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CURRENTS in theology and mission

Keep Your Eyes On the Prize — Hold On!

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Keep Your Eyes On the Prize — Hold On!

We speak of the 60's now with nostalgia, bemusement, even condescension. Much that happened then was, I suppose, naive and in some ways superficial, but how can you knock a decade when vision, hope, and fervor were stirring almost everywhere? Pete Seeger belted out chorus after chorus of "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," and we vowed with Paul: "So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above." (Phil. 3:14)

What Paul says about Christian life in general applies also to preparation for and service in the ordained ministry. This year the **Faculty of LSTC,** now including resources from **Christ Seminary-Seminex**, has written a "competency statement," indicating what we believe are appropriate goals for ministerial education. This description of the personal qualities, knowledge and abilities we hope to find in or transmit to candidates for ordination will serve first of all as a guide for a new curriculum in Chicago, but we hope it will also remind those already ordained of the prize we seek throughout our ministries. These days we write such a document, not on stone, but on a word processor, so that it can be easily changed in response to new challenges or fresh insights from the whole people of God. How would *you* train someone for ministry? We invite you to help us write a better competency statement by responding to this latest draft.

Lutherans tend to see life as a race run in the dialectic between law and gospel. But how can we speak of law when everything has become relative? **Paul Jersild** finds law in the concrete demands made upon us by life, in our experience of inadequacy, and in our accusing consciences. The demands of life force us to face the fundamental question of our own integrity. It is in the events of life, through which we are called to account, that the issue of life is posed. Such accountability is a prelude to the gospel.

George W. E. Nickelsburg reviews what is being said about a nuclear holocaust and the will of God. Some who depreciate this world as evil believe that such a disaster might actually be God's will for the world. Others minimize the nuclear threat because they hold that any all-out exchange would be contrary to God's will — and hence impossible. After showing the deficiencies of these proposals, our author outlines a Biblical alternative: weakness in the place of power; experiencing suffering rather than inflicting it. By eschewing rigid opinions and the demonizing of our opponents, we can be protagonists of redemptive suffering, weakness, and giving. We can listen, speak, and act in love — and be peacemakers.

And then there's love between the sexes — always a worthy prize! **Paul Bauermeister** ascribes to Cupid a three-level radar as he helps us understand what happens in ourselves and in others as we are attracted to one another. At the first level images are everything, but feelings take over as we "fall in love." The crucial level is the third, in which we think together about values, interests, attitudes and plans for the future. His non-theological approach may be useful in helping people of all ages navigate through these glorious and troubled waters.

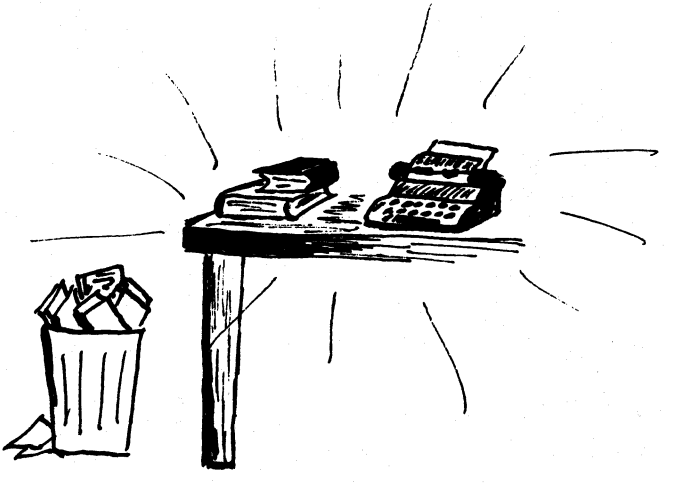
Duane Mehl follows up on an earlier article about contemporary literature by engaging in a theological analysis of John Updike's *The Coup*. He finds the novelist preoccupied, as often, with the problem of God's existence, leading to the paradox of meaningless despair. Mehl hopes for fictional heroes who will experience the realities of life in process, in ecological interdependence with others and with nature, and who will thereby find hope for the liberation of themselves and other depressed peoples.

