December 1984
Volume 11
Number 6

CURRENTS in theology and mission

Surprise Package VI

CONTENTS

Page

Editorial: Take Up Your Cross and Follow 322
Ralph W. Klein

Proclaiming the Hidden Kingdom: Preaching on the Gospel Lessons in Mark 325
David L. Tiede

Wounded Lion: Mark 9:1 and Other Missing Pieces 333
Robert Smith

Incarnate Us 349
Ruth E. Sievert

The Messianic Secret in Mark 350
Raymond Martin

A Pilgrimage for Unity: Jerusalem in January, 1984 353
Doris Graesser

The Four Cycles of Ritual in Christian Observance 357
Jay C. Rochelle

Redeeming Dressage: Or, The Sermon on the Mounts 363
Cathy Ammlung

It's a Baby 369
Thomas G. Sinnott

A Letter to Joseph 370
E. A. Zeile

Epiphany — Based on a hymn of Saint Ambrose on the Canonical Hours 371
Thomas M. Milke

A "Meditation" on the Advent Lectionary 372
Dean L. Moe

Jolly Old Saint Nicholas: Christmas in Reverse 374
Mike Sherer

Book Reviews 376

Volume 11 Index 383

A New Responsibility for World Lutherans ..... Inside Back Cover
William E. Lesher

Drawings by Scott Holl

Staff

Editor: Ralph W. Klein

Printed In U.S.A.

Associate Editors: Morris J. Niedenthal (LSTC, Chicago)
Duane A. Priebe (Wartburg, Dubuque)
Robert Smith (PLTS, Berkeley)

Assistant Editor: Louise Miller

Circulation Manager: Donna Goodwin

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

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

December 1984
Volume 11
Number 6

CURRENTS in theology and mission

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

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

Take up Your Cross and Follow

What a way to celebrate Christmas! We are used to hearing words about letting our gladness know no end, having our heart rejoice all night, or harking to a thrilling, sounding voice. But the message of Mark is full of tough love: to succeed this year, you had better look good on wood.

In this issue we provide three essays designed to help us preach and worship better in year B, when the majority of gospel readings come from Mark. First, **David L. Tiede** presents Mark as a Christology tract, a meditation on the wondrous, inscrutible, merciful ways of God. To proclaim this gospel faithfully requires that the concrete hazards of Christian obedience be discerned in each new era. Expect to find in Mark a series of glimpses into how Jesus acted as the agent of God's rule and as challenger of the systems and structures that enslave God's children.

What would our liturgy and church year look like if Mark really supplied all the Gospel readings? **Robert Smith** reminds us that there would be no Christmas or Epiphany, no resurrection appearances on the Sundays of Easter, no Ascension, and no Pentecost. He carefully shows what the lectionary makers included from Mark — and what they left out, and concludes that our standard church year forces a Lukan calendar on the other gospels. A truly Markan church year would summon us to confront sin, evil brokenness, hate, betrayal, and death. It might inspire us to create new festivals of suffering love. What mighty works on our part might celebrate Jesus' assaults on darkness? How might we learn of him to take up the cross, repudiate privilege, or seek excellence in service? How could we better express our solidarity with the Sufferer — or with all sufferers?

The "messianic secret" is among the most enigmatic elements in Mark. **Raymond Martin** seeks to solve it on three levels. The earthly Jesus, who had emptied himself, was unaware of his divine nature and pre-existence. His reticence to use messianic language about himself turns up in church traditions as deliberate secrecy on his

part. The evangelist employed the messianic secret to reinforce his instructions not to concentrate on glory and power. Rather, he hoped that all would remember the serving, suffering, and dying of the messiah and realize that this lifesyle is God's way for them as well.

At the first Pentecost Jerusalem was full of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers of Mesopotamia. Early in this year, during the week of Christian unity, **Doris Graesser** found the holy city full of Anglicans, Armenians, Lutherans, Ethiopian and Syrian Orthodox, and Roman and Greek Catholics. Each night she followed the ecumenical movement through the streets of the Old City and discovered the multicultural, multilingual, and multiliturgical tapestry that is the one church, to which we all belong.

Year in and year out, we pass through four cycles of ritual: blessings and dedications, rites of life identity, rites that mark the canonical hours and the rhythm of daily work, and the annual cycle or church year. **Jay C. Rochelle** provides extensive discussion of the annual cycle, tracing the history and meaning of each liturgical season.

Cathy Ammlung uses dressage (horse training) as a metaphor for discovering whether authority can be redeemed. All authority, she learns, must be cruciform and Christiform. We are subversives in the world who dare to use our authority as an instrument through which God will overthrow the world. What she does in the training of a horse (or what you do in . . .) becomes a beachhead which Christ may use as part of his new Kingdom.

For six years we have invited readers to contribute their own poems, essays, hymns, or other literary pieces appropriate to the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. This year's December Surprise Package includes works by **Thomas M. Milke, Dean Moe, Mike Sherer, Ruth E. Sievert, Thomas G. Sinnott,** and **E. A. Zeile.**

In spite of Mark's pared-down story line, we will all observe Christmas this year. We will wish each other a blessed or a happy

Yule in spite of the fact, or perhaps just because, we know that the Markan Jesus has quite a year planned for all of us, a year to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow. The book of Mark is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. It is up to us to complete it, out there where we can see the risen Christ, in our Galilees of humble service and suffering.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Proclaiming the Hidden Kingdom: Preaching on the Gospel Lessons in Mark

David L. Tiede
Professor of New Testament, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

Introduction: Proclaiming an Enigmatic Gospel

The return of Mark in the lectionary of the new church year (Series B) presents fresh challenges for interpretation and proclamation. Both those who have been uneasy about preaching once again from the second gospel and those who have been eagerly anticipating Mark's return may discover surprising new dimensions in this familiar narrative. The Gospel of Mark which had almost become captive to certain interpretative and dogmatic concerns has proved to be less predictable, less controllable and more provocative for preaching than expected.

The text of Mark has not changed, and many of the insights gained in the 1950's and 1960's have demonstrated their worth for interpretation. The christology of the book still provides a stunning corrective to any attempt to capture Jesus in schemes of religious enthusiasm. The profound irony of the "messianic secret" continues to caution all those who pretend to know the hidden counsels of God. Mark's "theology of the cross" still requires that all who confess Jesus to be the "Son of God" can never evade Good Friday for the sake of more "optimistic" gospels.

But the way that Mark is being read has been changing. Interpreters have begun to gain a new appreciation for the rich literary, scriptural and theological complexity of Mark. Yet such appreciation has been hard won over against the consensus of critical scholarship earlier in this century and in face of the long standing neglect of Mark in the lectionaries of the church.

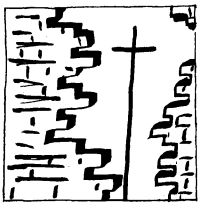
For hundreds of years Mark's voice was almost completely silent in the lectionary. Perhaps this resulted from the church's preference for Matthew and the assumption that Mark was merely a condensation of the "first Gospel." Or perhaps Mark's presentation of Jesus was just too esoteric, too caught up with the "secret" of Jesus identity, and too preoccupied with the awful truth of his crucifixion. Of course, the reader of Mark knew all along that Jesus is Son of God and Messiah and Son of Man. The "messianic secret" was not much of a "secret" from the Christian community. Yet Mark's story kept emphasizing that Jesus was not well understood at first even by those closest to him. Then as soon as they recognized him to be the Christ (8:29), they misunderstood (8:33), and eventually they all deserted him. The lack of resurrection appearance stories further increased the focus on Jesus' harsh death, with the Messiah only crying out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (15:34). The "good news" of the story was even obscure to the disciples and finally the women on Easter who simply fled away and "said nothing to any one, for they were afraid." (16:8) How can one proclaim this story as "good news"? Perhaps it is not surprising that Mark was neglected so long.

A testimony of hope . . . tried in the fires of despair

In recent decades Mark's very obscurity or enigmatic quality has been identified as its genius. At the same time, Mark has been brought into equal prominence with Matthew and Luke in the three year lectionary. Now the modern preacher has a problem which earlier generations had solved by neglect. How is Mark to be understood and proclaimed year after year? "Read this gospel backwards, beginning from the abrupt ending at 16:8," has been prudent advice. Mark has been grasped as "A passion narrative with an extended introduction," and its apocalyptic negation of all religious "explanations" of God's work in history has been driven home, especially in certain Lutheran existentialist interpretations. But is Mark's "theology of the cross" only a statement of divine judgment on human institutions and an exposure of blindness and pride among Jesus' own disciples? Does not Mark also attest a faith in God, a hope for salvation, and a confidence in the dominion of the crucified messiah? What "good news" may be proclaimed from Mark once the harsh truth concerning the human situation has been accepted?

Meanwhile the times which the preacher must address have also changed. Interpreters have suggested that preoccupation with the negation of Mark's "theology of the cross" may even have obscured the profound word of hope for a troubled world which Mark authorizes. And pastors have argued that Mark has a great deal more to offer for equipping Christians' discipleship and witness than simply a rehearsed polemic against triumphalism. Furthermore, many Christians throughout the world have recognized that the public declaration of the Gospel has itself become more and more of a challenge to the rulers and ideologies and dominions of this world. Certainly Mark's narrative still offers a clear corrective to all heretical attempts to reduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to naive optimism, ethereal religiosity, or "possibility thinking." Yet Mark's version of the Jesus story is also a strong public affirmation of the reality of the hidden kingdom of our God and Christ, a testimony of hope which has been tried in the fires of despair.

This article is an attempt to stimulate further pastoral interpretation of the Gospel according to Mark. A brief book list follows to draw attention to some promising academic work which will prove helpful for understanding Mark and for demonstrating how changing theological concerns and new methods of interpretation continue to open new doors of understanding. But for now, three aspects of Mark's project may be identified as particularly fruitful and complementary avenues of interpretation: christology, discipleship, and the kingdom of God. By building upon the clarity which has been achieved in understanding Mark's christology and instruction in discipleship, this essay invites the pastoral interpreter to consider that Mark's testimony concerning Jesus as



Messiah and the disciple as servant are part and parcel of the "good news of the Kingdom" in its hidden power and splendor which this Gospel proclaims. In his opening declaration that "the kingdom of God is at hand" (1:15), Mark's Jesus enters the public arena to challenge other claims to divine favor and begins the deployment of the strangely gracious reign of the God of Israel.

I. Jesus Is the King

The Gospel according to Mark has been aptly characterized as a christological tract. From the first line announcing "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1, Advent II) until the centurion's verdict at Jesus' death, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39, The Sunday of the Passion), Mark's retelling of the Jesus story constantly probes the questions of Jesus' identity and role as Messiah and Son of God. Some interpreters have even suggested that the outline for Mark's whole project was derived from the christological hymn of Philippians 2:6-11.

But this is not an abstract discussion of Jesus' divine "nature" or a metaphysical speculation concerning God as "Father" and Jesus as "Son." What is at issue is how Jesus will use his power and authority to exercise divine dominion. The unclean spirits tip off the reader to the cosmic struggle that has begun as they confess in terror that Jesus is "the Holy One of God" (1:21, Epiphany IV) and "the Son of God" (3:11). Throughout seven of the Sunday gospel lessons for the Epiphany season, the not so "secret epiphany" of this Messiah is declared from the first two chapters of Mark. Jesus' status before God and his royal-messianic stature are no mystery. Jesus even preempts the role of the Son of Man who, according to Daniel 7, would execute divine judgment at the end of days from the clouds of heaven, while Jesus indicates that he already has the authority to forgive sins *on earth* (2:10).

The "mystery" or "secret" of Mark is, nevertheless, grounded in Jesus' identity which has been made so manifest. Just as episode after episode reveals Jesus as royal, theocratic, and eschatological agent, the narrative is peppered with reports of awe, astonishment, questioning, fear, silence, amazement, and opposition. Knowing *who Jesus is* does not guarantee knowing *what Jesus will do!* The Christian reader and the preacher would do well to take notice of the uncertainty and hope and disbelief which meet the clear epiphanies of the early chapters of Mark. The "mystery" is hidden in the secret ways of God whose dominion will not be exercised according to general human schemes or expectations.

The confession of Peter and the three subsequent passion predictions in Mark 8, 9, and 10 sharpen this "christological" discussion. Peter's confession has been

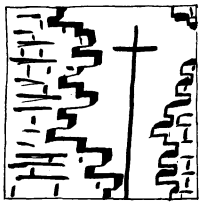
Mark's christological tract is . . . a running commentary on kingship.

seen as the "hinge" around which the whole gospel turns (Mark 8:27-30, Pentecost XVII). Just when Peter correctly confesses Jesus to be the Messiah, he misunderstands the consequence of this identity for Jesus and for Jesus' disciples. The disciples are unable to comprehend what Jesus says "plainly" (8:32) about his "way" or mission to suffering and crucifixion. And when Jesus dies amid the sarcastic confessions of the "Christ, the King of Israel" (15:12, 18, 26, 32), the enigmatic word of the centurion reveals the crucified Messiah to be truly the Son of God (15:39). The reader knows who Jesus is as Messiah and Son of God throughout the story, but then what kind of divine dominion has God chosen to exercise through Jesus' kingship?

Go and learn what this means! Mark's christological tract turns out to be a meditation on the wondrous, inscrutible, merciful ways of God. The revelation of the identity of Jesus is not merely a corrective to christological heresies. This Gospel is a disclosure of the depth of divine compassion and condescension in the person and reign of the king of Israel who submits even to crucifixion in the exercise of the kingship of God. Do not mistake such hidden strength for weakness! Do not miss the clarity of the confession of Jesus as King and Messiah and Son of God by disciples and demons and accusers and bystanders! None of them fully understands, but all are attesting the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of the reign of the God of Israel whose ways are beyond human comprehension. Mark's announcement of the reign of Jesus may confound the reader with they mystery of God's rule in the world: "Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you" (see Acts 15:41, Hab. 1:5). But the triumph of God is never in doubt, and the power of God's mercy is already being disclosed for those blessed with eyes and ears to discern that it is this Jesus who has been exalted to dominion in "the name that is above every name" (see Phil. 2:9).

Mark's christological tract is, therefore, a running commentary on kingship. It is a profound critique of the way that "those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them" (10:42). Distilled through the early Christians' experience of the might and "divine right" of Roman imperialism, the story of Jesus has become an alternative vision of how God's gracious will has been exercised in the world. The christology of Mark is a testimony to Jesus as God's ruler *par excellence.* Far from offering a benediction on the *status quo* or conceding that "might makes right," Mark's story of Jesus testifies to the hidden strength of God's ultimate work "from below."

The power of God is still power, and the kingship of Jesus is genuine in its authority and triumph. King Jesus identifies so completely with those who ap-



parently have no power or luck or favor of the gods that as he dies he even joins the lament of those who feel forsaken by God (15:34, Psalm 22:1). No human triumphalism or political optimism can withstand such a stark vision, but the triumph of God in the reign of God's Messiah Jesus is not in doubt.

Jesus is the King, God's own messiah. Make no mistake about it. The ultimate power with which to contend in heaven and earth is not the Caesar or Prime Minister or Congress or the "almighty dollar" or the threat of nuclear destruction. If Jesus' healing of the paralytic began to show that he as "Son of man" had divine authority "on earth" to forgive sins (2:1-2), how much more will his gracious dominion be disclosed when his life of service as Son of man is given "as a ransom for many" (10:45)! Jesus' death is not only the correction to misunderstandings of his power which may arise from dwelling on his miracles or authority. His crucifixion also confirms and reveals the grandeur of Israel's vision of God's dominion against the backdrop of human delusions of power and control.

II. The Way of the King Is the Way of the Servant

Mark's christological meditation also is an instruction in the Christian life. It is appropriate that the central section of the Gospel occurs in the extended Pentecost season because Mark's repeated rehearsals of Jesus' passion predictions are all linked directly with counsel on discipleship (see especially Mark 8:27-35, 9:30-37, and 10: (32-34) 35-45: Pentecost XVII, XVIII, XXII). Once again, Mark's presentation both confronts and confirms Christian readers in their understanding of the calling to follow this Jesus.

Perhaps Mark's christological clarifications may even be best understood as directed to the life of the Christian community in the midst of the anguish of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem. The only direct aside which the evangelist offers to the reader occurs in connection with Jesus' prediction concerning the dire fate of the temple ("let the reader understand," 13:14). Jesus' identity and role as ruler are directly relevant to the particularities of being a disciple in the midst of an imperiled world which does not recognize his dominion.

Modern preachers have been both delighted and perplexed by Mark's treatment of the disciples. They are depicted so negatively in their confusion, misunderstanding and abandonment of Jesus that the polemical tone of the narrative is easily recognized. The situation becomes especially painful in connection with each of the passion predictions discussed above where the disciples first rebuke Jesus for speaking of his mission to die (8:32), then blithely discuss with one another "who is the greatest" (9:34), and finally are caught in a dispute over sitting at the right and left hand of

The "way of the cross" was not merely a spiritual exercise.

Christ in his glory (10:37). The human folly of these scenes is so compelling that commentaries and sermons have been filled with remarks about the "ignorance," "stupidity," and "hard-heartedness" of the disciples. Many honest preachers have also recognized themselves and their ecclesiastical peers in these episodes.

But more is at stake in Mark's narrative than simply an exposure of human pretension. The community of faith is also being schooled in fidelity to the dominion of the Messiah. Each of the disciples' blunders is followed by instructions from Jesus in discipleship (8:34-38, 9:35-50, 10:38-45). The importance of these instructions is intensified by their being corrections of misunderstandings, but their content is alive to the realities of ongoing peril, struggle, and persecution. In the face of such genuine perils as possible crucifixions (8:34-37) and sharing the "cup/baptism" of the suffering Christ (10:38-45), Mark's account still attests the vindication of the Messiah's followers (see especially 9:1, 9:37, 41, 42-47).

Proclaiming Mark's Gospel faithfully requires that the concrete hazards of Christian obedience be discerned in each new era. In its social and political world, Mark's account spoke of real conflicts with the "powers that be." The "way of the cross" was not merely a spiritual exercise, and certainly no masochism was being suggested in the call to "take up the cross and follow" (see 10:34). The story reveals that self-giving and forgiveness and care for the powerless will continue to be met with hostility and suspicion and accusations. In every generation the reign of Christ stands at odds with the objectives and methods of the dominions of this world. This "way of the cross" must not be confined to a spiritual realm where it will be safe and innocuous. Followers of Jesus will never be at ease with a wide range of worldly power structures and profound conflicts are bound to occur. Mark's Gospel does not reinforce any illusions about how congenial the systems and structures of the world are to the reign of Christ.

