rural issues. That, in turn, means that we need to develop better understanding of the complex issues that have led to this crisis. We will learn some of that from the victims themselves. We can also learn from those who are specialists in agricultural and economic issues. But learn we must, if we are to fulfill our special ministries in and with rural America. There are systemic issues at the base of this crisis. This is not simply a matter of a few farmers caught speculating or reaching too far, too fast. These are people struggling to practice their vocations during a time of great upheaval. Their churches need to address the systemic problems, even as we also minister to the individuals.

What can/should seminaries do? At a minimum, we have an obligation to try to understand the problems faced by rural America. Conferences on rural ministry will help.

Interdisciplinary courses and workshops will help. Direct contact with farmers and agribusiness people will help. And the starting place for that is a positive sense of rural life and the farmer's vocation as an important part of the created order. We need to equip ourselves — seminaries, parish pastors, church structures — for that significant ministry. The crisis is real and the need is great.

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