Other aids for the race: **Elizabeth-Anne Vanek** has written a poem on the Samaritan woman of John 4; **Roger Fjeld** discusses the church as the Body of Christ against the backdrop of the excesses of congregationalism; **Ralph W. Klein** provides a recommended list of Old Testament commentaries.

We all need to run with perseverance the race that is set before us. Trouble is, running itself can become the goal. So keep your eyes on the prize: Christ Jesus who has made us his own. Or are your problems, like mine, fatigue, discouragement, distractions, detours, and doubts?

Hold on! Please, hold on!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor



Qualifications for Ordained Ministry in the Church

The Goals of the Master of Divinity Curriculum Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1984

The Faculty of LSTC
Preamble by Ralph W. Klein

The following "Competency Statement" was written by the faculty of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago as part of a curriculum revision process. It represents our consensus about the qualifications that are desirable for today's ministry, and it suggests, overtly and by implication, the kind of education for ministry we intend to provide.

From the start of the drafting process in January, 1984, we agreed that this statement would always be open to revision as we became aware of new needs for the ministry and as we received comments and criticisms from various constituencies. An earlier draft of this paper was discussed with the student body on a Curriculum Day, April 4, 1984. Representatives of LSTC are presently taking the document to supporting Synods in the LCA and AELC in order to elicit their input, and we expect further revisions as these grass-roots discussions proceed. Any who would desire to share their own views with us in writing should address them to: Curriculum Steering Committee, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615.

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In the fall of 1983, the Lutheran School of Theology was joined by faculty and student resources from Christ Seminary-Seminex. The purpose of this expanded seminary was expressed in a mission statement:

"The school will witness to the Gospel as the center and sole basis of the church's faith and life. It will interpret the Sacred Scriptures and the whole of Christian tradition in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in faithfulness to the Lutheran confessional writings. It will call the church to be a confessing community that by its words and actions brings an evangelical witness to the contemporary world."

A central way LSTC carries out its mission is by preparing women and men for the ordained ministry in its Master of Divinity program. The faculty resolved to assess and revise the M.Div. curriculum in the light of its new resources and in anticipation of the new Lutheran church formed by the merger of the AELC, ALC, and LCA. The following pages describe the goals of this program by outlining competencies expected for ordained ministry today.

The seminary seeks to enroll men and women who are participating fully in the life of the church, and who are vocationally intent upon, or are seriously examining, the vocation of ordained ministry. Candidates for ordained ministry also need considerable emotional stability and physical strength for the academic rigors and professional demands that will be placed upon them. Through life and worship at the seminary, opportunity is provided, under the power of the Spirit, for growth in maturity, piety, and spirituality.

Building on the candidates' life ex-

periences and their college or university education, the seminary assists them in interpreting the Scriptures, the Christian tradition, and the modern contexts for ministry; it trains and encourages students to embody and express God's revealed love and to enable others for the work of ministry.

LSTC attempts to build bridges of dialogical exchange between the Christian tradition and contemporary reality, between confessional allegiance and ecumenical affirmation, and between theory and practice.

The following statement of goals for the M.Div. program may serve as a guide for present or prospective students, faculty, the Board of Directors and others in understanding what preparation for ordained ministry is and ought to be. From it will flow a schedule of courses for study, as well as guidelines for our common life together.

It is not expected, of course, that every minister will manifest the characteristics listed in the following paragraphs to perfection. Rather, these characteristics represent goals toward which preparation is directed at the seminary, and toward which ordained ministers grow throughout their ministries. As students make these goals their own, they may need to modify them to conform to their unique gifts or their priorities in ministry.

We have numbered the paragraphs to facilitate discussion and response, not necessarily to indicate priority. These seventy-two paragraphs are not unrelated beads on a string, but they are all attempts to articulate the centrality and sufficiency of the gospel of Jesus Christ and its radical implications for faith and life.