Yet discipleship is truly a way of joy and glory, a continuing revelation of the gracious dominion of God. More than an exposure of the idolatries of power and a critique of self-delusion, Mark's story attests the near vindication of the truth of Christian belief in the reign of Christ: "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power" (9:1). The eschatological character of this faith is clear in Mark. No gradualism or "Christianizing" of human culture is envisioned (see especially 9:42-48). Nevertheless, Christians have been given to understand that the fundamental resources of hope and health, power and glory, justice and freedom have been supplied within history by God through Christ Jesus. Although the overt forces of power will seek to establish their claims and attempt to



tyranize humanity with punishments and rewards, the covert dominion of Christ persists and provides the faithful with the kind of life, hope and safety which will endure beyond the present age.

III. The Kingdom of Jesus Is the Kingdom of God

Proclaiming Mark's Gospel leads to public witness to God's ultimate and gracious will for the world, for humanity, and for each person. Evangelism is a natural consequence because this strangely wonderful story of Jesus conveys a hope and dignity which surpasses any human despair and shame. The evangelism which Mark's narrative equips will never be a recitation of human virtue and success, although it will be well acquainted with joy and blessing.

This is a testimony which knows of a salvation and justification for living which comes from outside of us. Mark's recitation of the "good news" is singularly aware of how God's ways and plans to redeem and restore us are unexpectedly contrary to the coercive systems and powers which dominate our lives and claim to be our destiny. This version of the Jesus story is good news for us in our most dire straits because it is so candid about human folly and so unafraid of those who seem to dispense life and death. Even a shameful death accompanied by official denunciations by all the authorities and powers has been marked as one most specific occasion in which the mockers have been mocked by the Lord of heaven and earth. On one level, this story is merely passed along by one grateful human creature to another as the truth which is too good to withhold.

Mark's christological meditation is, therefore, never merely objective, told at arm's length from the human predicament. It is not so much a systematic exposition of Jesus' Messiahship or Kingdom as it is a series of glimpses into how Jesus acted as the agent and bearer of God's rule within this world and in challenge to the systems and structures which enslave God's children. Episode by episode, the "secret" of the Gospel is unpacked as the "mystery" of the reign of God (see Mark 4:10-12), so that the pretenses and posturing of religious, economic, personal and political power are exposed while divine freedom, grace, and power are revealed in Jesus' words and deeds. It is no surprise that challenges and resistance confront Jesus from the start (see 1:24, 45) and that plots on his life soon follow (3:6). Mark's story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God (1:1) is a disclosure of God's kingdom on earth.

Discipleship, in turn, is the arena where the strangely gracious and powerful reign of God's Messiah continues to confront, expose and critique the dominion of the powers that oppose God, both human and suprahuman.

Evangelism . . . is an enterprise of the hidden kingdom.

Evangelism or telling the gospel truth or making other disciples thus involves much more than individual salvation. It is an enterprise of the hidden kingdom, declaring the ministry and mission of Jesus to be the ultimate disclosure of how God has chosen to exercise gracious dominion now, in the midst of the principalities and powers, and at the end of time.

Mark's vision of the reign of Christ and the mission of the church is an invitation to the preacher to ponder the mystery of God's will and power in a world where economic, social, political, physical and psychological factors seem to control our destiny and determine our worth. Mark's story of Jesus moves far beyond pursuing a narrow polemic against ancient or modern christological heresies. It directs the interpreter into the broad public realm where the value and fate of humanity and of each person are already subject to various interpretations and actions. And this statement of the gospel of Jesus Christ authorizes the declaration of the ultimacy of the gracious dominion of God's Messiah Jesus.

The Gospel according to Mark is a wondrously strange narrative, full of sharp edges, defying human efforts to explain, domesticate or otherwise control the Jesus story. And, thankfully, Mark is a meditation on the Messiahship of Jesus which discloses the awesome power and rule of God made perfect in the dominion of the one who was obedient unto death.

For Further Reading

Morna D. Hooker. *The Message of Mark.* London: Epworth, 1983.

Jack Dean Kingsbury. *The Christology of Mark's Gospel.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

Werner H. Kelber. *The Kingdom in Mark.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974.

Werner H. Kelber. *Mark's Story of Jesus.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

David Rhoads and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.



Wounded Lion: Mark 9:1 and Other Missing Pieces

Robert Smith
Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of New Testament, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA

I woke in a sweat, tangled in the sheets. I had slept, and I had dreamed. In my dream four strangely familiar creatures had appeared: a lion, an eagle, an ox and a human. But they came to me battered. The eagle's right wing was broken, the human limped badly and moved uncertainly, and the lion's roar was full of pain rather than menace. Only the ox appeared whole and strong.

The meaning of my disturbed sleep was immediately clear to me. It wasn't anything I had eaten. Late the previous night I had been thinking about the fate of the Four Gospels in the three-year lectionary. What an improvement over the older one-year lectionary! Each Gospel has emerged powerfully in the new system, far more impressively and insistently than ever before!

But in the back of my mind there lurked the nagging question, "Just how well is each Gospel treated now?" Then I slept — fitfully. For centuries, of course, the four living creatures have symbolized the four Gospels. The Eagle for John, the Human for Matthew, the Ox for Luke, and the Lion for Mark.

All four figures stood out clearly in my dream, and yet three had suffered injury. I woke to ponder anew the question of the night before: "Just exactly how well is each evangelist treated in the three-year lectionary?" I focused on Mark.

The three-year lectionary boasts an entire Year of Mark (Year B). Mark has never had it so good. Older one-year lectionaries (pre-1971) offered us only three or four paragraphs from the entire Gospel. But precisely how well does Mark fare in our three-year lectionary? Do we really have a Year of Mark?

Mark's Unique Material

I began by running down a list of pericopes, notices or incidents unique to Mark's Gospel. For some reason Matthew and Luke omitted this material. (I say "omitted" because I work with the assumption that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a basic building block when they composed their own Gospels.)

1. *1:13b* ("He was with the wild beasts and angels ministered to him." — 1 Epiphany)
2. *2:27* ("The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." — 2 Pentecost
3. *3:19b-21* ("Then he went home, and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. And when his friends [family?] heard it, they went out to seize him, for they said, 'He is beside himself.' " — 3 Pentecost)
4. *4:26-29* (The seed growing automatically. — 4 Pentecost)

How do the lectionary builders treat these pieces?

5. *7:31-37* (Healing the deaf man with an impediment in his speech by spitting, touching and saying, "Ephphatha." — 16 Pentecost)
6. *8:22-26* (Jesus' first efforts at healing the blind man at Bethsaida resulted in his seeing people "like trees, walking." Omitted from the lectionary.)
7. *9:49, 50b* ("For everyone will be salted with fire . . . Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." — 19 Pentecost)
8. *14:51-52* (The young man fled naked from Gethsemane. — Passion Sunday)

The above list of unique material (not found in the other Gospels) is not complete. Mark has unique wordings and special features in numerous places, but this is a rough and ready list of whole sayings or entire reports found only in his Gospel. How do the lectionary builders treat these pieces?

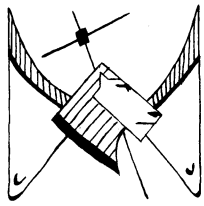
It is gratifying to find that only 8:22-26 failed to make it into the lectionary. No doubt Jesus' lack of success here (at least initially) was the stumbling block for the lectionary committee, as well as for Matthew and Luke. The pericope however is an important building block in the narrative. It forms a transition to a new section in the Gospel. Mark will show how the disciples have some very little "sight" and he will raise the question of what it will take to open their eyes so that they "see" clearly.

So far we can say that Mark receives more generous treatment from the architects of the lectionary than he does at the hands of Matthew and Luke.

Markan Parallels

Next I turned from uniquely Markan material to the material which Mark shares with either Matthew or Luke or with both and checked all three years of the lectionary. What pieces of Mark's Gospel are missing?

1. *3:1-6* The curing of the man with the withered hand in a synagogue on the Sabbath.
2. *3:7-12* A report of Jesus' movements, of teaching and healing, and of confessions to Jesus by demons.
3. *4:10-12* The hard saying about Jesus' practice of speaking in parables to those outside.
4. *4:21-25* A lamp is meant not to be hid but to be placed on a stand. The measure you give is the measure you will get.



5. *5:1-20* The healing of the Gerasene demoniac.
6. *6:14-29* The execution of John the Baptist.
7. *6:53-56* Summary of healing activities.
8. *7:9-13* The Corban saying.
9. *7:17-20* What defiles is what comes out, not what food goes in.
10. *8:1-10* The feeding of the 4,000.
11. *8:11-21* This generation seeks signs. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.
12. *9:1* "Some standing here will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God come with power."
13. *9:9-13* Elijah must come first, and indeed has come.
14. *9:14-29* Jesus' cure of the epileptic boy after the disciples had failed.
15. *11:12-14, 20-25* The cursing of the fig tree.
16. *11:27-33* "By what authority are you doing these things?"
17. *13:14-23* The desolating sacrilege and other signs of the end.
18. *13:32* "Of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."
19. *5:21-43* This one differs from the above. Here the lectionary offers the lector a hard choice: Read *either* 5:21-24a, 35-43 (The Raising of Jairus' Daughter) *or* 5:24b-34 (The Cure of the Woman with the Hemorrhage.

What's Really Lost?

1. *3:1-6* recounts how Jesus healed a man with a paralyzed hand. It may not rank as Jesus' most spectacular or most memorable miracle, but it is the anchor in a series of five conflict stories (2:1-3:6) and contains the punch line for the series. As Jesus entered the synagogue, hostile eyes tracked his every gesture and he knew it. Deliberately, provocatively he set in their midst a man whose illness was no emergency, however disabling and distressing it may have been. To heal or not to heal? To work or not to work — on behalf of the neighbor — on the Sabbath? How shall we honor the Creator of the Universe? Jesus worked the miracle and did good, marveling at their hardness of heart. Those scrupulous guardians of religious traditions, however, went out and put their heads together, trying to discover how to destroy Jesus. This early, deadly encounter is a significant element in the plot of Mark's Gospel.

2. *3:7-12* is rather colorless. It contains no dramatic gesture, no memorable word of Jesus, no sharply drawn portrait of a suppliant. It does, however, show

What's really lost?

the demons yielding before Jesus, compelled to acknowledge him. Such a scene has already been portrayed in 1:24 (4 Epiphany), and perhaps 3:7-12 is regarded as redundant. Luke 6:17-26 (6 Epiphany, Year C), reproduces some of Mark 3:7-12).

3. *4:10-12* is a hard saying, but is an integral part of Mark's presentation of Jesus: the human reaction to Jesus is mixed to say the least, just as prophets like Isaiah earned mixed reviews from their contemporaries. The prophets and the prophetic word in every generation have an uphill struggle, and the fact that people turn deaf ear and blind eye to prophetic words and prophetic signs should surprise no one. The word may never be so powerfully proclaimed. It is nevertheless not easily or automatically triumphant. But triumph on earth among the children of Adam and Eve and success in the eyes of the heavenly Father can be two quite different things. Mark has much to say about defeat and triumph.

4. The loss of *4:21-25* may dismay preachers looking for an occasion to sermonize on evangelism or stewardship. Mark probably intended to preach a sermon on the ultimate victory of God and the triumph of his righteousness in spite of present counter-indications.

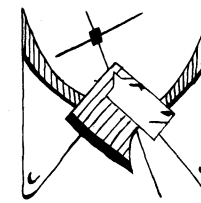
5. I miss the Gerasene demoniac *(5:1-20),* the vivid descriptions of his bizarre behavior, and the headlong plunge of the 2,000 pigs into the depths of the lake.

6. Even more I miss Salome's birthday party and the beheading of John the Baptist *(6:14-29).* John is the forerunner, and his execution foreshadows Jesus' violent death as a prophet-martyr and raises the same kind of issue to which 4:10-12 and 4:21-25 are responses. See no. 15.

7. *6:53-56* is a generalizing summary, as 3:7-12 is, with little that is engaging, except for the remark that some were healed by merely touching the fringe of his garments. Others had fringes but without any healing or redeeming properties of any kind (Matt. 23:5, cf. Mark 12:38).

8. *7:9-13* contains the "Corban" saying.
The important thing about the Corban pericope is that it says the word of God is all about honoring father and mother by caring for them, while human traditions divert us from the neighbor's need by channeling our energies into religious practices. Indirectly the pericope defines Jesus' ministry and passion as self-giving on behalf of the neighbor.

9. *7:17-20* merely expands on the saying in 7:14-15 (15 Pentecost), and its omission keeps congregations from pondering the realities of their digestive systems. No terrible loss here.



10. No doubt 8:1-10 (4,000) was regarded as somehow redundant, since the feeding of the 5,000 figures so prominently in Years A (Matthew 14:13-21; 11 Pentecost) and B (John 6:1-15, 24-35, 41-51, 51-58, 60-69; 10-14 Pentecost). Luke in his Gospel features the meals of Jesus, but he also omits the feeding of the 4,000. I suppose that if the lectionary makers had done it the other way around, omitting the 5,000 in favor of the 4,000, then we would suspect them of insufficient faith!

11. *8:11-21* is probably important only in the context of a continuous reading of the whole narrative. It wraps up the preceding and underscores the failure of the disciples to understand, describing these dull insiders with words applied to outsiders in 4:10-12. Of course the omission of this pericope is an illustration of the simple fact that the lectionary does not treat Mark's Gospel as a narrative with literary integrity, with plot and character development.

12. *9:1* has prompted many guesses concerning what moment Jesus could possibly have envisioned as the coming of the kingdom with power: the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, Parousia? The passage was probably omitted because it seems to indicate limits to Jesus' knowledge.

13. *9:9-13* is a curious paragraph indirectly identifying John the Baptist as Elijah, and so reminding us of Jesus' opening declaration that "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." (1:15).

14. The immediately following paragraphs *(9:14-29)* narrate Jesus' cure of the boy with a dumb and deaf spirit. It is part rebuke of the disciples' ineffectiveness and part demonstration of Jesus' compassion and power, perhaps omitted because the account is so long and rambling.

15. More memorable is Jesus' cursing of the fig tree *(11:12-14, 20-25)*. The lectionary prefers the parable of the unproductive fig tree in Luke 13:6-9. The lectionary includes the Johannine version (2:13-22) of the cleansing of the temple, which in Mark is interwoven with the cursing of the fig tree and meant to be interpreted with it. Not only is the astounding treatment of the fig tree gone, but also removed from the companion piece are the descriptive phrases, "Den of robbers" and "House of prayer for all nations," since John's version is worded differently and has its own accents.

16. Mark *11:27-33*. Jesus, when questioned about his credentials and backing ("By what authority"), raises the ques-

The Consultation on Common Texts has already recommended . . . a revision.

tion of John the Baptist. Jesus aligns himself with John, his ministry, his baptizing, his martyrdom. Did John in the midst of all his action and passion enjoy God's backing or not? A judgment regarding John prepares for a decision regarding Jesus — and regarding one's own suffering at the hands of unjust powers.

17-18. With the excision of the center of the Little Apocalypse *(13:14-23),* we lose the graphic portrayal of the necessity of quick and decisive action when "the desolating sacrilege" is erected where it ought not to stand. When will that occur? In *13:32* (omitted from the lectionary) Jesus is portrayed as saying that even he does not have the answer.

19. *5:21-43* is an example of the way Mark likes to build literary sandwiches, beginning a story, interrupting it to tell another, then completing the first (e.g. 6:7-30; 11:11-25; 14:1-11; 14:53-72). He apparently intends them to be digested as a unit, because the complex whole offers greater nourishment than the various elements consumed individually. Mark wants us to chew on the sandwich and not just pick and choose like finicky eaters. So in the case of 5:21-43 Mark seems to think along these lines: How far does Jesus' power run? Even over death (Jairus' daughter)! And how do we make connection with that gracious power? By faith (the woman with the flow of blood)! Neither pericope alone tells the story.

Relief Is on the Way

The Consultation on Common Texts has already recommended to the churches a revision of the three-year lectionary. As far as the treatment of the Gospels goes, the revision is modest and seems primarily to be a matter of slightly enlarging individual lections. In the process some of the omissions listed above are remedied:

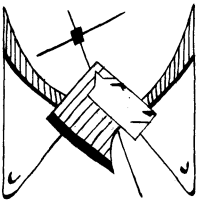
1. *3:1-6* is included, since the Gospel for 2 Pentecost is extended from Mark 2:23 all the way to 3:6.

2. *5:21-43.* The sandwiched accounts of the raising of Jairus's daughter and the healing of the woman with the flow of blood are no longer alternatives but are to be read straight through as a single, complex narrative on 6 Pentecost.

3. *9:1* is embraced with the account of the Transfiguration (9:2-9) as an alternative reading on Lent 2 but is still oddly omitted from Transfiguration Sunday (only 9:2-9).

4. *13:32* is included in the revision which offers Mark 13:32-37 (rather than 13:33-37) as Gospel for Advent 1.

All this is not to say that in Year B (The Year of Mark) congregations will hear the whole of Mark — with the exception of the pieces listed above. Frequently a narrative contained in Mark is



read in church not in its Markan version during Year B, but in another year and another form. So in Year A we hear Matthew's version of the call of the twelve, the parable of the sower and the soils, the Syrophoenician woman, the feeding of the 4,000, the third passion prediction, and the question about paying taxes to Caesar. In Year C we listen to Luke's version of the question of the Sadducees about the resurrection, and we are offered Luke's parable of the fig tree instead of Mark's account of Jesus' withering the tree. Both in Year A and C we hear Matthew's and Luke's versions of the parable of the wicked tenant farmers. And we get John's version of the cleansing of the temple, the feeding of the 5,000 and the walking on the water in Year B. Thus it is over a three-year period and not in a single year that congregations are exposed to the bulk of Mark's Gospel.

Up from the Dead

Question-and-answer time. Q: How well does Mark fare in the three-year lectionary? A: Better than ever. Mark never had it so good.

The difference between Mark's standing in the old one-year lectionary and in the new three-year lectionary is astonishing. It would not be farfetched to talk about a resurrection of Mark in the church!

Maybe I am just a light sleeper or a finicky eater, but I still feel uneasy. I reviewed my list of missing pieces. They fall into several categories:

1. Some (3:1-6; 5:21-43; 9:1; 13:32) are standing in line waiting to be included when the lectionary is revised. They are in process, so we won't even talk about them.

2. A few are just not dramatic enough or immediately useful enough to claim a place in the lectionary, and I cannot get up enthusiasm to plead their cases on an individual basis. I do not even remember their chapter and verse numbers.

3. Three pericopes speak of failure on the part of Jesus (or his audiences), and I for one never fail to be intrigued by nonsuccess stories. Jesus had a communications problem — with outsiders (4:10-12), with disciples (8:11-21), and with a blind man (8:22-26). In addition, these pieces speak of parables as a device for hiding the truth, they put the disciples in a bad light, and they all show that Jesus' power had its limits. These pericopes both disturb and intrigue. We like to think that Jesus subscribed to affirmative action principles offering equal opportunity to all comers in all times and circumstances, that he told parables as clever illustrations to clarify his teaching, conducted himself in a winsome and generous manner, and that he never failed to succeed when he put his mind to it.