Qualities

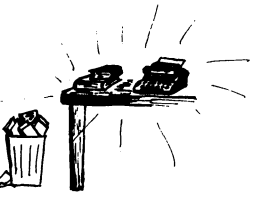
1. Trust in the gracious and forgiving love of God offered in Jesus Christ and mediated through Word and Sacraments.

2.Christian discipleship, under the guidance of the Scriptures, the Spirit, and the counsel of other Christians past and present.

3. A personal conviction, confirmed by the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of a divine call to the ordained ministry.

4. Joy in ministry, and a desire not to be served but to serve. Willingness to serve in more than one social context.

5. Affirmation of the church as the context for enabling the ministry of the whole people of God; appreciation for the pastor's responsibility to be a theological resource for all people in their ministries; receptivity toward ministry *from* lay persons or other pastors. Willingness to work for the correction of the church's ills, as an individual and in concert with brothers and sisters.



6. Commitment to and passion for the communication of the Gospel in word and deed, and for the embodiment of God's call for justice and peace in relation to current social, economic, institutional, and political realities.

7. Acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures, characterized by constructive reflection, awareness of the indispensable place of biblical testimony in faith and ministry, and an experience of the Bible's judging, saving, and illuminating character as the Word of God.

8. Adherence to the Ecumenical Creeds and the Lutheran confessional writings as a faithful exposition of the Word of God; acceptance of the Gospel as guide for faith and practice.

9. Cultivation of personal piety and commitment to the importance of corporate worship.

10. Affirmation of God's love for the entire world — its people, nations, institutions — and for all the products and resources of nature; acceptance of ecological responsibility.

11. A spirit of receptivity and compassion toward other people, their needs and their ideas, including those of another religion, denomination, race, nation, sex, culture, class, or age group.

12. Recognition of the variety of ways in which truth may be sought; appreciation for the contribution of theological traditions different from one's own.

13. Sensitivity to the ethical problems faced by Christians today, to the burdens of sin and pain, and to the ways in which people are deprived and oppressed both in society and in the church.

14. Readiness to put one's self at risk in relationships that are caring, nonjudgmental and nonmanipulative; a leadership style that is imaginative in envisioning new possibilities and encourages participatory decision-making.

15. Openness to evaluation as a means of growth and improvement; flexibility in exercising and living under authority; willingness to acknowledge limitations and mistakes and seek help when needed.

16. Sufficient strength and stamina to meet the physical, academic, emotional, and professional demands of the ministry. Eagerness for life-long growth, learning, and hard work; the gifts of common sense and a sense of humor. Moral integrity.

Knowledge

17. The content of the Bible and the history of its composition and canonization.

18. The political, social, and religious history of Israel, Judaism, and early Christianity as the context in which the Biblical liberature emerged and the faith

of the church was formed.

19. Hebrew and Greek sufficient to read the text of the Bible in its original languages, with the help of lexicons, grammars, and other tools for Biblical study.

20. The periods, movements, personalities, and issues in the growth of the worldwide Christian church, and the thought and life of the church in relation to the world. An understanding of oneself in particular historical circumstances as the basis for theological awareness and growth.

21. The major doctrines of the Christian faith, in terms of their Biblical roots their historical developments, the conflicting facets of the tradition, and current implications.

22. The Reformation and its ecumenical implications, the life and teachings of Martin Luther, the Book of Concord, the continuing development of the Lutheran tradition, and viable interpretations of that tradition today.

23. The beliefs and practices of world religions and their relationship to the church's mission; understanding the Christian gospel in relation to religious and secular alternatives.

24. The main types of Christian ethics as developed throughout history and in modern scholarship; understanding of methodological issues in ethical reflection today.

25. A specifically Lutheran understanding, rooted in the Gospel, of the theological foundations of ethics.

26. The church's social teachings, especially as expressed in Lutheran and other social statements.

27. The history and activity of such ecumenical structures as the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation; the progress toward union achieved by ecumenical dialogues (Lutheran and Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Episcopal, and Reformed).

28. The intellectual, cultural, and religious dimensions of contemporary experience, as mediated by a variety of secular disciplines today.

29. Social, economic, and political realities of our time and how the church and its theology interact with them; the relationship between the symptoms of human need and their wider structural causes.

30. The multicultural and global context within which the Christian faith makes its witness; the interdependent character of the Christian church in the United States and throughout the world.

31. The role of Scripture, theology, church history, and liturgy in achieving a genuine and persuasive witness to the gospel.



32. Cultural expressions and communication arts of our time; media appropriate for the witness of the gospel.

33. The heritage of liturgical practice, the interdependence of liturgy, service, witness, and fellowship, the place of Scripture in worship, and the use of music and other arts in the total life of the church.

34. The theology and the rites of the sacraments, including attention to local traditions; the history and use of hymnal and agenda.

35. The history, functions, forms, techniques, and theological foundations of preaching and sermon delivery.

36. The resources and programs that aid in the teaching, administration, and training necessary for educational ministry.

37. The varying ways in which people develop and learn, and the strategies for appropriate educational ministry to diverse people.

38. Leadership strategies, organizational management, and group dynamics that enable the ministry of the whole people of God.

39. The institutional character of the church in society, and the social, political, and economic characteristics of a particular congregation and its community that are relevant to the life and mission of the congregation.

40. The development and present form of Lutheran polity.

41. The Biblical and theological foundations for God's mission throughout the world (evangelism, social ministry, the church's corporate witness), and the practical means for carrying it out.

42. The ways in which socio-political ideologies affect people and require a liberating form of ministry.

43. The theological basis and traditions of pastoral care.

44. The characteristics of human behavior and changing needs throughout life, with special attention to issues of rapid change and conflict; relevant aspects of the behavioral sciences.

45. A spiritual and psychological knowledge of one's self as person and pastor that continues to grow and deepen over time.

46. Professional ethics, particularly as applied to Christian ministry.

Abilities: The ability to . . .

47. Set forth the meaning of Biblical passages by understanding the relation between original language and translation, by recognizing and evaluating problems in establishing the text, by describing the form of the text, by an analysis of the formation and content of the passage, and by a critical use of commentaries and other secondary literature.

48. Interpret and apply the meaning of particular texts and to understand their relationship to the whole of Scripture, to the confessional tradition and systematic theology, and to the current realities of human experience.

49. Utilize historical evidence to discover what happened and how and why it happened; to communicate insight from historical studies in relating the past to the present.

50. Deal constructively in preaching, teaching, and counseling with contemporary ethical questions and with concrete social and political developments in the human community today.

51. Do one's own constructive theological thinking that is in touch with the tradition and the contemporary world, and which is also consonant with one's own personal integrity.

52. Express in clear and contemporary language theology relating to the central doctrines of the faith, showing in each case how the statement is rooted in the Gospel and the witness of Scripture, and how it interprets or responds to alternate modes of thought.

53. Give a credible witness to the Christian gospel in the modern context; articulate and interpret critically the meaning of the gospel.

54. Sense the Spirit's movement in the lives of people and interpret this movement in ways that enrich the faith and life of individuals in the church.

55. Lead worship graciously, skillfully and consistently, including the selection of appropriate music, the preparation of public prayer, and the conduct of occasional services (e.g. weddings, funerals).

56. Arrange worship appropriate to various cultural contexts and in various styles; elicit forms of worship from the worshiping community.

57. Design and deliver sermons that are theologically and homiletically sound, that interpret the human situation accurately and address the Word of God's redemptive purpose to it, and that are delivered in an engaging manner.

58. Use teaching-learning approaches that are appropriate to various levels of development in order to foster growth in faith and Christian life; recruit and train others for planning and executing the church's educational ministry.

59. Establish trusting relationships that invite new ideas, make possible mutual criticism, and foster healthy interdependence; relate to people and their needs.

60. Exercise leadership in a way that mobilizes people, delegates responsibility, and makes effective use of the time and abilities of all members of the congregation; lead people in stewardship and evangelism programs.



61. Help a congregation bring about constructive change in its own life and in its community and deal creatively with conflict.