What would our liturgy and lectionary look like if Mark were fully restored?

Perhaps this cluster and the next two were simply too tough or sour to be digested.

4. I wonder why 5:1-20 (the Gerasene demoniac) is among the disappeared. Maybe we are not ready for the rough humor of this pericope — a Jewish Jesus ruins a pagan pig-farmer's business! Here is Jesus as destroyer of personal property and polluter of lakes. Oblivious to the wreckage he leaves in his wake, he cheerfully departs for the other side of the lake. We look for a more useable Jesus — one gentler and more considerate — someone more like ourselves!

Perhaps the cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14, 20-25) has vanished for the same reason. We want blessing and not cursing, manners and not rudeness.

5. Vanished also are three pieces of Markan material dealing with John the Baptist: his bizarre fate at the not-so-tender hands of Herod and Herodias (6:14-20), the reference to John as the promised forerunner Elijah (9:9-13), and Jesus' dig at his opponents by raising the question of John's authority and credentials (11:27-33). These have an inner coherence and together with the opening paragraph of the Gospel foreshadow Jesus' ministry, the enmity he arouses, and the fate that awaits him. They are poignant pieces, they are important, they are missed.

Questions

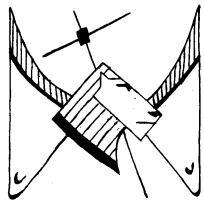
Our initial survey has raised some larger questions.

1) Looking at smaller bits and pieces and wondering about their role in the narrative pushes us to inquire about the meaning of Mark as a whole: Mark's plot, Mark's purpose or thrust, Mark's tone or atmosphere, Mark's point of view, Mark's underlying message or theology.
2) What does it mean to call something "Markan" and to say that it is not Matthean, not Lukan, not Johannine?
3) Is the pattern of our liturgical lectionary compatible with the pattern of Mark? What is the lectionary pattern?

Perhaps we could get at these questions another way. What would our liturgy and lectionary look like if Mark were fully resurrected and restored to life?

Markan Christmas

In my dream I was walking through the center of a large American city on December 25. Everything was normal but everything was strange. Citizens were going about their business as usual. Children sat in school where teachers stood at blackboards. People bustled in and out of shops and restaurants and offices. Normal, but strange. No Christmas trees, no ornaments on the



street lamps, no Santas, no loud-speakers blaring "A White Christmas," no creche on the lawn at the city hall.

I mounted the steps of a large church. The interior was dimly lit, and nothing about it said, "Christmas." No tree decked out with chrismons, no advent wreath hanging in the chancel, no banners with angels or "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," no choir singing Handel's "Messiah," no odors of incense or Christmas cookies rising from the kitchen.

I woke with a start. Is that what I wanted? Quickly I defended myself to myself: "It's not a matter of what I want or what I like." The question I had been pondering before sleeping was very simple and, I thought, potentially useful: "What would a church year based exclusively on Mark's Gospel look like?"

Gospel Text and Liturgical Year

At the present time each Gospel is shoved into a framework determined by the annual revolution of the earth around the sun and by the tradition of a Christian schedule of celebrations from Advent, through Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter to the Pentecost season.

Of course, Mark has no Christmas, so Johannine (John 1:1-19) and Lukan (2:1-20) texts are imported into our present Year B. Furthermore, Mark has no Resurrection appearance stories, no Ascension, and no Pentecost either, and so again texts are imported from other sources to remedy Mark's defects.

But what if Mark deliberately concentrated on Jesus' ministry and passion, and purposely omitted traditions about Christmas, Resurrection appearances, Ascension and Pentecost? In 13:11 he reveals that he knows something about a moment of the giving of the Spirit as prophesied in 1:8. Nevertheless he has suppressed any mention of Pentecost (and other festivals) in favor of a fierce concentration on Jesus' way to the cross.

As I thought about the shape of the traditional Christian calendar and the shape of Mark's Gospel, I suddenly remembered my first dream. Of the four creatures (Human, Lion, Ox and Eagle), three were wounded and in pain but the Ox appeared whole and strong. Now I understood! The pattern of the liturgical year is really a Lukan scheme. Luke wrote both our Third Gospel and the Book of Acts, and Luke-Acts presents the story of Jesus in terms of a continuous narrative running from Annunciation through nativity to baptism and a forty-day temptation and ministry and transfiguration to Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Resurrection appearances for forty days, Ascension, and Pentecost on the fiftieth day. No wonder the Ox looked so hale and content! Luke-Acts has set the pattern for our Church year, and each of the other Gospels is forced into a Lukan mold. Especially Mark and John have to be handled roughly to make them conform to Luke's pattern, but even Matthew suffers.

**The important question is . . .
our perception of Mark's organization and themes.**

Let Mark Be Mark

What if we decided to devote a year to Mark's story of Jesus? What if we let Mark be Mark and refrained from subtraction or addition? What might such a Year be like? It would be unlike Year A or B or C. What follows may perhaps seem a bit whimsical but the form is more day-dream than whimsy.

The story of Jesus in Mark has been described as "the swift campaign of a single season." He streaks like a meteor across a dark sky. The chronological clues are few in number and except for the 40 days in the wilderness (1:13) the whole of the public life of Jesus according to Mark could have been accommodated within a month or two. In contrast to Mark, John definitely speaks of several Passovers and describes a two- or three-year ministry of Jesus. But our calendars decree that we must live and think and celebrate in twelve month chunks, whatever the facts about Mark or John might be.

Perhaps a "Markan Church Year" could be stretched out from around January till early April or whenever the Sunday after Passover falls. Passover looms large in Mark both as a chronological moment and as spiritual background for Jesus' passion, the central element in Mark's story. So we might construct a Markan calendar backwards, beginning with Passover. Then we could simply work our way back to an arbitrary starting point, going back a sufficient number of Sundays to accommodate the reading and celebration of Mark, unit by unit.

Of course the least important feature of a "Markan Year" or "Markan Cycle" is its length. Let's not argue about whether it should be a year long or four months long. Mark contains around 75 or 80 paragraphs or pericopes, more than enough for 52 Sundays and a few weekday services.

But whether we read Mark in short bursts over a twelve-month period or use longer segments and get to the end in say, four months, the important question is not the time involved, but our perception of Mark's organization and leading themes.

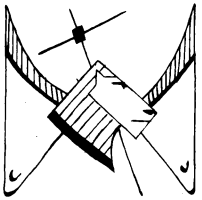
Let's Cancel Christmas

A "Year of Mark" (12 months) or "Cycle of Mark" (3 or 4 months) would require that we cancel Christmas and Epiphany, Ascension and Pentecost, and think of new ways to organize our celebration and focus our meditation.

The Powers of Darkness

The great themes of Mark offer suggestions for such a reorganization of our liturgical energies. Mark's Jesus strides across a landscape dominated by dark powers.

In the front ranks of those powers are the demons (their name and their number is Legion, 5:9), and sometimes



closely and other times loosely associated with the demons are such illnesses as fever, leprosy, paralysis, dumbness, deafness, blindness, epilepsy, and such phenomena as contrary winds, earthquakes and wars and rumors of wars.

The demons are on the side of death. The Gospel is acutely aware of the pathos of the untimely death of children from "natural" causes (5:21-43) and of the death of God's prophets (6:14-29) by unnatural execution.

Besides the darkness rising from demonic depths, Mark recognizes the darkness proceeding from the human heart: "evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness" (7:21-22).

Hold Back the Darkness

Earthly powers claiming to represent God or Caesar or both organize their various responses in an effort to hold back the darkness. Mark has far more to say about religious than about political responses, although it is naive to imagine that these can be neatly separated in either our time or in ancient times. By sheer physical power Caesar maintains civil order (10:42; cf. 6:14-29) and collects his taxes (12:13-17) to pay his legions and so keep other kingdoms at arm's length, to beautify Rome, to feed the crowds, to subsidize the worship of the Roman gods. In spite of the heavy-handedness of political authority, Mark's Jesus perceives a vacuum of real leadership.

As prominent as the "secular" rulers are, Mark focuses primarily on the activities of scribes and priests, Pharisees and Sadducees, working singly and in council, and on their responses to the darkness in the world.

They meditate upon the law. They practice it, teach it, and guard it like watchdogs prowling a warehouse at night. For them the doing of the law is a dike against the raging sea of chaos. They fear cracks in the dike, run to investigate cases (2:6-7; 3:22; 11:27-33), and make examples of notorious lawbreakers (14:63-64).

Roman authorities, Jerusalem officials, and Jesus all claim to represent the power of truth and light against encircling evil. But Jesus and these others are on a collision course.

Mark's Plot

Mark's Gospel is complicated. Mark pictures Jesus marching forth from the Jordan as God's Warrior ordained to do battle with the demons and illness and death. He bursts onto the scene triumphantly, rolling back the demons and illness by a series of sharp attacks, creating brilliantly-illuminated arenas of light in the midst of thick gloom, and for a moment it seems as though he might utterly vanquish darkness and banish it from the earth and let there be light without any dimming or shadow.

The speed with which Jesus aroused opposition . . . is astonishing.

However, Jesus is soon locked in a terrible combat not only with demons and overtly evil forces but with religious leaders and the powers of "good." Of course they thought of themselves and they were perceived by others as on the side of God and as arrayed against the ranks of evil.

Mark has narrated the way religious law and civil order are disturbed by love. Mark sees the terror and confusion resulting when apparently high and holy demands are in conflict with one another. It is easy — too easy, really — to relieve the tension by turning the ancient pious Pharisee and priest into moral monsters or hypocrites, and explain their obtuseness by reference to their marvelous lack of self-criticism as they steadily support their tradition and the status quo, which serve them so well. And it is easy for us today to imagine that we are following a biblical precedent when we omit any but the most innocuous reference to the state of our politics or to the politics of our church in our liturgical meetings.

Opposition from Religion

The speed with which Jesus aroused the opposition of the dark forces and then also of the powers of light is astonishing. 2:1-3:6 is a block of material ordinarily called "Conflict Stories" and they conclude on an ominous note: "The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him" (3:6).

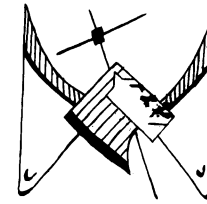
Opposition from His Family

The family of Jesus and the circle of his chosen disciples might be expected to stand by him. But his family (TEV; RSV has "friends") soon came to take Jesus home, believing that he was beside himself (3:20-21). Jesus declares that those who do the will of God are his family (3:31-35).

Opposition from His Friends

People do not choose their mother and father, but they do choose their friends. Jesus chose twelve to be with him (3:13-19), and readers easily begin to identify with them. Jesus takes them aside and explains his teachings to them in private (4:11-12, 34). The natural expectation is that this privileged communication would bear fruit.

But if the demons oppose him, authorities attack him, and his family is embarrassed by him, the disciples misunderstand him. They misconstrue his words and deeds living in high hopes of his success (8:27-29) and their own basking in his power as his companions (10:35-39). Slowly the truth dawns on them, and they realize that Jesus will not establish the kingdom of their desires, will not unsheath the fateful lightning of any terrible swift sword, will not crush



his opponents beneath his heel, will not overwhelm the doubts of the nay-sayers with irrefutable words flung like arrows from his lips, will not unleash any awesome display of pyrotechnic wizardy to win the hearts of the masses and their leaders.

When the truth broke in upon them, the twelve whom he had gathered began to scatter like sheep without a shepherd. One denied, another betrayed, all forsook him and fled (14:50). Thick darkness descended about Jesus.

The Structure of Mark

The progress of the Gospel can be charted in a number of ways. Following is a diagram which attempts to display something of the structure and progress of the Gospel, paying attention to geography, audiences, words of Jesus, deeds of Jesus.

Major Divisions	Dominant Geography	Special Audience	Main Topic	Deeds of Jesus
I. 1:1-8:26	Galilee	Crowds	Kingdom of God	15 miracles (Exorcisms, healings, feedings), plus summary statements of many more.
II. 8:27-10:52	On the Way	Disciples	The Suffering and Vindication of the Son of Man	Two Miracles
III. 11:1-16:8	Jerusalem	Chief Priests and Elders	Temple and Messiah	Cursing of the Fig Tree; Suffering and Death

The nub of the Gospel is Jesus' suffering and death.

Miracles in Mark

The distribution of what we call "miracles" is interesting. They decline in number very rapidly. Jesus seems to move from signs to suffering, from power to weakness, from action to passion. That decrease in number may be a sign of the increasing hostility and unbelief which Jesus encounters (6:50) as he approaches the religious capital, and it may signify that Jesus' real work is suffering service.

Some of the miracles are done out of compassion. That element may indeed be present in all of them, but in some there is an additional symbolic element. For example, Mark seems to have deliberately ended both part I and part II with healings of blind men (8:22-26 and 10:46-52), as if to say that it will take a miracle to open the eyes of people — whether crowds or disciples. And it should be noted that the final angelic announcement at the empty tomb promises that the disciples will finally "see" Jesus, if they believe that he goes before them and provided that they follow him (16:7).

The impression is inescapable that Mark is talking — cryptically no doubt — in 8:22-26, 10:46-52 and 16:6-7 about faith and discipleship.

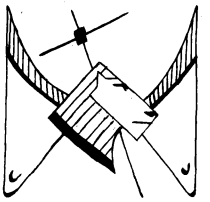
The cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14, 20-25) is the only miracle of Jesus in the final section of the Gospel. It is interwoven with the cleansing of the temple (11:11, 15-19) and together these scenes speak of the fruitlessness of the dazzling ritual display at the sanctuary and of the judgment resting upon any such unproductive religious exhibitionism.

In the report of Jesus' first miracle, the exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum on the Sabbath (1:21-28), Mark brackets the miracle by references to his "teaching" at the beginning (1:21-22) and at the end (1:27). The point of Mark's story is that Jesus' teaching has the astonishing authority to sweep aside the old lordship of Satan and inaugurate the kingship of God. And that power or authority of Jesus is present and available beyond the time of Jesus' death and resurrection, in the word uttered in the community of disciples. So in Mark, Jesus is presented and indeed presents himself as "Teacher" (14:14, 49), and the word "Gospel" looms large (1:1, 1:14-15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9). And the heart of Jesus' teaching and the nub of the Gospel is Jesus' suffering and death and resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34, 45).

Jesus' Progress

So Jesus appears to move from power to weakness, from victories to defeats, from the light to increasing darkness, from triumphant life to a terrible death. From one point of view Jesus is in Mark a progressively forsaken figure and his path is a steep decline.

Yet from another point of view his movement is upward. It is an ascent. He



moves from smaller to larger deeds of service, from smaller to more decisive victories over evil. Jesus is acclaimed Son of God at his baptism in the beginning (1:11) and wins the grudging recognition of demons (1:24; 5:7). He is acclaimed Son once more at his Transfiguration in the hearing of his disciples (9:7), who struggle unsuccessfully to comprehend his secret. And finally at the climax of the Gospel he is acclaimed Son by the Centurion (15:39), the first human being to penetrate the mystery and to see and confess God's own action precisely in the person of the crucified.

The dynamic of Mark's Gospel is supplied by the tension between these two movements. What is the relationship between the two paths? Is it only negative? Or is the correlation positive? Is the free assumption of forsakeness and darkness and even death an essential part of the ascent to life? Can there be truth in Jesus' declaration, "Whoever loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will find it" (8:35)?

Isn't the distress of the disciples (and our own uneasiness) at Jesus' service and suffering and call to discipleship a sign that we think in human terms rather than in divine terms (8:33)?

How does God's kingship come? How does God regain control over a wayward universe? He does it, Mark says, through Jesus' ministry of outreach to the possessed, the hungry, the ill, the unclean, the sinful, the woman, the tax collector, the pagan. Through costly ministry, through self-giving, against shocked and scandalized opposition, through suffering, through the cross.

His kingship asserts itself in our world through active ministry and passive suffering, or through passionate ministry and active suffering.

The cross is darkness and it is light. It is defeat and it is victory. It is misery and it is glory. It is as weak as dying and expiring, and as tough and enduring as the love he there offered to God and to humanity.

A Year of Mark

So once more the question, "How might we celebrate according to Mark?" How might we heed the final revelatory declaration of the Gospel, uttered by the angel, and so write in our lives an ending to the Gospel more satisfactory than the one provided by the nervous second-century author of Mark 16:9-20?

Part I (1:1-8:26) of the Gospel shows Jesus in action among the demon-possessed, the ill, the sinful, the hungry, the outcasts, the leaderless (or those badly led). And it shows him in trouble with good people and bad. What does following such a Jesus entail? How might we re-present his action in liturgy and life? What mighty works on our part would celebrate Jesus' assaults on darkness? What struggling of ours (and even failing!) would honor Mark's Jesus?

What is our portrait of Jesus?

Part II (8:27-10:52) concentrates on Jesus among the Twelve and on Jesus' struggles to bring the Twelve to an acceptance of the cross. The section features conflicting theories about Jesus. Not all Jesus-talk is equally valid. What is our portrait of Jesus? Is our current Christian portrait of Jesus adequate when measured by the standard of Mark's Gospel? Are we better at identifying Jesus than were the Twelve (8:28-29; 10:37)?

Jesus was not a rabbi inculcating a reverence for tradition and going the way of study, not a Pharisee contemplating the law and going the way of submission to the ordinances, not a Sadducee filled simultaneously with pride in ancient institutions and with political savvy and going the way of accommodation, not a Zealot angered by foreign domination and inculcating the way of apocalyptic revolution, not an Essene revolted by corruption in the religious establishment and traveling the puritan path of withdrawal and monastic discipline. He was not governor like Pilate nor emperor like Caesar, imagining that all would be well if only he could get his hands on the levers of police power and political control. He was no priest seeking stricter observance of religious ritual. He is the Son of God who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom (10:45).

How might we more deliberately, more intentionally, let him serve us in our services of worship? How might we more effectively learn of him to take up the cross, repudiate privilege, seek excellence in service?

In Part III (11:1-16:8) Jesus locks horns with the authorities, not for the first time to be sure, but in this section he goes head to head with them on their turf, in their city. What laws, arrangements, institutions, traditions, rulers or authorities demand our obedience or our sacrifices, and promise us peace and security in return, while they simultaneously discourage love of God and love of neighbor as unrealistic, naive, or dangerous? What inner or outer forces would prevent our expressing solidarity with the Sufferer or with sufferers? What stands in the way of our understanding and affirming the triumphs of suffering love?