62. Function effectively within the structures of the church.

63. Enlist and equip the people of God, individually and corporately, to proclaim and embody the gospel in specific contexts and to lead the church out of a preoccupation with its internal affairs into loving mission and service to people beyond its boundaries.

64. Communicate and work with people who do not belong to the church, and engage in dialogue with people of other faiths.

65. Use the tools of social research in order to plan ministries that are effective in meeting human need.

66. Help the church address the structures of society and interact with the promise and problems of the urban and the rural scene.

67. Assess critically the church as an institution and the adequacy of its ministry among the people it serves; deal constructively with one's own failures and those of the church.

68. Draw upon the resources of the behavioral sciences and other societal or institutional resources for pastoral ministry in dealing with alcoholism and substance abuse, aging, family crises, changing sexual roles, and other human needs.

69. Maintain a discipline of prayer and use Word and Sacraments to sustain and enhance one's own spiritual formation; develop and maintain one's own physical, psychological, and spiritual resources for the tasks of ministry.

70. Plan and carry out an on-going program of personal and professional education.

71. Manage personal and/or family commitments, including time and finances, in a manner that enhances one's own ministry and sense of fulfillment, and the lives of those with whom one lives and serves.

72. Recognize the need for personal or professional assistance; seek critique and support from appropriate colleagues.

Understanding the Law When "Everything is Relative"

Paul Jersild

Academic Dean, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina

At the basis of Lutheran theology lies the conviction that God addresses us in two ways: through law and gospel. In both of these "words," God confronts us at the very core of our being. Our fears, aspirations, and hopes, our quest for meaning and direction and personal fulfillment are directly spoken to by the encounter that God makes with us in these two ways of demanding and giving, of judging and redeeming, of bringing death and bestowing life. It was of prime importance to Luther that a theologian carefully distinguish these two ways in which God speaks to us. If the distinction between law and gospel is not retained, then the gospel itself inevitably loses its character as a word of grace. The nature of the Christian life is then misinterpreted as our effort to meet a divine requirement rather than our thankful response to grace.

During the past several generations the Lutheran understanding of law and gospel has been the object of what one might term a massive assault. In his passionate battle against the "hydra" of natural theology, Karl Barth developed a powerful Christocentric theology in which God's convenant of grace with the human family, established in his eternal decree of election in Christ, completely and absolutely determines the divine-human relationship. We do not begin with the fall as the symbol of a broken relationship between God and humanity, but with the election of the world in Jesus Christ. This means that the Lutheran point of departure in understanding the divine-human relationship, in which we stand under a law of judgment as a result of our fallenness, is rejected. Accordingly any talk of the law in human life and experience prior to the gospel is not to be regarded as reference to the law of *God*. Barth concludes that we must reverse the Lutheran sequence of law-gospel to gospel-law.[1] For Barth, law and gospel are united in the person of Jesus Christ, and the only law of God that one can speak of is the imperative form of the gospel. The law of God is really in the gospel, and nowhere else; it is the applied proclamation of the gospel. Any other law of God that one might speak of is a human invention, a product of our incurable urge to theologize apart from the gospel.

While the disagreement between Barth and Lutheran theology is real and important, it is necessary that we recognize the valid concern on both sides. Barth was concerned to maintain the universal lordship of Christ and the sovereignty of a gracious God whose saving will is expressed in both law and gospel. Lutheranism, on the other hand, proceeds from a fundamentally different orientation: the sinner's experience of law and gospel, demand and gift, which

[1]See Karl Barth, "Gospel and Law," *Community, State and Church* (Garden City: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1960), pp. 71-100. The theological foundation for Barth's position is spelled out in his doctrine of God in *Church Dogmatics*, II/2 (New York: Scribner's, 1957), ch. 8.



cannot be united without confusing the distinction between them. If this distinction is not maintained, the gospel becomes a new law rather than God's gracious word of acceptance. This Lutheran concern with diastasis rather than synthesis is reflected as well in the two-kingdom teaching of Luther. Here again he was concerned not to confuse the appropriate realm of the church as bearer of the gospel with the task of the state in legislating and enforcing the law. While the church as institution is also a part of the "kingdom of the left," its being and purpose is to be governed by its message of grace.