Passionate King

Is it possible to encode the liturgical year with Markan themes and Markan content? Would it be possible for a twelve-month period to deny ourselves Christmas and Pentecost and, inspired by Mark's stern Gospel, devise fresh "Festivals of Suffering Love?" The words of Mark's Gospel are harsh, hard, oblique in their communication of life and joy, summoning us to direct confrontation with darkness, sin, evil, brokenness, hate, betrayal, and death. And they promise no easy victory. But there remains

the good news of abundant yield, astonishing harvest, superlative growth beyond the sowing of the seed that is buried and dies (ch. 4).

Mark presents the serving and suffering Jesus as the final embodiment of God's own movement into the world, acting to overrule his enemies and both to rescue and to restore his creation. Mark presents a Jesus who inaugurated God's kingdom by loving passionately all the way to the cross and who as the resurrected one now summons us to follow him to "Galilee" (16:7). The Risen Lord invites his ever-failing disciples to meet and "see" him in the Galilee of humble service and suffering. That is precisely where and how the Kingdom comes with power.

Incarnate Us

Come Lord Jesus, make us human again.
  Caress our tired bodies,
  touch our trembling hands,
  embrace us with your
  life-giving love.
Dance, laugh, cry, sing, hurt, love, wait with us.
Transform our fears
  that we might come to you again and
  again as we are.
Show us our darkness
  that we might live in your light.
Bring life to our hardened hearts
  that we might know you as
  our Faithful Center.
Gentle us with your grace
  that your birth
  might be our daily re-birth.
Come Lord Jesus, make us human again.

Ruth E. Sievert

The Messianic Secret in Mark

Raymond Martin
Professor of New Testament, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

One of the most striking and enigmatic features in our earliest gospel, Mark, is the so-called "messianic secret" – the commands by Jesus to silence whenever, especially in the first half of the gospel, anyone recognizes or confesses the "messianic" role and nature of Jesus.

The significance of this has been much debated and there is yet today no complete agreement on the origin or significance of this motif.

It can be studied on three levels; and, as will be shown below, there is a difference in meaning in each of these levels.

There is general agreement today that this phenomenon does not originate with Mark, but rather was a part of the church traditions which came to Mark. Mark uses this feature of the traditions to express a serious theological concern he has.

It is much less clear whether behind the church traditions there is some stimulus in the life of Jesus himself which the church recalled and also made use of to express a theological issue which confronted it.

It is both possible and probable that Jesus himself spoke and acted in such a way as to color the traditions about himself with this unexpected reticence which has come to be designated as the "messianic secret."

In the balance of this article one possible explanation of this reticence of Jesus and its theological use later by the church and Mark will be sketched.

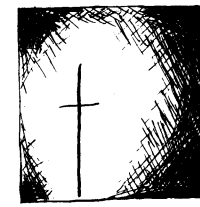
To understand Jesus' actions and thinking during his earthly life the theological confession of the New Testament and the church that Jesus is both true God and true man must be taken seriously.

Probably the earliest confession of this theological reality is to be found in the pre-Pauline, and probably Aramaic, hymn of Philippians 2:5-11, most likely to be dated in the 40's.

Though the exact meaning and translation of verses 5-9 are difficult, this much is clear: this early hymn confesses the pre-existence of Jesus Christ before his incarnation and states in very strong terms that during the incarnate period of the Son's existence, Jesus made no use of his divine nature and powers, but was truly human, limited as all human beings are.

For this truly human limitation of the Son to have any real meaning, it must include, it seems, *Jesus' unawareness during his earthly life of his divine nature and pre-existence.*[1] Only in this condition would he be *truly human,* limited as we are, totally dependent on the Father, as the traditions show him understand-

[1] Miracles which occurred in and through Jesus during his ministry are to be understood as special powers given to him by the Spirit, as he himself claims, e.g., in the Q passage Matthew 12:28/Luke 11:20.



ing himself to be. This corresponds most suitably with the meaning which is behind the words "emptied himself" in Phil. 2:7.

How does this understanding of Jesus' truly human nature help in the interpretation of the messianic secret?

It means that Jesus during his life and ministry was reticent to use or accept from others current messianic terminology — not from any desire to keep hidden or secret that which he knew he truly was, but because he did not feel those messianic terms expressed his understanding of his role in the Father's plan for the in-breaking kingdom.

Further, as Jesus proclaims the kingdom and seeks to see its unfolding in his day, his own self-understanding changes as he seeks to perceive the Father's will for him and conform his own will to it.

Naturally this reticence to use or accept for himself terms the church, after the resurrection, knew applied to Jesus caused problems for the church. Their explanation of the non-messianic claims of Jesus as reflected in the traditions which they had received was explained by the church saying: Jesus knew who he was — his divine nature and messianic role — but chose to keep this secret until the proper time toward the end of his ministry when it should be made public. Thus the reticence of Jesus to use messianic language about himself appears in the church's traditions as a deliberate secrecy on Jesus' part — and in this way the so called "messianic secret" appears in the traditions which Mark received from the church.[2]

What does Mark do with these traditions so strongly colored by the "messianic secrecy" motif? Also for Mark (and his readers) Jesus not only was divine and the Messiah long-promised to Israel, but Jesus *knew* that he was such. Yet Mark has seen in the church of his day evidence of the danger of such a view of Jesus, a view which emphasizes the deity and power and glory of Jesus. Mark sees that the church in his day needs to understand and emulate rather the suffering and vulnerability of God's agents and people.

By taking over and continuing to see the "messianic secret" motif, Mark says in effect: "Do not concentrate on the glory and the power; remember rather the serving, the suffering and the dying of our Messiah; and remember that this serving, suffering and dying is God's way for us as well."

And Mark has done more. Mark seems to say, in effect, also by the way he has structured his gospel: "This understanding of the true nature of the Messiahship of Jesus is hard, yes impossible, to perceive and accept as the pattern

[2] The Fourth Gospel solves this problem by modifying the traditions to have Jesus himself during his earthly ministry again and again openly speak about and accept his divine nature and his messianic, life-giving role.

It has always been difficult for the church to accept . . . that Jesus was truly human.

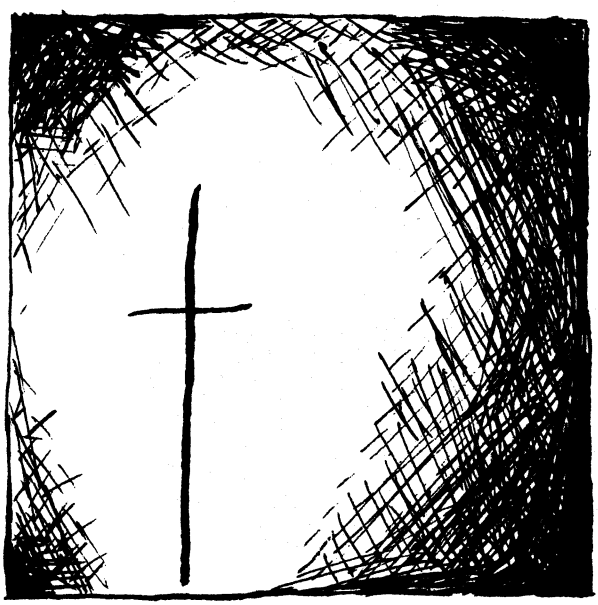
for our own lives. It is a secret revealed only by the resurrection — God-worked, God-taught."

It has always been difficult for the church to accept in actuality the full implications of its claim that Jesus was truly human.

The church has felt that Jesus, since he is God in human flesh, must have been aware during his earthly life of this reality. Yet that would make it impossible for him really to be as the writer of Hebrews says "like us in every respect" (Heb. 2:17).

In its earliest traditions the church explained Jesus' reticence to use and accept divine and messianic titles as his deliberate secrecy concerning his true nature and role which he knew all along.

Mark, then, found in this church motif a suitable vehicle to counteract the glory-seeking of Christians in his day. He believed that only God could enable the church to accept the importance and reality of the true understanding of Jesus' messiahship — as one of serving, suffering and dying for others.



A Pilgrimage for Unity: Jerusalem in January, 1984

Doris Graesser
Albright Institute, Jerusalem, and Berkeley, California

Unity!

What does this word conjure up for most of us Lutherans? Probably we envision the New Lutheran Church, a church involving the AELC, ALC, and LCA.

While living in Jerusalem during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 1984, the word *unity* took on fresh dimensions for me. For eight consecutive days in January local Christians of many denominations and nationalities gathered in large numbers for ecumenical worship services. As a part of these worshipping communities I was brought in touch with an incredibly wide circle of experiences. The highlights involved church buildings and traditions of people who accept Jesus as the Christ in this land called Holy, as well as the opportunity to expand my limited concept of the word *unity*.

Day 1 Anglican/Episcopal St. George's Cathedral

The week began in a setting very familiar to me. St. George's is a lovely, Victorian Gothic cathedral consecrated in 1898. Our family worshipped here fifteen years ago, when services in English (albeit with a British accent) lured us into regular attendance. St. George's was actually into ecumenism even then. I, a Lutheran, taught Sunday School in this Anglican church, using Presbyterian materials!

The primary language of this first vesper was English, the basic language of this cathedral. However, as in most of the services during this week some of the Bible readings, prayers, and hymns were in other languages, in this case, Arabic, French, and German. The "local parish" churches of Jerusalem provide Arabic services for the native Arab Christians in their membership. Thus, this week's services had sections in Arabic and tonight one sermonette was in Arabic.

The high point of the service came for me as we sang *The Church's One Foundation,* each person singing in their own language.

Elect from every nation, yet one
o'er all the earth
Her charter of salvation; One Lord,
One Faith, One Birth
One holy Name she blesses, partakes
one holy Food
And to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.

The theme of the week, "to gather into one the dispersed children of God" is epitomized by these people from many nations singing this hymn in many tongues.

Day 2 Armenian Cathedral of St. James

The Cathedral of St. James is abounding with traditions. On this site St. James, the greater, brother of John the Evangelist, is believed to have been beheaded. St. James, the lesser, first bishop of Jerusalem, is said to be buried under the altar. Fact or fiction? No mat-

ter. Archaeological evidence shows a Christian sanctuary on this site already in the fifth century! There is a strong sense of unity with early Christians in this place.

As I enter St. James a little before five o'clock, I am handed a long, thin candle. The beautifully proportioned church is rich with ancient decoration — golden designs around and on the altar, a carved throne, decorated ceramic tiles and eggs, oriental carpets. Was the candle to add to this exquisite atmosphere? No, I soon realized, no need for Christmas Eve dramatics. The candles are utilitarian. The last rays of light filter through the windows high in the dome. Candlelight is needed to follow the service printed in Armenian and English.

The Armenian Seminary choir sings hymns and responses in the soulful, deep melodies of their liturgy. The Bishop announces the Gospel will be read in Aramaic, the language of Jesus. I am in readiness to hear. Then these unintelligible sounds come forth. My immediate reaction is, "Jesus couldn't have sounded like that! I can't understand!" Barriers to unity come in various forms.

Unity, however, did come across in another way. On this rainy night in 1984 we Christians, standing crowded together in candlelight, were bound to all Christians, including those who worshipped here throughout the past fourteen centuries. With ageless prayers and praise we reached out to God, united, past, present — and future.

Day 3 Evangelical/Lutheran Church of the Redeemer

The Church of the Redeemer is a well-known landmark in Jerusalem. Close to the Holy Sepulchre it stands proudly with its magnificent bell tower an integral part of the Old City skyline. The airy, white interior has a purity of design that relates well to a Lutheran's sense of what a church *should* look like!

A trilingual hymnal in the pew (German, Arabic, and English) identifies the languages used in the local congregation's services, and at times, like this night, is the vehicle for all to sing together. I find worship in this church to be on familiar turf. However, tonight an Armenian priest sits next to me, his black robe and pointed head-gear attesting to this being an ecumenical service.

Yet what jolts me most is a note in the Order of Service:
"All the texts of the Liturgy and prayers are taken from the Liturgy prepared for and agreed upon by the World Council of Churches meeting in Lima, Peru in January, 1982." The very form of this service is a tangible expression of the Church's progress toward unity.

Day 4 Ethiopian Orthodox Ethiopian Orthodox Church

As a latecomer to Jerusalem, this Ethiopian Orthodox Church is located in the western and newer section of Jerusalem. The round, rather small structure provides about five rows of chairs from the outer wall to the central square, enclosed chapel.

We feel warmly welcomed as we enter without any mutually understood words. A smiling, black-robed priest hands us an English translation of the service. His obvious, genuine pleasure in having us come to worship breaks the verbal communication barrier.

As the orthodox service progresses, I realize that not only is the language of the chants and readings foreign to my ear, but I, like many others, have no idea where we even *are* in the order of service. After fruitlessly flipping through the

pages, my attention is drawn to my surroundings. What joyous color — shocking pink painted pillars with royal blue borders, pictures and designs in vivid reds, greens and gold, priests' copes of gleaming brocade. This place of worship, thick with the smell of incense, calls forth from me adoration and praise of God.

Then I realize I am experiencing unity with Christians of another period. Medieval Christians used their cathedrals in this way. Illiterate and unable to understand the Latin words of the service, the people used their surroundings as the tools of worship. Creator Lord, let us learn from each other new and fuller ways to praise you with all our senses.

Day 5 Fraternity for Christian Unity The Cenacle

The Upper Room, or Cenacle, on Mt. Zion is a room of Crusader architecture. Pilgrims come here, however, to recall Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. The room is basically devoid of furnishings or decorations.

The site is not a house of worship for any one denomination, so the committee spearheading this week organized today's service. A wealth of clergy are involved, with parts of the service in Hebrew and Greek, as well as the languages used in past services — Arabic, Aramaic, Armenian, German, English and French.

I notice the variety of languages and nationalities is easily surpassed by the variety of people and their dress. Old and young, poorly and well dressed, nuns and priests (some in white, brown, blue, or black habits) — all crowded together in candlelight, yearning for the love and unity Jesus proclaimed.

We sing and pray and listen to words about the uniting power of Christ's death. We read a prayer from the Didache (a first century writing), "Remember, O Lord, thy church . . . and from the four winds assemble her, the sanctified, in Thy kingdom".

We are then invited to climb a stairway to a small, bare chapel for ten minutes of silence. A German student choir sings a lovely repetitive refrain in Latin as the orderly crowd winds its way into a room now called the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Yes, another event is recalled in this building, a very appropriate one, indeed, Pentecost. Come, Holy Spirit!

Day 6 Roman Catholic St. Savior's Catholic Church

The narrow, dirty cobblestoned street leading to St. Savior's is typical of the alleyways in the Old City. Tired, irregular stone buildings begrudgingly give up even the small slice of space needed for a thoroughfare. I enter St. Savior's and suddenly feel transported to modern-day Italy, to a huge, slick marble-walled church. Can Jerusalem be outside?

St. Savior's clearly displays its Italian Roman Catholic heritage in building and adornment. This is a functioning parish church, complete with flowers on the altar. Tonight a dozen or so young, brown-robed Franciscans come to the pulpit microphone. Each one reads a petition for unity in his own language, each language different from the others. The congregation responds with "Kyrie Eleison," Lord, have mercy. The service concludes with the sounds of the magnificent organ engulfing people and place.

Unity will involve problems of place. Where will we worship together? How will we lessen the jarring extremes dictated by culture and tradition? As we keep sight of the unity which is already

ours in Jesus Christ, can we be flexible enough to remember his words, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them"? Lord, have mercy!

Day 7 Syrian Orthodox St. Mark's Church

The Syrian Orthodox community roots itself deeply into the beginnings of Christianity. They associate numerous holy events with the site of this twelfth century building; their most prized church adornment is an ancient painting on leather, not earlier than Byzantine times, but ascribed to St. Luke.

Tonight's service is in Syriac, a language close to Aramaic, and in the convent's orthodox form. Once again I find it difficult to follow the eastern rite. The priests, however, progress comfortably from one chant to another. They stand robed in black with an interesting hood embroidered in a white, Swiss-like motif. As I glance up to an aged painting, I see a priest, probably patriarchal, his head covering identical to the ones worn by the priests tonight. In dress as well as tradition and confession these priests are united with their predecessors of old.

How the Church needed followers of Christ like these through the ages! From generation to generation, despite seemingly impervious obstacles, the clergy, as well as many other faithful Christians, passed down the precious Gospel message and Christian tradition. Under God's watchful eye the chain remained unbroken — united.

Day 8 Greek Catholic Melkite Cathedral

The interior of the Melkite Cathedral provides a feast for the eyes. Recently painted with frescoes (1975) the church surfaces blend an ancient Byzantine art style with the freshness of a new work of art.

Fifty-three elongated saints, uniformly depicted in a flat, full-front stance, appear like icons encircling three sides of the church. Their penetrating eyes peer out from faces framed with identical gleaming gold haloes. Scenes of Christ's life are depicted above this saintly bottom border. The archways, ceiling and dome are likewise adorned with biblical and holy figures in harmonizing color schemes. The overall effect is one of a tasteful design, visually proclaiming the Christian tradition.

It is a worthy setting for the week's concluding service. One final time we worship together with words and thoughts. Near the end of the service gilded-robed priests process around the church with bread, wheat, wine and oil. Then the entire congregation is invited to share the blessed bread. This is not communion, but a ceremony of this community. The blessed bread with a goblet of wine is on a small table in the front of the church. We all line up to come to this table. We dip our piece of bread into the wine. We return to our places and kneel to pray. God, make this feeling of unity "a foretaste of the feast to come." Amen, Lord Jesus, amen.

But there is a postscript. Sunday in our English speaking congregation, the Crusader Chapel of the Lutheran church, we sing Canticle 14 in the LBW. Never have the words had more meaning for me:

Listen! you nations of the world:
listen to the Word of the Lord.
Announce it from coast to coast;
declare it to distant islands.
The Lord who scattered Israel will gather
his people again; and he will keep
watch over them as a shepherd
watches his flock.

The Four Cycles of Ritual in Christian Observance

Jay C. Rochelle
Assistant Professor of Worship, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Mircea Eliade divides rites into three categories: there are rites of time, rites of space or place, and rites of life-identity (which are often called rites of passage by anthropologists). The aim of ritual is the suspension or negation of time as *chronos,* the celebration of time as *kairos,* and the union of the spiritual and material worlds as proclaimed in the incarnation of Christ and his resurrection from the dead. To give a simple, but profound, example: in baptism we *are* removed from the realm of death and the powers of evil into the kingdom of light and life. The symbol is the reality: our task is to find out how to live this truth in our daily lives.

The Christian church has, in its history, built up four cycles of ritual which grow out of the central celebration of that mystery in the Eucharist.

Cycle One: the round of blessings and dedications (rites of place).

Blessing and dedication are often used as equal terms. Strictly speaking, a dedication means a turning over of the rights to a thing from one person to another, in this case, to God. Thus we speak of the dedication of a church or cathedral. A blessing is an invocation of the presence of God upon objects or persons; thus we speak of the blessing of a home or an altar, or the blessing service found in some churches for infants not yet baptized. Often the terms "blessing" and "consecration" are equal. The framework for both blessings and dedications is prayer.

Cycle Two: the round of services celebrating life-events, seasons in a person's life (rites of life-identity).

These are the rituals which accompany passages in life: birth, adolescence, marriage, ordination, illness, death. The specific rites are: Holy Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, Visitation of the Sick, and the Christian Funeral. The aim of these rituals is the celebration of the presence of God at turning points of life, at significant times for the family and the individual. The rituals of the Christian faith move beyond the family and the individual, however, and place these events in the context of the whole community in Christ.

Cycle One and Cycle Two are usually found together in the books of churches known as "Occasional Service Books."

Cycle Three: the round of services which hallow or sanctify both the daily round of 24 hours and the arena of work (rites of time).

Judaism sanctified time through its own cycle of prayer during the day. This cycle came over into the Christian church as the first set of minor services, connected with vigils or watches through the night, and consisting of Matins, Lauds, and Vespers. These services revolve around prayer and psalmody. From early times there was a recognition that these services were not only the prayers of individual Christians, but the prayer cycle of the church, and thus one is bound in community with others in their recita-

tion and singing even if one performs them alone. They are the church praying and singing through us. These services perhaps more than those in the first two cycles are centered in the Eucharist; from it they derive their meaning and extension into daily life.

It is from Roman influence that the next three services were added for the sanctification of work; they are quite brief, no more than 10 minutes in length, and are called Terce, Sext, and None, corresponding to the ancient enumeration of hours in the day.

Lastly, under the influence of monasticism, the final two hours were added. Prime was another brief service, but contained in it the dispension of tasks about the monastery for the day; Compline was the last service of the evening and commended the monk to bed. Each of the major services (Matins, Lauds, and Vespers) used one of the great canticles as a focus for meditation. Saturday became Mary Day in the monastery and Compline on Saturdays always includes a seasonal hymn of Mary. In time, too, each of the services had a thematic content for its time.

The complete cycle, then, looked like this:

It is important to recognize that in the early church, before the full flowering of the monastic movement, *most* Christians observed at least the three basic "hours" of Matins, Lauds, and Vespers. The inner meaning of the cycle was understood: we proceed, through it, from duplicity to simplicity and single-minded focus on the Presence of God in all things and all work; from fragmentation to wholeness, in the knowledge the day is under God's purpose and protection; from ego to self, in that we find and celebrate our common humanity under God.

Cycle Three is called the Daily or Divine Office (Latin *officium* = prayer) and is contained in books called "Breviaries."

Cycle Four: the Christian sanctification of the annual cycle, or year (rites of time) centered in the Eucharist and stemming from *the* festival, the Pasch or Easter. Of the four cycles, this one is the major and the other three stand as minor in relation to it.

The church year may be simply divided into two halves, usually called the *semester* (half-year) *Domini* (of the Lord) and the *semester ecclesiae* (of the church). The semester ecclesiae is the same as the entire Pentecost season.

hour	theme	canticle	time
Matins	2nd coming of Christ	Te Deum	2-3 a.m.
Lauds	Resurrection	Benedictus	dawn
Prime	preparation for day's labor		6 a.m.
Terce	come, Holy spirit		9 a.m.
Sext	cross/lead us not into temptation		noon
None	perseverance/last things		3 p.m.
Vespers	thanksgiving	Magnificat	sundown
Compline	protection for night/Gethsemane		bedtime

There is, however, an overlay throughout the year, of another cycle of celebrations: the sanctoral cycle, those times which celebrate saints, martyrs, confessors and so on. The Reformation retained two semesters but radically reduced the sanctoral cycle.

Another way of looking at the church year is in terms of seasons. The church also participates in the lunar-solar cycle and connects with its emphases. Thus, for example, the winter solstice naturally attracted to it the festival celebrating the birth of the Sun of Righteousness. The Day of John the Baptist (June 24) correlates with the summer solstice, when the days begin to get shorter. John as a forerunner of Christ was an obvious choice for this time. Augustine in sermon 287 makes the symbolic analogy: "Today John the Baptist is born; from now on the days get shorter until Christmas, when they will once more get longer." His scriptural analogy is John 3:30: "I must decrease and he must increase." The vernal equinox is marked by the Easter cluster of commemorations. After the autumnal equinox, the days rapidly become shorter, darkness prevails, and the weather is cold. Hence the church celebrated, on September 29, a day to uplift the champion against darkness and the forces of evil: the day of St. Michael and All Angels.

The year, as now celebrated in its full development, officially begins on the Sunday nearest St. Andrew's Day (Nov. 30), which is the first Sunday of Advent ("the coming") and concludes with Christ the King Sunday, whose theme has been that of judgment (traditional text: Matthew 25:31-46).

The "Cycles" of the Christian Year

ADVENT — four weeks preceding Christmas. Advent originated in Gaul, Spain, and Italy near the end of the 5th century. It was originally 6 weeks in conscious imitation of Lent, but became shortened in time. Traces are found already in journals of the Council of Saragossa, 380.

Advent is viewed as a season in preparation for Christmas, but it actually contains three motifs:

1. preparation for Christmas — the historic birth of Christ 2000 years ago (even if not historically accurate in date)

2. preparation for the Second Coming, or Parousia — the consummation of time at the "end of the ages"

3. recognition of the coming of Christ and the Kingdom in the present through the means of grace

The Sundays of Advent have peculiar meanings, too. The 1st Sunday emphasizes the Second Coming; the 2nd emphasizes Christ's coming in Scripture; the 3rd the coming of Christ in ministry; and the 4th specifically relates to Christ's coming at Christmas. The new pericope systems, unfortunately, blur this traditional understanding.

The Eastern church begins Advent on November 14, thus preserving the early imitation of Lent.

Advent was traditionally a *tempus clausum* (closed time); no weddings could be performed during it. This is a Roman imposition on the season which, perhaps inaccurately, stresses a penitential mode.

CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY — originally a unitive festival, but broken apart because of the different forms of dating the celebration of the Incarnation, the West opting for 25 December and the East for 6 January.

Christmas is a late development, stemming from Rome in 360, when Bishop Liberius notes its place in the cycle. Christmas was celebrated in Antioch by 380, Alexandria by 430. It is a Christian takeover, in some ways, of the festival *natalis solis invicti,* introduced into pagan Roman worship by Aurelian in 274.

The three saints' day following Christmas were part of the cycle of the early post-Nicene Church and represented martyrdom in will and deed (St. Stephen — Dec. 26); martyrdom in will but not deed (St. John — Dec. 27); martyrdom in deed but not will (The Holy Innocents — Dec. 28). They link incarnation with sacrificial love.

Epiphany is the earlier of the two festivals and probably comes from the natural link to the winter solstice. The East linked it to the Baptism of Christ but according to John Cassian (400) it is a unitive festival, linking incarnation and baptism. Not until 386 do we hear in a sermon of Chrysostom of Antioch that Christmas and Epiphany are definitely split into two festivals.

If Christmas is the festival of the humanity of God, then Epiphany may be celebrated as the festival of the divinity of Christ and, by derivation, our own "divinization."

Epiphany thus has an eschatological thrust, more than is found in the readings and prayer for Christmas, It focuses on *glory.*

Three traditional concerns go along with Epiphany:

1. the three kings — representing the beginning of the Kingdom without end

2. the baptism of Jesus — representing the beginning of his ministry and the manifestation of his messiahship

3. the miracle at Cana — representing the beginning of the transformation of the world through "works of power"

To which has been added a fourth, by transferral of Transfiguration from August 6 to the final Sunday of Epiphany: the manifestation of Jesus' messiahship to the disciples, which also forms a lead-in to Lent by its emphasis on the suffering servanthood of Christ.

The Christmas season includes the Circumcision of Jesus (Jan. 1) and ends on Jan. 5. Epiphany runs from 6 Jan. to Transfiguration. The length of Epiphany is determined, of course, by the date of Easter.

LENT — Ash Wednesday was determined to fill out the period of Lent to 40 days (which are "in", not "of" Lent). The period was originally known as *quadragesima* (40 days). "Lent" is an old English word meaning, simply, spring. By the 5th century in Rome, Ash Wednesday came into its own. The use of ashes has a twofold meaning:

1. purification — Heb. 9:13; Num. 19:9

2. penitence — Jonah 3:6; Luke 10:13; Matt. 11:21

Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) fixed the season by calling for the Wednesday of the 6th week before Easter as Ash Wednesday.

Lent is a conflation of the "newer" period of 6 weeks with the earlier period of 6 days of fasting, which we now call Holy Week.

As is true with many of the historically-rooted festivals, Palm Sunday comes from the Jerusalem church. It began in the 4th century with a procession from the Mount of Olives into the city. Maundy Thursday ("maundy" from Latin *mandatum,* John 13, "a new com-

mandment") and Good (God's) Friday also come from 4th century Jerusalem.

The devotional cycle known as the "stations of the cross" comes from the Jerusalem tradition of visiting the place on the *via dolorosa;* so does the "tre ore" (3 hour) service celebrated from 12-3 p.m., including lessons, prayers, and the Passion story from John, but since the 17th century Peruvian tradition has come to focus on the "7 words of the cross."

Tenebrae (darkness), the other major Good Friday devotional, is much later, 12 century Roman, and originally was a term for the services of Matins and Lauds on the last 3 days of Holy Week, which were done the preceding night. A distinctive feature was the successive extinction of candles as lessons were read, until the chapel was in darkness. It is now associated exclusively with Good Friday.

EASTER — to get to Easter we must back up and remember that Lent was originally not a time of penitence for all Christians solely but was especially seen as the time of *catechesis* (instruction) into the Christian mysteries, preparatory to Baptism which took place at the Great Vigil of Easter. That is why the Mass was, during the time of the hidden discipline, split into the Mass of Catechumens (who had to leave after the homily) and the Mass of the Faithful (only those Baptized and instructed). The Eastern Liturgy still retains the priest's admonition, "The doors. The doors. Let the deacons attend to the doors."

In the 2nd century, a debate arose called the quartodeciman controversy (controversy of the "14th"). Christians in Asia Minor wanted to celebrate the Pasch relative to the 14th Nisan, the day of the sacrifice of lambs for Passover, regardless of what day it fell on. Other Christians wanted to observe Easter on Sunday each year. The debate was finally settled by the Council of Nicea (325) which opted for the Sunday celebration, saying that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox (March 21) and always after the Jewish Passover. If the full moon falls on Sunday, then the following Sunday is Easter; this means that Easter can fall as early as 22 March or as late as 25 April. We still follow this enumeration; the reason for the difference between East and West has to do with the East's refusal to accept the Gregorian Calendar (1583 — Pope Gregory XIII) and remain with the Julian calendar.

The Paschal Candle was lit from the kindling of new fire at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday and kept burning until the day of Ascension, 40 days later. Ascension is another of the Jerusalem-inspired historic fests from the 4th century, but originally it celebrated not Christ's ascension but the Holy Innocents at Bethlehem. The ascension of Christ took over that festival by the end of the 4th century in Constantinople, Asia Minor, and Antioch, and is mentioned in *Apostolic Constitutions.* Ascension/Pentecost was originally a unitive festival, but under influence of the peculiar Jerusalem tradition these split apart.

From Advent through Easter's season is the *semester Domini.*

PENTECOST — was a Jewish festival called Shavuoth (the feast of weeks) which celebrated the ingathering of the wheat harvest and which was fused with the Jewish theology of covenant renewal at an early time (2 Chr. 10:14; see also Exod. 34:22; Deut. 16:10). Thus the early church used the obvious analogies: giving of the Law/giving of the Spirit; founding of the Jewish qahal/founding of the Christian church. These themes are found in sermons of Augustine and

Leo; and Eusebius in the 4th century made it plain that Ascension was also part of this celebration.

Pentecost is doubtless the second oldest festival of the church, since its origin is to be found within the New Testament along with the Pasch. Whitsunday, the English name, is probably derived from the fact that on this day candidates for baptism or membership wore white robes. This, too, became a day for baptisms and reception of new members because on the first Pentecost 3000 members were added to the church (Acts 2). It thus became also a traditional day for confirmation.

Pentecost is celebrated 50 days after Holy Saturday and thus its date is determined by Easter, too.

TRINITY SUNDAY — is a very late development; it was celebrated by the 10th century in Rome, but did not become an adopted, i.e. required, celebration until the 14th century. It is an odd festival since it is the only one which celebrates a doctrine first and foremost rather than an event or a person. It became the only day during the year on which the creed used was the *quicunque vult* ("whoever wishes . . ." the opening words), also known as the Athanasian Creed (though it is not really a creed and it was not written by Athanasius).

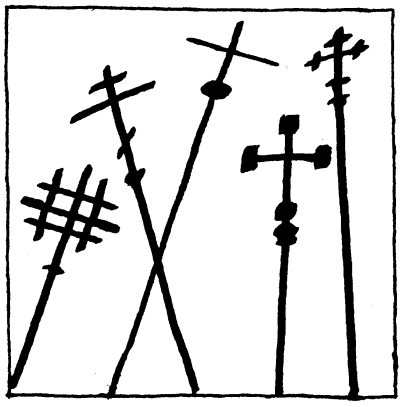
The Sundays after Pentecost are rather a hodge-podge and focus on ethical instruction and the parables of Jesus; the aim of the season, however loosely put together, is the edification of the church; hence the name: *semester ecclesiae.*

OTHER DAYS —

All Saints (Nov. 1) began in Syria in the 5th century at Antioch, when an all martyrs' day was celebrated on the Friday after Easter. Boniface IV picked up the idea and celebrated all martyrs' day on 13 May 610; in 835, it was transferred to Nov. 1.

All Souls (Nov. 2) began in Syria at the same time on the Saturday after Easter. It was a way of celebrating the nonfamous Christian dead. It became popular in the West via the monastery at Cluny which began to celebrate it in ca. 1000.

Mary Days are quite old, most dating from before the Gelasian Sacramentary. Candlemas (Presentation — Feb. 2) was fixed by Justinian in Rome in 524 CE. Others: Annunication — Mar. 25; Assumption — Aug. 15; Immaculate Conception — Dec. 8; Mary's Birthday — Sept. 8. Not all are celebrated by Lutherans.



Redeeming Dressage: Or, The Sermon on the Mounts

Cathy Ammlung
St. Louis, MO.

In the story of the magi we are confronted with the clash of conflicting claims of authority. On the one hand is the suffering, redeeming authority of the Baby; on the other is the grasping, hierarchical authority of Herod. That latter sort was shared to some degree by the magi in their faulty assumptions about where the King was to be found; however, the story would have us believe that in going back to their own country "by a different way" the magi were different — redeemed — men. Henceforth their "goy authority" would have a different cast because in some way it, too, had been redeemed in their encounter with Jesus.

It is a long way from ancient Palestine to 1984 America, but authority is alive and well. Loosely interpreted, it is all around us: in governments, families, and education surely, but also in less familiar guises. When we break ground with a plow, deduce the motion of the stars, or interpret and re-order reality in literature and art, we are laying claim to a degree of authority and mastery over some portion of existence. But the notion of "redeemed authority" would strike many as quaint at best, useless at worst. At the very least, they would say, "Gimme a ferinstance."

All right, ferinstance, let us look at dressage. It seems to be a fairly simple example of human beings exhibiting some form of authority and mastery over horses and (to a lesser degree) over students learning the discipline. Let us imagine an intelligent but theologically neutral devotee of dressage confronting the notion of redeemed authority. The first question would probably be, "What is 'redeemed?' Do you mean the correction of abuses in the sport, or do you mean the whole system is under some form of divine indictment? Because if you mean the latter, I protest. The ideal standard of practice in dressage is pretty darn good; who says it needs to be changed?"

Our devotee has a good point. Consider the following extract from the American Horse Show Association 1982-83 rule book: "Dressage (pronounced dreh-SAHZH) is a system of skilled horsemanship which . . . draws on internationally accepted principles. Elementary dressage is basic training which teaches a horse to be obedient, willing, supple, and responsive — prerequisites for any work the horse may be asked to do . . . the object of dressage is the harmonious development of the physique and ability of the horse. As a result it makes the horse calm, supple, and flexible, but also confident, attentive, and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with his rider . . . The horse gives the impression of doing of his own accord what is required of him. Confident and attentive, he responds to the slightest indication of the rider and thereby gives life and spirit to all . . . his body. By virtue of a lively impulsion and . . . suppleness free from the paralyzing effects of resistance, the horse obeys will-

ingly and without hesitation . . . displaying a natural and harmonious balance both physically and mentally."

Sounds downright theological! Of course, the very fact that there are rulebooks and instruction manuals presupposes the possibility of ignorance and/or abuse, for what need is there of a written rule if it is "written on the heart?" And our dressage devotee insists that pointing the finger away from those who mess up the sport, and towards the ideal itself, and saying, "change *that,*" is unrealistic. At the least it gets the bad sports off the hook far too easily.

The abuse of authority in dressage stems (as it does in other activities) from pride, the need to prove one's superiority, and ignorance. It is made manifest in two basic ways: in trying to push the horse beyond its present capabilities, and in trying to work beyond one's own capabilities. I've ridden a young horse that would waddle and sway down the length of the arena because, although I wanted her to move forward briskly, I had unfortunately forgotten that she was young and weak (and built like a moose) and hadn't yet mastered balancing me on her back at the slower paces. I had pushed her beyond what she could do, and she responded by moving like a duck. On the other problem, there have been cases in which a rider would resort to severe punishments and harsh training methods with their mounts, not because the horse couldn't do what was required but because the rider didn't known how to request it properly. Rather than taking the time to learn things properly, some riders prefer to take shortcuts which ultimately brutalize the horse and dehumanize themselves. Unfortunately, it's the horse that suffers most from all manifestations of abuse in the sport.

But these abuses can (at least theoretically) be corrected internally, through education, training, and discipline in accordance with the rules and ideals of dressage. Adherence to the rules is capable of producing outstanding examples of artistry and horse/rider harmony. Consider the beautiful white Lipizzaner stallions of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna, or the Olympic-caliber teams of many nations. So, our dressage devotee demands, other than calling riders to recognize and adhere to the stated goals and rules of dressage, what do you mean by "redeeming dressage?" If our dressage devotee were an atheist, s/he might be even more insistent and say, "As the highest form of life on earth, is there anything we don't have the right to do? The limits are strictly self-imposed without reference to any higher authority. Once we decide what 'abuses' are, and try to eliminate them from dressage (or whatever), there is no possibility of, much less any need for, further redemption. What have you to say to that?"

Well, nothing, at present. Let me dig myself in deeper, because another dressage enthusiast has just tapped me on the shoulder. "I've got a different question. What if redeeming dressage is a hopeless and impossible task? Maybe it does need it at heart, but does that mean it will get it?"