If one acknowledges the validity of these two concerns in the discussion of law and gospel — the need to affirm their ultimate source in God as well as the need to distinguish between them — then these two concerns should be capable of living with each other. But Barth's attempt to replace the law-gospel order with its opposite is not an adequate answer. A more effective approach would recognize the dialectical relation of law and gospel. There is both a proper context for law/gospel and a proper context for gospel/law within the teaching and preaching ministry of the church.[2] It is also just as necessary to distinguish and contrast law from gospel as it is to stress their inseparableness in bringing about the purposes of God. The law is the presupposition of the gospel as it challenges and condemns our sinful ways, but at the same time the law does not reveal our self-centered lives as *sin* apart from the gospel. Here is the validity of the Barthian critique. Judgment and promise must be held together at the same time as they are clearly distinguished from each other.

Problems in Interpreting "the law of God"

In recognizing the distinction between law and gospel, Lutheran theology is committed to a theology of creation and a theology of law apart from the gospel. This work of God's "left hand" encompasses the world common to both Christian and nonbeliever. The continuing task for Christian theology is to interpret the presence of God in this world and in the life-experience of our contemporaries. This interpretation calls for a persuasive theology of law that clarifies and illumines the push and pull of everyday life in terms of the divine presence which reaches into every corner of human experience. There are formidable obstacles in carrying out this task, for we are living in a cultural atmosphere marked by agnosticism if not by a pervasive atheism. Nonetheless, the question of God's absence remains an issue for a humanity created in God's image.

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[2]Gilbert Meilaender addresses the necessary tension as well as complementarity between law/gospel and gospel/law in a helpful way. See "The Place of Ethics in the Theological Task," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, vol. 6, no. 4 (August, 1979), pp. 196-203.

The reality of law . . . is the reality under which we live.

This quest for meaning in the face of unbelief is often powerfully expressed in many contemporary novels and plays which serve as a mirror of the age. In recent decades the American playwright, Arthur Miller, has been particularly eloquent in articulating this quest:

> You know . . . more and more I see that for many years I looked at life like a case at law. It was a series of proofs. When you're young you prove how brave you are, or smart; then, what a good lover; then, a good father; finally, how wise, or powerful or what-the-hell-ever. But underlying it all, I see now, there was a presumption. That one moved not in a dry circle but on an upward path toward some elevation, where . . . God knows what . . . I would be justified, or even condemned. A verdict, anyway. I think now that my disaster really began when I looked up one day . . . and the bench was empty. No judge in sight. And all that remained was the endless argument with oneself, this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench . . . which, of course, is another way of saying — despair . . .[3]

We have here a compelling picture of the modern scene, where people fail to find the meaning to life that life itself would intimate is there. The reality of law and judgment is the reality under which we live out our lives, giving us a sense of structure and meaning. But the question is what it all ultimately means, and to what or whom I am ultimately responsible. Addressing this deeply existential question is the task of a theology of law. We may believe that God is indeed speaking to us through law in distinction from the gospel, but how are we to interpret that conviction for today so that it reaches the groping questions of our contemporaries?

From the viewpoint of Lutheran orthodoxy, a theology of law is based upon a series of universal, moral prohibitions which establish our guilt before God. The law is understood as *lex aeterna,* an objective law which spans the centuries, ever the same. It is the basis by which we are judged and against which God in Christ has performed this work of justification by satisfying the demands of the law. Since we cannot fulfill the law on our own, God in Christ has become our substitute in fulfilling that law. The doctrine of atonement in Reformation theology has thus been closely related to Anselm's theory of the atonement, with particular emphasis upon the satisfaction-character of Jesus' work in meeting the requirements of the law in our behalf.