It took a bit of probing with this earnest doomsayer, but I think I see the basis for the question. It is the matter of superfluousness. Many forms of authority have the possibility of being useful or beneficial to people: government, families, medicine, education, agriculture, even the ordained ministry. Others are perversions of these or other intrinsically decent expressions of authority. They might need to be radically transformed, but not totally abolished. Some, however, seem quite benign but altogether superfluous to the

human situation. Exercising our authority over nature by climbing mountains, hang-gliding, raising gerbils, or even training horses in the airs and graces of dressage in a mechanized age do seem rather pointless. Furthermore, although horses today are useful as beasts of burden, as cow ponies, and even as food in many parts of the world for the poor as well as the wealthy, dressage itself is not useful. In fact, it is expensive, elitist, and obscure. The only people it really benefits are those who charge outrageous prices for training and coaching, those who sell feed and equipment at vastly inflated prices, and the wealthy folk who use the high-priced steeds as tax writeoffs. We can speak of it as "sport approaching art" but there is a certain defensiveness in our tone. Ultimately it is something we do because it is something we do. It is superfluous. What possible point could there be in redeeming the pointless? "What assurance is there," our dressage enthusiast anxiously asks, "that my authority as a trainer of horses will be redeemed and not abolished?"

And of course, once that question is asked, the breach is made. For how do we know what activity, or which form of authority, is useful — permissible — redeemable? When it all comes down to it, what assurance is there that *any* of it won't be trashed?

So I am left between a rock and a hard place. Even if I ignore for the present the notion that no authority needs redemption because there is none to redeem it, I am still left with my two friends who claim apparently opposite positions. A) The system of authority is fine as is in dressage; no redemption beyond reform is necessary. There is apparently no "crossing" between my existence as a redeemed person and my activity as a dressage rider. B) I have only an extremely tenuous claim for supposing that dressage can or will be redeemable, even if one admits it might need it. That form of exercising authority is so pointless one might as well not indulge in it. It might not be a sin, but it is surely beneath God's dignity to bother with.

The fact remains, though, that I *do* ride horses. And I even raise gerbils, although that's another story. People do all sorts of pointless and peculiar things. Why? What gives them the right? How dare they? Or, to be more personal: I've often been asked some variation of the following question. "What gives you the right to slap a bridle and saddle on an animal and impose your will on it arbitrarily? What gives you the right to demand that it arch its neck and prace and turn and halt just so? I'm sure it would rather munch grass undisturbed on the open plains!"

Well, the question could be pushed even farther. What gave people the right to tame wild horses in the first place, or to herd wild cattle, or to develop new strains of wheat, or (if we're going to get right down to it) to be anything beyond the hunters and gatherers our ancestors were? We do these things and exercise our authority with a curious unconscious ease, little understanding the dreadfulness and accountability that presses down upon us at times. Indeed, how dare we?

How does one begin to answer these questions? I'm not sure one can, not fully, but I'll start where the magi did. Matthew tells us they prostrated themselves at the feet of the Christ Child. They made obeisance to the One to whom all authority in heaven and on earth would be given. In doing so, they laid at his feet their own claim to authority. In the presence of that One, their claims were seen rather to be his claim. Their gifts — symbols and fruits of *their* power, *their*

position, *their* authority — are now seen as symbols of *his* power, position, and authority.

"All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me . . ." — at the heart of it, that makes us thieves and usurpers. All our claims are voided. We have no "natural right." In that sense, my authority as a rider is no more or less ideal, no more or less superfluous, than that of a doctor, or a petty tyrant, or a pimp. "All have fallen short . . ." and all forms of authority need redemption. The beginning of that redemption lies in acknowledging authority's rightful owner.

But there is a subtle point here. It is quite possible for an individual to acknowledge God the Creator as the source and legitimizer of human authority. We see, even in Genesis, the command to have dominion over the earth. There is nothing specifically Christian, nor even Judaeo-Christian-Islamic, about working and creating in our daily lives and affirming that all is from God. There are deists and Druids and Buddhists who could stand alongside us and affirm likewise.

So as we stand before the Babe with our talents, our handiwork, our ideas, our training programs, we might do well to ask, in what sense is laying all this before Jesus different from simply laying it before God the Creator?

I think it is the case that an end-time, or eschatological, dimension must be (forgive the pun) trotted out in order to understand what is happening. Authority in this world, even authority seen as a gift from God and responsibly exercised, is simply that: authority *in* and *for* this world. It can surely be used to benefit both the authority-wielder and that which is subjected to authority. In the case of dressage, responsible and dedicated trainers and riders certainly gain a self-discipline and communication with another creature which is admirable. The horse's physical and mental development is enhanced and even the species as a whole benefits from the selective breeding and rigorous testing certain individuals undergo. And even other people benefit by appreciating the beauty of an artistic expression in which cooperation is not simply between human beings with each other (as in dance) or with inanimate materials (as in painting or, to some degree, instrumental music), but actually between one living species and another. Surely that is enough to give one pause! The rest of creation might not be simply a tool or toy, but possibly an active, responding partner, for humanity.

But the authority of Christ is not simply the authority to make this world and all its denizens and relationships as good as they possibly can be, however important (and it is very important) that may be. Instead, his authority is set for the redemption of the world — indeed for the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. This is where what I called the eschatological dimension of Christ's authority comes in. Jesus suffered and bled and died not for the status quo, not even for the sake of "every day in every way, things will get better and better." No, for the sake of the status quo or its improvement, perhaps the suffering and death of "poor ord'nary people like you and like me" is necessary, but surely not of the Babe who is revealed to also be the Son of God. Christ's death and resurrection are the touchstones of his authority as the One who will usher in a whole new reality, a whole new Kingdom in which all authority will ultimately be both cruciform and Christiform.

The unsettling thing is that it's starting to happen already in the here and now of "this-world" authority.

When the magi rose from worship and returned to their own country by a different route, they bore with them the gifts Christ gave to them: the authority to go back and do whatever it is magi do, but with a difference. For *they* were different. They had been confronted by and drawn into the bringer of that new reality. They were, in short, redeemed: magi whose allegiance and obedience was to the One whose authority as King of this new reality and whose claim to their worship and obedience consisted in his own humbly obedient and loving suffering and death for their sake. Henceforth their own authority would be transformed by, conformed to, and for the sake of, Christ and his Kingdom — his new, redeemed creation.

One ramification of all this begins to emerge: Although the redemption of creation is through Christ, there is yet a sense in which we who have been redeemed are involved. We are subversives in the world who dare to use our authority not just for care and maintenance but also as an instrument through which God will overthrow the world! This is risky business. We live in the hope that Christ's authority and promise really do extend beyond destruction and death to the establishment of a new heaven and earth; if it does not, we are in big trouble. Even if it is true, it is still risky — is there any reason to believe that as it cost the Son of God his life to bring this about, it will cost us any less as we say, "Thy will be done in us, through us"?

Yet the hope and promise remain. If creation and our authority within it are to be redeemed, a lot of it will be done by God through us, God's redeemed regents in the world. In a very real sense, both the risk and the promise are that the redemption of any of our authority is whatever we make it to be. For although it is God's will, through the strange authority given to his Son, to redeem us and all creation, it is apparently also his will to accomplish the latter by indirection through what *we* do. And we have been given a pretty free rein, or reign. This is indeed a princely Christmas gift.

So turning to dressage, I can say without hesitation that yes, it must be redeemed, it can be redeemed, and, God willing, it will be redeemed. But what will that entail? What might "redeemed dressage" look like?

It will probably look very little different from dressage as it is practiced in its truest and noblest form right now. I don't think there is a specifically Christian way to ride a horse. Nor do I think the good and beautiful communication between horse and rider is a poor framework for redemption just because it was refined by pagans like Xenophon or secular institutions like the Austrian cavalry. Redeeming dressage will surely consist in pointing out abuses and in calling abusers back to the ideals of the sport, just as my friend the dressage devotee maintained.

But if the authority exercised in dressage stopped there, it would will simply be "maintain-the-status-quo-of-this-world" authority. What would be most radically different, I think, might not even be apparent on the surface, because the difference might be described as one of intention and allegiance rather than of actual best-case practice. It is perhaps akin to settlers who initially stake a claim to the virgin prairie acres upon which their ranches and herds and crops would someday exist. Or perhaps it is a bit like the heralds and soldiers and conquistadors who plant the banners of their king on foreign soil and thereby claim that that soil is no longer just itself but is also, because of the power and authority wielded by their king, an ac-

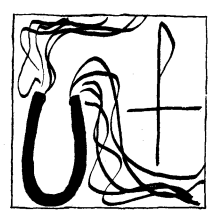
tual part of his kingdom and an object of his direct concern and intervention. Those are lousy examples in that they rest on the kind of conquering, "superior-type" authority of Herod rather than the suffering, dying, obedient "servant-type" authority of Christ and his redeemed, but I think they hint at something. Because of my redemption by and allegiance to Christ, and by and through his authority, what I do in the training of a horse and in the establishment of equine/human and human/human relationships, becomes a beachhead which Christ may claim as part of his new kingdom and from which even wider circles of "this world" might be claimed for and redeemed by Christ. In some still poorly-defined way, what I "bet my life on" is that dressage will have some place and value in Christ's new creation because I, his redeemed, have valued it here.

But are there any outward signs by which some hint of this might be seen? Perhaps, especially if one considers those above-mentioned equine/human and human/human relationships. Let us very briefly examine them.

As I train a horse to be submissive yet keen, obedient yet full of joie de vivre, in some small way I do what God through Christ has done for me. One might say I am as God to that horse. And in the fact of that trusting relationship, in the realization of that obedience which frees the horse to most fully express its "horse-ness", the absurd thing is accomplished. Somehow, through me, God is redeeming that part of creation, that horse!

And from all this flows another possibility: the redemption of human relationships because of the possibility of the redemption of dressage. As just one very minor point, consider the light in which an instructor might now be able to regard her student. Instead of just being a promising young rider who might win medals or enhance the instructor's reputation, the student might be seen as another one who is saddled (pardon the expression) with a high responsibility and privilege. This accords to the student, or even to the groom or stablegirl, a certain dignity that otherwise might be overlooked. They might be seen, not as low folks on the totem pole of achievement, but instead as co-conspirators in an unlikely, risk-filled, subversive, marvelous enterprise. It might be that a new sense of joy, respect, cooperation, and fellowship would be engendered because a trainer or rider saw another in such a new light.

Of course, these are tentative, "perhaps" sorts of statements. After all, who can say what the ramifications of the redemption of any kind of authority might be? When God's kingdom comes in its fullness, who can say whether or not there might be redeemed saints on glorious mounts, dancing before their Lord as David danced before the Ark? If the design of God's will is partly woven by my hands, I would not be too hasty to rule it out.



It's a Baby

Thomas G. Sinnott

The chill December wind hurried me from the parking lot into the highrise building which in reality fit all of the stereotypes one might have of "senior citizen housing." Prepared for a shut-in communion visit I balanced a private communion set, a Bible, and a gift from the LCW to Harold as I entered the lobby.

Inside, the cold stares and barren expressions of those standing around were as chill as the wind outside. A cheerful "good morning" elicited one grunt and one nod. The elevator took me to the proper floor, and as I walked down the hall, doors would crack open and close. As I passed, curious residents peeped out anonymously, and retreated back into isolation after seeing who it was that the elevator had deposited on their floor.

Harold at least was glad to see me. We visited, read scripture, prayed, communed. It was time to leave, and just then I heard something astonishing. It was the high pitched wail of a baby crying. Perhaps it was due to a misguided diaper pin, or a sudden fright, but the scream was very loud. How ironic I though, a baby crying in this senior citizens tower.

I left the apartment and saw in the hall, practically a convention gathering in front of the apartment from where the baby's cries were coming. One woman announced "there is a baby in there." Another said "that's her great grandson, come to visit." The doors were open up and down the hall, and people were smiling and talking in excited hushed voices so as not to overpower the baby's cry. "God bless you," I said as I walked to the elevator. "Merry Christmas to you too, Reverend," someone said. It was Christmas, and it took a baby to make it so.

Just as the child brought those people out of their isolation, and overcame the barren existence of the highrise dwellers, so the Christ child brings us together in community by breaking down the barriers and opening the closed doors which both define us and constrain us. Jesus is a great, grand child, come to visit.

"Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!' "

A Letter to Joseph

E. A. Zeile

I have never written to you before. Seems like you pretty well stayed in the shadows, what with all the excitement of that night in Bethlehem. I sometimes wish, Joseph, we could have taped the whole experience, right down to the first gurgle and bawling cry of that special child. Were you as uptight and excited as we fathers of the 20th century get? Did you help, somehow, some way? Or,as the awe of the moment a kind of paralyzing thing? How long did Mary labor? And, knowing what you knew about the royalty of the child, what feelings flooded your heart as the Lord of all was gently laid to rest in "manger crude and bare?" Yes, I wish we had it all on tape, video, of course, and in color.

But then again, carpenter, I am glad we must muse and wonder. Somehow I think we would have misused the details, gotten them all snarled up in the central truth of the night. For after all, Immanuel is another name for your foster son; and it says it all. God with us! I don't really want to know the dimensions of the cave you stayed in, nor the entourage of humans and animals that wandered in and out that night. Nor, for that matter, is it important how many wise men and shepherds came to adore. They did come, the seers and sages and the common, unlettered, smelly, hill people. And they worshipped him. They, and you, represent me, and Nobel prize winners, and Madison street believers, and a whole variety of human beings who have in faith said their "yes" to our Lord.

O yes, friend Joseph, what kind of song did you sing? I know Mary's wonderful hymn of praise, even Simeon's when he saw the baby in the temple: What did your song sound like? Could it have gone like this?

O God, how my heart bursts with joy this night,
This virgin mother I do love, she has carried your son!
She is blessed, and will be. I too am blessed, immeasurably!
God, I shall care for him as my own son, no, as your son.
I shall love his mother, love her and know each day
She carried in her body your hope for all ages.
Father, show me how to father him.
Power my life and my heart to love him deeply.
With chisel and adze, carve me into a fitting caretaker
Of your holy one.
Use me, if only for a little while
In your grand plan.
And when his mission breaks thru to deepen my understanding
Then let not the darkness of the cross shake me from the
Glory I know is in him.
O God, let me stand for this little while in the reflection
Of his glory.
That is enough, indeed, much more than enough!
O God my heart bursts with joy this night!

Epiphany
Based on a hymn of Saint Ambrose on the Canonical Hours

The star of morn to night succeeds;
We therefore pray,
May God in all our words and deeds,
Keep us from harm this day;
May wrath and thoughts that gender shame
Ne'er our breast abide; . . .

Eastern Magi's special star
Brilliant comet's path converging
Forms celestial flares.
Bright portent of one's
Promised life to come.
Long journey's goal
To greet the King,
A gentle child
So soon to bring
The miracle of life
For those who
Feel so barred
From Paradise.
Within their grasp
But lost from
Feelings now but shared.
In this moment
Fertile, safe and
Open to God's future
I live and breathe
Anticipation!
What will come?

Thomas M. Milke

A "Meditation" on the Advent Lectionary

Dean L. Moe

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Holstein, Iowa

Beginning with the splendor of All Saints Sunday, we enter a period where the last Sundays after Pentecost are rich with eschatological and apocalyptic themes, culminating in the celebration of Christ the King Sunday, then comes Advent. And lo and behold, we're right back with very similar material, although in this case couched in terms of John the Baptist.

Following Advent, the lectionary for the Christmas season brings its own historical oddities. One of the Gospels appointed for Christmas Day, John 1:1-14, is repeated as the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Christmas. Any sense of a sequence is lost with the Holy Innocents, Martyrs, falling on December 28, the Name of Jesus on January 1, the Presentation of Our Lord, Feb. 2, and the various Gospels appointed for the first Sunday after Christmas (Flight to Egypt, the Presentation and the Boy Jesus in the Temple). To top it all off, the major festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord appointed for January 6 often falls on weekdays and thus is lost for all practical purposes for the great majority of our people.

Pastorally, I for years have pondered over this, wondering how we can better convey the sense of things to biblically illiterate people and deal at the same time with the cultural phenomena which occur: the explosion of Christmas celebrations in Advent, the let-down following Christmas Day, the transition from Christmas to Epiphany. In coping with it, for the past several years I have used an alternative scheme for the lectionary, which has had several advantages in our experience of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany. I'd like to share it in the hope of soliciting comments and further discussion regarding the lectionary. Perhaps I should point out that we do adhere rigorously to the appointed lectionary the rest of the year, lest anyone think that we have abandoned all.

What we have done can be outlined briefly.

Advent I, The Annunication of Our Lord

The propers are those assigned for March 25, which otherwise falls in Lent and is usually ignored. It is not important, but we have substituted Genesis 3:8-20 for the appointed Second Lesson, I Timothy 3:16.

Advent II, Joseph the Guardian

One may use the lessons in the Roman Catholic lectionary for Joseph's feast day, March 19: 2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-14, 16; Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; and Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24. We have also used Ruth 1:22-2:7, 4:13-17; Psalm 24; Romans 1:1-7; and Matthew 1:18-25.

Advent III, The Visitation

We use the propers appointed for May 31.

Advent IV, The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

The propers are those for June 24. We have sometimes substituted Psalm 138 for Psalm 141.

First Sunday after Christmas: The Name of Jesus

The propers appointed for January 1 are used.

Second Sunday after Christmas: The Presentation of Our Lord

The propers appointed for February 2 are used.

First Sunday after the Epiphany: The Epiphany of Our Lord

The propers appointed for January 6 are used. To climax the 12 days of Christmas, the greens are kept up through this Sunday, the choir presents its cantata that evening followed by a festive coffee, and a pageant involving the arrival of the wisemen is used, interspersed throughout the Service of the Word. Recalling the gifts which the wisemen bore, we remember all special gifts to the congregation on that day in the bulletin (excluding memorials which are remembered on All Saints Sunday).

Second Sunday after the Epiphany: The Baptism of Our Lord

This key event in the life of Jesus is retained for the second Sunday. As the ordination of Jesus and beginning of his public ministry, this event kicks off Epiphany as the time of mission par excellence. It also becomes the occasion on which we celebrate the generational rite for our three year olds, when they and their parents are reminded of their baptismal covenant as the children begin their first stage of formal learning in nursery. The names of all baptized during the preceding year are remembered also.

Following the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, we revert to the usual appointed propers for the rest of the year.

There are a number of advantages to this order which we have come to appreciate, having now worked with this scheme of things for several years.