This abstract, objective character of the law is reflected in the assumption that the law is propositional in form,

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[3]Arthur Miller, *After the Fall* (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1964), pp. 3f.



capable of being stated once-for-all in certain propositions. This understanding is apparent in the Formula of Concord, where we read in Article V of the Epitome, "We believe, teach, and confess that the Law is properly a doctrine divinely revealed, which teaches what is just and acceptable to God, and which also denounces whatever is sinful and opposite to the divine will." In our time, however, it is precisely this notion of stated laws, universal and absolute, which has been undermined by the rise of historical consciousness. By now we are intensely aware of the conditioned character of our beliefs and customs. Our outlook on life, the values we adhere to, the truths we affirm, are not taken directly from an eternal realm of ideas and abstract truths, insulated from the dynamism of historical process. Cultural anthropologists and sociologists have driven home the point that our so-called moral absolutes are not universal but reflect the values of a particular society in a particular time and place.

Lutherans have not been alone, of course, in the embarrassment that was felt with the dawn of this relativising historical consciousness. The Roman Catholic teaching on natural law has been virtually abandoned by Catholic moral theologians, or at least radically revised.[4] Humanists who have been in the habit of advocating the prescriptive character of ethics — that it is not simply a descriptive discipline like sociology or psychology — have been hard pressed to maintain a viable basis for the claim of prescriptive or normative judgments. In a quite different realm, it was a jolt for physical scientists when it was recognized that relativity is built into our understanding of the physical universe itself. There is hardly a more pervasive notion informing present-day understanding of values and truth itself than that which is expressed in the often-heard words, "Everything is relative." This contemporary experience poses a particular challenge to the theological interpretation of law as it has been understood in our tradition.

Luther's Dynamic View of the Law

In the context of Lutheran theology and ethics, the renaissance in Luther studies during this century has provided the Lutheran theologian with a perspective which can provide a basis for meeting the relativising consciousness of today. For one thing, scholars have come to the conclusion that Luther's view of the law is not the same as that of the orthodox fathers. To be sure, he does speak of the Ten Commandments as the embodiment of the natural law, and he

[4]Among contemporary American Roman Catholic theologians, Charles E. Curran and John G. Milhaven might be cited as two ethicists who have stressed the need of revising the traditional understanding of natural law in the direction of a more empirical and inductive approach. See Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides, Dome edition, 1970).

The law is primarily an event and only secondarily teaching.

makes statements which give the impression that he thinks of the law in the same way as his followers. However, such statements have to be understood in light of the profoundly existential character of Luther's view of the law. It is this existential thrust of Luther which has been recognized and stressed by twentieth century scholarship. According to Gerhard Ebeling:

> . . . Luther allows validity as "law" in the theological sense only to what touches and binds the conscience. It is precisely in that that it proves its binding character. What does not touch man's conscience, what does not concern him unconditionally as charge and commitment, is not law as it must be understood in interpreting the Pauline doctrine of the law.[5]

Luther does expand St. Paul's concept of law as Torah to a universal law on the basis of the apostle's comments in Romans 2:14ff. ("When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves . . . They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts . . .") However, even though Luther speaks of the "natural law," Ebeling affirms a continuity with Luther when he maintains that "the law is primarily an event and only secondarily teaching." The law written in the heart is not to be understood as knowledge of a legal codex, but as an awareness that one's life is open to question. From this awareness there results the crystallizing of positive laws which are the consequence or interpretation of the event of the law in human experience. Ebeling sees this existential view of the law in Luther's teaching on the conscience, in which he speaks of the claim that God places on each one of us. That claim is expressed in the unrelenting question, "Where are you?"[6]

The Finnish Reformation scholar, Lauri Haikola, places considerable weight on the difference between Luther's view of the law and that of the orthodox fathers. Indeed, he believes that it is precisely in their teaching of the law that we find the major difference between Luther and later orthodoxy. For Luther the proper relationship between the human family and God could not be understood in terms of an objective legal order. We do not possess full knowledge of the divine will, but reflect the limited knowledge appropriate to our own historical situation. We cannot possess the law in the form of eternal principles, but we do *know* the law in the concrete situations of life.[7] Rather than being identified with a particular set of com-

[5]Gerhard Ebeling, "Reflections on the Doctrine of Law" in *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), p. 276.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 277.