1. *The Old Testament Context.* Any casual exegesis even of the texts appointed for each Sunday in the described order reveals the wealth of Old Testament motifs and historical context for the birth of our Lord. There is much more of a grounding in Heilsgeschichte through this sequence, without duplicating the fine eschatological emphasis of the last Sundays after Pentecost.
2. *The Communication of the Gospel.* By preserving chronology and an unfolding series of great events, one really can tell a story to which people respond. Musicians and artists are able to call upon a rich set of resources in their contributions to the Advent-Epiphany seasons, which also enhances greatly the telling of the story.
3. *The Ability to Cope with Secular Culture.* Many pastors have struggled with the great pressure to transform Advent into Christmas and the post-Dec. 25 blues. With the lectionary described above, I found it much easier to satisfy the yearning of people for a more hopeful, celebratory Advent without transforming it into Christmas. Christmas itself, the 12 days, becomes a much more distinct season and finds its culmination not on December 25, but in the celebration of the Epiphany. It even helps with minor crises such as the hanging of the greens, which is more easily delayed until Christmas when people realize they will be used up to and on Epiphany for a particular reason. Musicians also feel the relief of pressure during the hectic Advent season by having more time to practice for their cantata each year. We also have a more coherent framework for singing Christmas carols longer than usual!

4. *Pastoral and Parish Concerns.* In the parishes where I have served, we have used a series of generational rites and parish concerns specifically integrated with the church year. In that context, we have found that a number of concerns tie in so well with the proposed lectionary. The great texts of Advent permit a focus on the family. Mary and Elizabeth provide a superb emphasis on the role of women as prophets and examples of faith. Christmas I, the Name of Jesus, fits well with the traditional ALC practice of recognizing our colleges and students at that time. Christmas II, the Presentation, is a fine time to recognize our senior citizens and their role in the congregation. We have already mentioned aspects of parish life correlated with the Epiphany and the Baptism of Our Lord.

I would be delighted to hear what others have found in wrestling with the opportunities and challenges of Advent in relation to what precedes and follows. Indeed, one wishes for some way in which other aspects of the lectionary for the entire year might be re-examined together in view of eventual reordering of the propers and in the hope (color it blue!) of finding more effective ways to recite God's mighty deeds among his people.

Jolly Old Saint Nicholas: Christmas in Reverse

Mike Sherer

Are you bracing for it? Are you taking a deep breath before the onslaught? I don't mean the "mad-dash, over-spend, over-do" mentality that seizes everyone Thanksgiving to Christmas every year (although that's certainly worth bracing for as well). I'm thinking more of the inevitable lamentations we are sure to hear, sure as the Lutheran liturgy or taxes or the sunrise: words from pulpits, and from Christmas magazines, decrying what "they" have done to "our" Christmas festival.

Well, what about what *we* have done to it? Why not make this the year to do something creative with the "Christmas spirit"? Why not make this your year to have "Christmas in reverse"?

A dozen or more years ago, our family did just that. We wanted to arrest what we perceived to be a "creeping secularity" about how we, along with much of culture, celebrated the Nativity. Because our children were still very young, we though it a good time to try a new direction. This is what we did (and what we still do each December),and what you might like to try.

We steered away from giving gifts to one another and to relatives at Christmas (although birthdays are big gift-times at our house). That left the Advent and Christmas seasons free for celebrating what the Scriptures say those seasons are about.

Next, we added a new day to our December calendar of celebration: St. Nicholas Day, December 6. A bit of quick-research turned up the fact that "Santa Claus" could be traced back to Myra, Asia Minor, ca 400. Nicholas, the good bishop of that city in that time, had earned a reputation for a sort of generosity we hadn't frequently encountered. A little (but not much) like Robin Hood, he persuaded the rich to give some of their wealth (or let him give it for them) to needy people. What's more, the giving was done by surprise — anonymously.

Nicholas, we decided, was a good exemplar of the Christ: giving to those (us) who are desperately in need of that which is most needed, in ways it cannot be repaid.

It was clearly the reverse of what the "Santa Claus" tradition had become. Instead of our expecting "St. Nick" to give us what we want (and probably don't need), we saw in Bishop Nicholas a readiness to give (not get), to share with those who have too little, not too much; an eagerness to redistribute wealth that frequently burdens rather than liberates those who grasp it too tightly.

So we started celebrating St. Nicholas Day every December 6. We did some things those years when our kids were much younger that we haven't done more recently: we made sock puppets and played out the story (our version of the story, anyway) of Nicholas and how he prompted sharing. We rewrote the "Jolly Old St. Nicholas" song to speak of Myra and of Jesus' birth. We ate (still do) a special supper on that night. We chose a place to give a sum of money we had set aside for a "St. Nicholas project." One year it went to kids to whom a local kindergarten teacher had alerted us (in fact, the school teacher took the money, bought the kids new clothes, and delivered them to them, so that neither we nor they found out who was "on the other end.") More recently we've given our St. Nicholas gift to a self-help project in Iowa which makes and donates simple tractors to poor farmers in Africa and Latin America.

As one church tract once said, "The problem isn't that Christmas is too commercial, but that it's not commercial enough!" We don't give the material goods we have to the right people. Those who have in abundance give to others who have in abundance, and the poor go hungry — and naked — away.

Well, how about it? Are you ready for a shift this Advent/Christmas? Why not celebrate the "real" St. Nicholas, and have a "Christmas in reverse"?

You might just find yourselves still talking about it in January.

Book Reviews



THE OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA. VOLUME 1: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE AND TESTAMENTS. Edited by James H. Charlesworth. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983. 995 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

For more than 70 years the standard English translations of the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha have been those edited under the leadership of R. H. Charles. In the meantime, and especially in the last generation, there has been a tidal wave of new discoveries, at Qumran and elsewhere, that has rekindled interest in this literature. The result has been a new appreciation of the eschatological side of early Judaism and of the apocalyptic milieu prevalent in the New Testament period.

The documents printed in this volume were written during a millennium extending from the second century B.C.E. to about the ninth century C.E. Preserved in a dizzying variety of languages (Slavonic, Ethiopic, Greek, Syriac, etc.), often languages different from those in which they were originally composed, these documents could only be adequately treated by an international team of scholars. For the work of recruiting and supervising this team, the theological world owes an enormous debt to Prof. Charlesworth.

The editor calls attention to four theological themes that recur time after time in these writings: sin, the origin of evil, and theodicy; God's transcendance; the coming of the Messiah; resurrection and descriptions of paradise. While each of these ideas have their roots in the Old Testament, they underwent rapid development in Judaism particularly from 200 B.C.E. to about 100 C.E., a development that meant that almost all Jews at Jesus' time believed in a coming resurrection even though this doctrine is sparsely attested in canonical writings (Isa. 26; Dan. 12). These documents are also important for what they reveal about the many sectarian divisions within Judaism and the liveliness of this religious community, the usual unfortunate generalizations about Jewish legalism notwithstanding.

The Testaments are the imaginary last wills and testaments of people like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — and the latter's twelve sons, not to mention Moses, Solomon, and Adam. As with the apocalypses, many of these documents were written at times of turmoil or even persecution, and they often present remarkable and faithful responses to the possibility of martyrdom or stirring ethical admonitions. It ought not be forgotten, of course, that with all the valuable information in these documents comes much that is merely esoteric. In addition, many of the documents, though originally Jewish, have been supplemented and expanded with Christian additions; a good many of them were preserved only in Christian circles.

For each of the documents a fresh translation is supplied, plus a brief commentary that is about equal in length to the comments in an annotated Bible. Those who prepared the translations also discuss standard introductory questions (date, provenance, original language, historical and theological importance).

Needless to say, this volume will be part of any well-stocked theological library for the forseeable future. A second volume, scheduled to appear shortly, will complete this collection of writings from the intertestamental period.

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

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE GOSPEL PASSION NARRATIVES. By Douglas J. Moo. Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1983. 468 pages. Paper. $17.95.

This book is a doctoral dissertation written under Matthew Black at St. Andrew's, with all the exhaustive detail, footnotes (as long as the text itself), and bibliography (55 pages) of a dissertation. The one concession to book form is indices of Scripture and authors which allow this book to serve as a reference.

Moo's purpose in studying NT use of OT references and allusions in the Gospel passion narratives is to isolate hermeneutical principles at work in the early Christian church (including Jesus). This topic takes its focus from the often held/heard assertions that the NT used hermeneutical principles continuous with those of rabbinic and/or Qumran communities (midrashic, arbitrary, atomistic).

The first chapter studies rabbinic, apocalyptic, and Qumranic use of the OT. The heart of the book is a meticulous study of Gospel passion narrative pericopes that utilize the OT (background of the OT pericope, OT text used, review of scholarly literature, significance of the pericope for NT witness). These pericopes are organized around five major topics: Isaianic servant songs, Zech. 9-14, lament psalms, sacrificial terminology, and miscellaneous pericopes. The final chapter gives Moo's conclusions.

The diversity and detailed nature of this study allows only several general observations. Moo is a sane and cautious scholar. He acknowledges that the image of suffering servant was rarely used in the pre-Christian era, and that the Son of Man title was somewhat ambiguous. Moo is also a conservative scholar — he teaches at Trinity, Deerfield. He refers to a rectilinear understanding of OT prophecy and seldom grants much redactional activity to the evangelists. He provides some interesting insights into the theology/theologies of the evangelists, based simply on the ways they select and use the OT. His observations on the meaning of "fulfil" are very helpful. Most important, his summary discussion of the difference between NT and rabbinic or Qumranic use of the OT is clearly done.

This is a book for the specialist. It abounds with Greek and Hebrew (which unfortunately is handwritten and not easily read) as well as French and German. Conversation with the world of scholarship is conducted on every page. However, this is a significant study that will make its mark on the ongoing study of the significance and use of Scripture within Scripture.

Henry Rowold
Concordia Seminary
Chia Yi, Taiwan

COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF SAINT LUKE. By Saint Cyril of Alexandria. Tr. R. Payne Smith. Astoria, NY: Studion Publishers, 1983. xiii and 620 pages. Cloth. $34.95.

This book is in every sense of the word a pure delight. From the handsomely done geometric pattern on the inside front pages, through the 27 new iconographic drawings that were commissioned for this book and including the text of the commentary, the notes by the editor, the new Studion type face created for this series, and so forth: the book is a perfect example of a classical union of the contents and the container. The book contains Florovsky's classical essay on the function of tradition in the ancient church, a very brief biography of Saint Cyril including a list of all his genuine writings, and a fine critical essay by the editor. The text itself consists of 154 homilies that Cyril delivered on the Gospel according to Saint Luke. The homilies provide excellent examples of exegetical preaching and also demonstrate Cyril's profound and far-reaching knowledge of the Scripture of the Old and the New Testaments. The editor has decided, rightly in the judgment of this reviewer, to use an English style that tends to be more flowery than our modern tastes might enjoy, but very effective in helping the reader to imagine that he or she is back in the cathedral of Alexandria listening to Cyril himself.

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

ON THE MYSTAGOGY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. By Saint Photios. Astoria, NY: Studion Publishers, 1983. 213 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

This book explains why we Protestants and Catholics are wrong each Sunday when we confess our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed. The Creed as originally established, at Nicea in 325 and Constantinople in 381, describes the Holy Spirit as "proceeding from the Father." Our Western version adds *filioque,* "and the Son." The notion of a double procession first appeared in Spain at the Synods of Toledo in 447 and 589 and was later promoted for popular use by Charlemagne among the Franks. In 809 Pope Leo III rejected such a unilateral rewriting of the Creed because it violated the authority of the councils, but in 1054 Pope Leo IX excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople, Cerularius, saying it was because the Greeks were omitting the *filioque* from the Creed.

Through this first English translation the long muffled voice of an ancient and estranged Byzantine theologian can now be heard in the modern West. Summoned by Emperior Michael III to forsake his status as lay theologian and to head the church in 858, Photios was deposed and exiled in 867, reinstated in 877, only to be exiled again shortly before his death in 891. While patriarch he wrote an encyclical to Pope Nicholas I (858-67), the *Mystagogy,* and the *Synodicon,* all of which appear between the covers of this book and all argue against *filioque.*

Photios makes two basic arguments, one methodological and one theological. The methodological argument is clear: when an ecumenical council representing the whole known church establishes a statement of faith, only such a council has the authority to amend or alter it. The action taken by the bishop of Rome, quite obviously motivated by the lust for power, is abitrary and unwarranted. It seems to this reviewer that Photios is in the right here.

Exegetically, he underscores what Jesus says in John 15:26, namely, that the Spirit comes "from the father." Photios asks rhetorically: if the Spirit comes from both the Father and the Son, then why did Jesus not add ". . . and from me"? If "from the Father" was good enough for Jesus, then it ought to be good enough for us.

His systematic argument focuses on the destruction of the concept of the Trinity which the *filioque* implies. *Filioque* implies either a dyadic god made up of Father and Son, or the production of the Spirit by the Father through an intermediary, the Son. In either case, this leaves the Spirit as something less than an equal partner in the Trinity. In presenting his own view, Photios grants a certain priority to the Father, even referring to a monarchy of the first person within the Trinity. With this in mind he accuses the West of Sabellianism because *filioque* points to a succession leading from the Father to the Son and then, lastly, to the Spirit. He complains that this makes the Spirit the Father's "grandson"! The nature of the Spirit turns out to be inferior to that of the other two persons, because Father and Son each get to cause something within the Godhead, but the Spirit does not.

This reviewer has difficulty in accepting the systematic argument. Photios insists on making the first person of the Trinity, the Father, the principle of "unity" and the sole "cause" of the other two persons in an inordinate way. He objects to the "two sources" theory of the Holy Trinity, not because he advocates three sources but because he advocates only one, the Father. It seems that Photios is subordinating both Son and Spirit in a way akin to Arianism. The way to avoid Arianism is to find unity of God in the whole of God — in the Godhead — and not in just one of the three persons. This seems to escape Photio's consideration.

The book includes helpful theological and historical introductions plus the original Greek versions of some of the texts. Be warned, however, that the editor — unlike Photios himself — blames Augustine for initiating heresies which the Latin and Protestant churches have expanded and extended.

Ted Peters
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Graduate Theological Union
Berkeley, CA

EERDMANS
NEW BOOKS FOR SCHOLARS

THE EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS, TO PHILEMON, AND TO THE EPHESIANS
New International Commentary on the New Testament *by F.F. Bruce*
This second replacement volume in the NICNT series displays the same skill, scholarship, and spiritual insight that characterize F.F. Bruce's previous works. Cloth, $18.95

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS
by C.E.B. Cranfield
Cranfield's two-volume commentary on Romans in the prestigious *International Critical Commentary* was acclaimed by F.F. Bruce as "well worthy to take its place alongside the really great commentaries on Romans." Now Cranfield has abridged his very scholarly and technical work into this one-volume paperback edition. Paper, $10.95

THE NEW CENTURY BIBLE COMMENTARY *Edited by Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black*
The latest additions to this popular commentary series based on the R.S.V.
1 KINGS by G.H. Jones. Paper, $7.95
2 KINGS by G.H. Jones. Paper, $7.95
EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER
by D.J. Clines. Paper, $7.95

1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS
Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
by Leon Morris
Based on the text of the Revised Standard Version, this latest replacement volume in the *Tyndale* series is a verse-by-verse commentary which discusses questions of the meaning and interpretation of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Paper, $4.95

BONHOEFFER AND SOUTH AFRICA Theology in Dialogue
by John W. deGruchy
In this stimulating book, John W. deGruchy points out the relevance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thought to the life of the church in South Africa today, engaging in dialogue the theology of Bonhoeffer and the theology of South Africa. Paper, $6.95

PROTESTANTISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA *by Wilton M. Nelson*
A chronological account of the history of Protestantism in Central America, describing briefly its main movements and trends. Paper, $4.95

A MOMENT OF TRUTH
The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, 1982
Edited by G.D. Cloete and D.J. Smit
In the fall of 1982, the South African Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) took the bold step of declaring that the situation confronting the churches in South Africa constituted a *status confessionis*—a state of confession—a condition in which the very truth of the gospel is at stake. This book contains the text of the draft confession and its accompanying letter as well as nine essays examining the historical precedent, background, theological meaning, and practical consequences of this historic action. Paper, $9.95

FREE TO BE DIFFERENT
by Malcolm Jeeves, R.J. Berry, and David Atkinson
A psychologist, a geneticist, and a theologian discuss human freedom and responsibility.
"A fascinating investigation into the respective influences on human behavior of 'nature,' 'nurture,' and 'grace.'"—John R.W. Stott
Paper, $6.95

SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM
A Ragaz Reader *Edited by Paul Bock*
Paul Bock has selected and translated into English a representative sampling of the works of Leonhard Ragaz, a leading figure in early 20th-century Swiss religious socialism (a movement that paralleled the social gospel movement in America). Paper, $7.95

LEFÈVRE
Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France *by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes*
In this first substantial study in English of the life and work of one of the leading scholars of the 15th and 16th centuries, Philip Edgcumbe Hughes has drawn on the original works and letters of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples and his contemporaries to offer a thorough examination of Lefèvre's important role in the ecclesiastical renewal movement in France and his influence on the thought of the Reformers. Paper, $14.95

HISTORY AND HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING
Edited by C.T. McIntire and Ronald Wells
A collection of essays by a respected group of Christian scholars, this book explores what insight Christian faith may bring to our understanding of history and historical study. Paper, $6.95

JESUS SON OF MAN
by Barnabas Lindars
The use and meaning of the term Son of Man, which is found in the New Testament almost exclusively in the Gospels, has been the cause of endless controversy in this century. Here, in an attempt to break the deadlock in the debate, Barnabas Lindars offers a complete reappraisal of the meaning and use of "Son of Man" in the New Testament.
Paper, $9.95

THE WORLD OF ST. JOHN
The Gospel and the Epistles
by E. Earle Ellis
In this brief but helpful survey of the background, purpose, plan, and teaching of the Johannine literature, Ellis guides the reader to a better understanding and fuller appreciation of the Gospel and the Epistles of John.
Paper, $4.95

DANIEL, WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE
The Forms of the Old Testament Literature *by John J. Collins*
In his introduction to Jewish apocalyptic literature, Collins defines an apocalypse and examines the main characteristics of this literature. His section-by-section commentary on Daniel provides a structural analysis (verse-by-verse) of each section, as well as discussion of its genre, setting, and intention. Includes bibliographies and glossary. Paper, $14.95

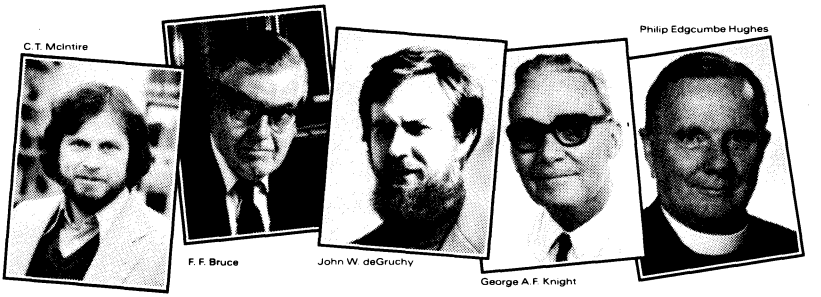
ISAIAH 56-66: THE NEW ISRAEL
International Theological Commentary
by George A.F. Knight
This latest volume, which follows Knight's earlier ITC volume on Isaiah 40-55, focuses on Isaiah 56-66, which completes the whole Isaian revelation by describing the comprehensive purpose of God, in Covenant with Israel for the redemption of all creation. Paper, $5.95

Prices subject to change.

For more information on these and other recent Eerdmans titles, write for a copy of our latest catalog. Examination copies of most publications are available to qualified professors.



At your bookstore or write:
WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49503



THE MIRACLE STORIES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION. By Gerd Theissen. Translated by Francis McConach. Edited by John Riches. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. x and 322 pages. Cloth. $27.95.

Nine years after its publication in German this important work now appears in a competently edited and translated English form. Theissen seeks to break new ground by combining diachronic form criticism with the synchronic approach of structuralism/phenomenological research. Names like W. Propp, A. Jolles, and C. Levy-Strauss (folklorists and structural anthropologists) appear frequently.

The work falls into three major sections. Part I, "Miracle Stories as Structured Forms (Synchronic Approach)," examines motifs, themes, and genres. T. catalogs thirty-three motifs as he describes more precisely literary forms: Exorcisms, Healings, Epiphanies, Rescue Miracles, and Gift Miracles. Each of these is then analyzed in terms of characters, object fields, perspectives, and boundary crossings.

"Miracle Stories as Reproduced Narratives (Diachronic Approach)," Part II of the work, examines the variation of the motifs and the compositional elements within the framework of the stories. Whereas Part I looked for the typical, Part II stresses the unique features and the way in which the overarching framework of the gospels individually influences the presentation of the miracle stories.

"Miracle Stories as Symbolic Actions," Part III, asks how the miracle stories functioned within the early Christian groups, what factors influenced their transmission (a social analysis of economic, ecological, and cultural factors), the historical intention in their narration, and the significance they had for early Christianity.

T.'s approach is thus social or sociological throughout. Though the work is not expressly theological, its fundamental conclusion has profound theological implications: "Primitive Christian miracle stories are symbolic actions in which the experienced negativity of human existence is overcome by an appeal to a revelation of the sacred." T. rejects the idea that this is mere wish projection; rather the stories shape and transform human wishes. They point beyond any human mastery of existence to the need for the holy that can be described, but not proved, in terms of its main external features.

A book to ponder and reread.

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

FAITH AND PRACTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH: FOUNDATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY. By Carl A. Volz. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983. Paperback. $9.95.

In this book, Volz examines six areas of the life and thought of the church through the middle of the fifth century. The areas studied are: the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Jesus' humanity, the doctrine of salvation, worship and the sacraments, authority in the early church, and the church and society. Most of his quotations come from the fathers and they are always well-chosen and pertinent.

In the preface, Volz states his intent to stress the dynamic nature of the struggle to define Christian dogma, the truth that the creeds of the church grew out of the life experiences of Christians, the importance of worship as a shaper of dogma, the immense amount of energy that the fathers put into dogmatic formulations and the way in which the church both influenced society and was influenced by it.

The book will serve as an introduction to those who wish to gain an oversight of this important time period, although the novice will not always understand Volz's comments because of their brevity. This volume will also provide an excellent organizing schema for those who know this period of the church.

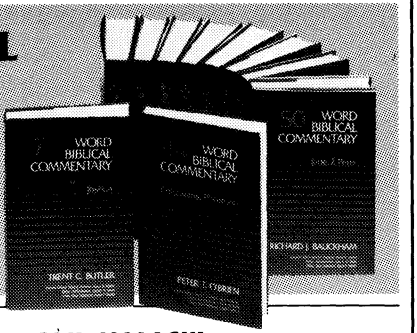
Herbert T. Mayer
Pilgrim Lutheran Church
St. Louis, MO

WORD OPENS NEW DOORS FOR THE SERIOUS BIBLE SCHOLAR

THE WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

THIS 52-VOLUME SET OFFERS:

- **A new translation of the entire Bible**
- **Research from 46 highly qualified and seasoned international scholars**
- **A unique study format**



NUMBERS, VOL. 5
Philip J. Budd
An explanation of the origins of Levitical priesthood; Israel's holy feasts; the results of rebellion against God; the minutiae of the law and the blessings promised to those who live by faith.

MICAH–MALACHI, VOL. 32 *Ralph L. Smith*
In-depth study of the books' original setting and the primary meaning of the language as the prophets warn and rebuke, praise, and offer flashes of hope.

I SAMUEL, VOL. 10
Ralph W. Klein
Extensive bibliography; original translation; informative word studies; up-to-date archeological findings; a well-rounded commentary on this often-neglected book.

PSALMS 1-50, VOL. 19
Peter C. Craigie
Careful analysis of language and form. Fresh new translation based on the latest textual and linguistic research. Insights into emotional and theological impact of the Psalms in Israel's life, worship, music.

PSALMS 101-150, VOL. 21
Leslie C. Allen
Survey of current scholarly research, with fresh translation and exegesis. The influence of various Psalms on Christian thought, with attention to canonical aspects and messianic implications.

JOSHUA, VOL. 7
Trent C. Butler
Keys to understanding the time-honored Pentateuch/Hexateuch debate; the origin and nature of Israel's worship prior to the Temple; the meaning of covenant theology.

PHILIPPIANS, VOL. 43
Gerald F. Hawthorne
Classical scholarship blended with evangelical respect for the biblical text. Significant theological wealth from a seasoned Greek scholar.

COLOSSIANS–PHILEMON, VOL. 44
Peter T. O'Brien
Examines main theological issues, showing how Paul interacts with contemporary pastoral problems. Careful exegesis within basic thematic framework.

1 & 2 THESSALONIANS, VOL. 45
F. F. Bruce
Relevant insight into the church's anxieties over the return of Christ, Paul's wise response to their overreaction and the empire-wide persecution of Christians.

JUDE–2 PETER, VOL. 50
Richard J. Bauckham
Jude — a rare glimpse into those original Palestinian circles in which Jesus' own blood-relations were leaders. 2 Peter — a look at the difficult transition from the apostolic to the postapostolic generation.

WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY... THE NEW AUTHORITY

Available in Christian bookstores everywhere.

WORD BOOKS
P.O. Box 1790 • Waco, Texas 76796

Foreign Distributors:
Australia, Word Books Australia • Canada, G.R. Welch
England, Word (U.K.) Limited • New Zealand, Sacred Records (N.Z. Limited)
South Africa, Sunday School Centre Wholesale

THE MEANING OF AUTHORITY. By John E. Skinner. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1983. xiand 78 pages. Paper. $8.25.

The primary problem with this book is that the author has attempted to develop far too complicated an argument in a short book. He has condensed almost every point so that the reader has the impression of being hurried through a detailed outline rather than fully engaging the author in helpful dialogue.

His chief objective is to construct a definition of authority that will not in any way support the Cartesian dualism that dominated western civilization until recent years. He appeals strongly to the writings of Jan Smuts and Alfred North Whitehead for philosophical support. Skinner proposes a trilogy of "thou — nature — God" to replace the subject-object pattern. For example, he says that "Our Father takes us into the sacramental mystery of creation." His basic position will appeal to all who have been trained in the Idealist tradition or who by nature tend to be dreamers.

He offers the following tentative definition of authority on page 6: "That kind of structured reality, whether societal or personal, which through nurture and cultivation enables individuals to become truly centered selves or persons and thus relatively free beings." A truly centered person is one who has found freedom in God's gift of life.

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

MARTIN — GOD'S COURT JESTER: LUTHER IN RETROSPECT. By Eric W. Gritsch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. xiv and 289 pages. Paper. $14.95.

Professor Gritsch has managed to write a readable, scholarly, and informative book in a year awash with Luther material, surveying the biography, theology, and historiography of the German Reformer with ease, insight, and even humor. He provides a candid and honest rendering of material familiar to professional Luther scholars and their students in a way that invites interested laity to bring themselves up-to-date in Luther studies.

Gritsch first offers a sensitive and provocative retelling of Luther's life, based on the results of the latest ecumenical Luther scholarship. The surveys of the crucial theological insights of Luther, as well as the continuing points of controversy, provide access for the reader to the world of contemporary Reformation historiography. The concluding essay on the results of modern ecumenical Luther research points accurately to the progress won in the "quest for the historical Luther."

Especially helpful are the Time Line and the superb Bibliography which conclude the work. Of particular interest to those who follow vicissitudes of Luther research are the chapters dealing with two of the "hot" issues in this field: Luther and the Jews, and the Old Luther.

Dennis A. Laskey
Community of Christ Lutheran Church
Schaumburg, Illinois

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

VOLUME 11 INDEX

Ammlung, Cathy. "Redeeming Dressage: Or, The Sermon on the Mounts," 11-6 (December 1984) 363-368.

Bauermeister, Paul. "Mate Selection: Cupid's Three Level Radar and Why It Does Not Always Work," 11-4 (August 1984) 227-232.

Bernardin, Joseph Cardinal. "Reflections for the Lutheran-Catholic Vesper Service," 11-5 (October 1984) 267-268.

Bloomquist, Karen L. "The Unemployed: Challenge to the Church," 11-1 (February 1984) 34-37.

Brueggemann, Walter. "A Cosmic Sigh of Relinquishment," 11-1 (February 1984) 5-20.

_____. "A New Creation — After the Sigh," 11-2 (April 1984) 83-100.

DuPriest, Travis. "The Second Knot of Friendship," 11-1 (February 1984) 47-48.

_____. "Spices for the Tomb," 11-2 (April 1984) 109-110.

The Faculty of LSTC. "Qualifications for Ordained Ministry," 11-4 (August 1984) 197-203.

Fjeld, Roger. "That We May Be Christ's Body in the World," 11-4 (August 1984) Inside Back Cover.

Graesser, Doris. "A Pilgrimage for Unity: Jerusalem in January, 1984," 11-6 (December 1984) 353-356.

Hoy, Michael. "Letter to the Editor in Response to 'Deterrence and the Kingdom'." 11-5 (October 1984) 310-311.

Huxhold, Harry N. "Pastoring One's Peers," 11-1 (February 1984) 38-46.

Jahnke, Vernon. "The Church That Changed Its Name," 11-1 (February 1984) 49-53.

Jersild, Paul. "Understanding the Law When 'Everything is Relative,'" 11-4 (August 1984) 204-212.

Johnson, Paul. "Deterrence and the Kingdom," 11-3 (June 1984) 148-153.

Jungkuntz, Theodore R.; Prange, Rudolph C.; Swedberg, Paul M.; Walles, William F. and Rochelle, Jay C. "Letters to the Editor in Response to 'Probings Toward Ecclesial Discipline'," 11:1 (February 1984) 54-59.

Kjeseth, Peter. "Preaching from Matthew in 1983-84," 11:2 (April 1984) 69-78.

Klein, Ralph W. "Anti-Semitism as Christian Legacy," 11:5 (October 1984) 285-301.

_____. "Cabbage Patch Theology," 11:2 (April 1984) 66-68.

_____. "The Holy Catholic Church," 11:5 (October 1984) 258-260.

_____. "In Christ — Hope for the World," 11:3 (June 1984) 130-132.

_____. "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize — Hold On!" 11:4 (August 1984) 194-196.

_____. "No Continuing City," 11:1 (February 1984) 2-4.

_____. "So You Want to Buy an Old Testament Commentary," 11:4 (August 1984) 237-242.

_____. "Take Up Your Cross and Follow," 11:6 (December 1984) 322-324.

Lesher, William E. "A New Responsibility for World Lutherans," 11:6 (December 1984) Inside Back Cover.

_____. "The Tale of a Third City," 11:2 (April 1984) Inside Back Cover.

Lischer, Richard. "Luther's Anthropology in Dialogue," 11:5 (October 1984) 279-284.

Lotz, David. "The Gospel, Historical Consciousness, and Risk," 11:1 (February 1984) 21-33.

Martin, Raymond. "The Messianic Secret in Mark," 11:6 (December 1984) 350-352.

Marty, Martin E. "Homily Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's Birth," 11:5 (October 1984) 261-266.

Mehl, Duane. "Dear John — An Apology and Footnote," 11:4 (August 1984) 233-236.

Milke, Thomas M. "Epiphany — Based on a Hymn of Saint Ambrose on the Canonical Hours," 11:6 (December 1984) 371.

Moe, Dean L. "A 'Meditation' on the Advent Lectionary," 11:6 (December 1984) 372-374.

Nickelsburg, George W. E. "The God of the Bible in a Nuclear Age?" 11:4 (August 1984) 213-224.

Prange, Rudolph C. — See Jungkuntz.

Ressmeyer, Ruth Bretscher. "Toward the Twenty-first Century Church," 11:2 (April 1984) 101-108.

Rochelle, Jay C. "The Four Cycles of Ritual in Christian Observance," 11-6 (December 1984) 357-362.

_____. "A Simple Priest," 11:5 (October 1984) 302.

_____. — See Jungkuntz.

Sherer, Mike. "Jolly Old Saint Nicholas: Christmas in Reverse," 11:6 (December 1984) 374-375.

Sievert, Ruth E. "Incarnate Us," 11:6 (December 1984) 349.

Sinnott, Thomas G. "It's a Baby," 11:6 (December 1984) 369.

_____. "Theological Reflections on Housing," 11:3 (June 1984) 176-179.

Sittler, Joseph. "An Open Letter by Joseph Sittler," 11:5 (October 1984) 269-284.
Smith, Robert. "Celebrating Easter in the Matthean Mode," 11:2 (April 1984) 79-82.
_____. "Wounded Lion: Mark 9:1 and Other Missing Pieces," 11:6 (December 1984) 333-349.
Stuhr, Walter M. "Dialogue Between Realist and Romantic," 11:3 (June 1984) 192-Inside Back Cover.
Swedberg, Paul M. — see Jungkuntz.
Tiede, David L. "Proclaiming the Hidden Kingdom: Preaching on the Gospel Lessons in Mark," 11:6 (December 1984) 325-332.
Tietjen, John H. "Ministry in the New Church," 11:5 (October 1984) Inside Back Cover.
_____. "Paradigm for Lutheran Union," 11:1 (February 1984) Inside Back Cover.
Vanek, Elizabeth-Anne. "Prodigal Father," 11:5 (October 1984) 278.
_____. "Samaritan Woman," 11:4 (August 1984) 225.
Vajta, Vilmos. "From Generation to Generation: The Lutheran World Federation 1947-1982," 11:3 (June 1984) 133-147.
Walles, William F. — See Jungkuntz.
Wind, James P. "Ministry and Profession — The Paradoxical Relationship," 11:3 (June 1984) 168-175.
Zeile, E. A. "A Letter to Joseph," 11:6 (December 1984) 370.
Zimany, Roland. "Perspectives From Jüngel's Theology," 11:3 (June 1984) 154-167.

BOOKS WORTH DISCUSSING

Machovec, Milan. *A Marxist Looks at Jesus.* Reviewed by Steven Schroeder. 11:5 (October 1984) 303-305.
Foxfire 7: Ministers, Church Members, Revivals, Baptisms, Shaped-Note and Gospel Singing, Faith Healing, Camp Meetings, Foot Washing, Snake Handling, and Other Traditions of Mountain Religious Heritage. 11:5 (October 1984) 306-309.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If you are moving, please attach your mailing label and send it to *Currents in Theology and Mission,* 1100 East 55th St., Chicago, IL 60615.

PASTE MAILING LABEL HERE

A New Responsibility for World Lutherans

William E. Lesher
President, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

The Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, held in Budapest, Hungary, in late July 1984, is being widely reported in our church journals. Everyone has heard about the historic action of electing Zoltan Kalde, Bishop of the host church, to be the first president of the world body from an Eastern European country. Also, the suspension of two white South African churches and the Assembly's decision not to act on the applications from two additional white South African churches are now well known. What is not so well known is the new responsibilities the LWF has taken upon itself and its member churches with this last action.

Suspension is not a familiar organizational term in Lutheran circles. In fact, the category does not exist in the LWF constitutional documents. Both the idea of suspension and the proposed action came from Black African churches meeting in a pre-Assembly conference in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December 1983. To the Africans, suspension does not mean that the white South African churches are no longer members of the LWF. Far from it. They are members with a special problem, a problem that threatens their very life in Christ, and for that reason calls for radical action.

In 1978, at the Sixth Assembly in Dar es-Salaam, Tanzania, the LWF declared apartheid a *Status Confessionis,* a practice that must be opposed as a matter of faith. Now, six years later, the resolution to suspend states that since "no satisfactory fulfilment of this goal has yet been advanced . . . Those churches have in fact withdrawn from the confessional community that forms the basis of LWF membership."

It is hard to convey the mood of the Assembly during the debate and decision in this matter. Solemn, grave, sad are all descriptive terms that capture something of the atmosphere. There was no great joy in the outcome; only the knowledge that a necessary deed to preserve the confessional integrity of the Federation had been done.

But what has been done and what needs to be done as a result of this action? The suspended churches cannot send voting delegates to LWF Assemblies. This does not mean, however, that they are cut off from the fellowship of the churches. Black Africans who put forth the category of suspension insist that it means the white churches are still part of the international Lutheran family. As in a human family, an offending member becomes the object of special care and help and prayers, so suspension calls for greater concern and attention, not less, to be focused on the white churches of Southern Africa.

It is expected that officers of the LWF will make special visits to the suspended churches in the months ahead, encouraging and assisting them to reject apartheid unequivocally. If satisfactory actions are taken by the white churches to abolish apartheid in the life of the churches and their congregations, the suspensions can

be lifted by the LWF Executive Committee.

There is, of course, ambiguity in such a bold action. A friend from one of the suspended churches, who together with his whole family has fought strongly and consistently against the apartheid system in spite of regular harassment and abuse, has written, "It hurts to be a minister of a church which has been declared heretical by the worldwide family of Lutherans. For me the experience of fellowship with members of the worldwide Lutheran family has always been very meaningful and a source of strength for a struggle which admittedly has been full of failings and often marked by timidity. I hope that the Budapest resolution does not block this fellowship."

According to the intention of those who proposed the Budapest action, it should not. When I told a Black African pastor of my friend's letter, he said, "Don't worry. The Blacks will minister to him — if he will only accept it." That's what suspension means. Its intention is not to sever relationships, but to share ministry across the lines of racial separation.

For us, much farther away, suspension means that we continue to hold the churches of Southern Africa close to us and that we pray regularly and fervently that the God of Justice and Mercy might use this solmen action to open new channels of fellowship and service between our Black and White sisters and brothers in that torn and tragic land.

CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION
1100 East 55th St.
Chicago, IL 60615

Second Class Postage Paid at Chicago, IL and at other mailing offices