[7]Cf. Gerhard O. Forde, *The Law-Gospel Debate* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), pp. 176f.



mandments, the law is anything that accuses us in our self-sufficiency. It can be the bolt of lightning as Luther experienced it on his journey home from the university; it can be the hearing of a specific commandment which comes as an indictment of one's own behavior; it can be the crumbling of a personal relationship; it can be the hearing of the story of the cross which can also be experienced as indictment, and so on. Law so understood is law in terms of its effect on sinful persons, a view that coincides with Luther's understanding of the gospel. The gospel is defined by Luther in terms of our existential encounter with it, in which we are made just by a gracious God. Both law and gospel are understood by Luther in existential fashion, in terms of the human encounter with judgment and grace.

To sum up our argument to this point: we have rejected the Barthian alternative to the Lutheran order of law-gospel by affirming that we live out our lives in the presence of the divine command, a command that is simply there prior to the gospel in virtue of our being creatures of God. One of our principal tasks is to interpret life under the law to the nonbeliever. We have, however, questioned the orthodox Lutheran understanding of that law as a set of commands that can be eternally expressed in the form of propositional absolutes. Luther has shown us that the proper use of the law — its theological use *(usus elenchticus)* — does not assume the teaching of a universal law which has been revealed to us in its fullness. Rather, the law is to be understood in the context of concrete demands of life, the experience of our inadequacy, the accusing conscience, the despair over meaninglessness and death. In the concrete demands of life we are pushed and prodded by the divine presence, and perhaps are opened or perhaps are closed to the possibilities which divine grace and love offer to our own experience.

Law and the Situation Ethics Debate

These observations are pertinent to the methodological debate in recent decades among Christian ethicists, often described as the situation ethics debate. It might appear that Luther's understanding of the law as we have understood it here would place him in the situationist camp. One could understand it that way in the sense that we do not have a set of absolutes capable of settling in advance the appropriate moral response to every situation. But Luther's concern is not captured in the situation versus principles debate; to him the principal issue as always is the proper relation of law and gospel. The confusion in the church on this issue had resulted in an ethic of bondage and legalism. The freedom of the gospel had been lost in the imposition of ecclesiastical requirements as the condition of a God-pleasing life. Situa-

The sense of accountability is the other side of our freedom.

tionists are also concerned with legalism, but their answer is often to get rid of law altogether as the antithesis of a Gospel ethic. Among situationists, the gospel with its imperative to love is the sole norm for the Christian life — a view which betrays the influence of Karl Barth.

It is, of course, appropriate to stress that Christian ethics are an ethic of gospel rather than an ethic of law. St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27), recognizing the gospel as the source of the Christian's life of response to the goodness of God. The gospel of Jesus Christ creates the possibility of our responding in gratitude as the motivation of the faithful life. But the Christian life cannot be divorced from the reality of law and accountability which is prior to the Gospel, even if it is experienced within the context of Christian faith. As long as one is *simul iustus et peccator,* one is in need of hearing the law which confronts and judges the sinner. But how shall that law be understood? Joseph Fletcher maintains that to speak of law in the Christian life is either to speak in terms of a natural law ethic as seen in Roman Catholicism or in terms of a literalistic set of rules which the fundamentalist Protestant seeks to derive from Scripture.[8] There is another way of speaking of the law, however, which is profound in its illumination of the character of life. It reflects the dynamic view of law seen in Luther and speaks with particular effectiveness to the contemporary mindset, impressed as it is with the relativity of moral values and every expression of law.

Law as the Demands of Life

This understanding of law may be expressed in the words "law of life," which operative for all of us as we live out our lives in relation to the world about us, to ourselves, and to others. At the basis of this law of life is the reality of our being "held to account" in the many and varied relationships in which we find ourselves. This sense of accountability is but the other side of our freedom. Where there is genuine decision-making and intentional activity on our part, we inevitably create and are drawn into relationships which obligate us, which compel us to respond, which hold us accountable. There is no human society in which this law of life is not present, for a society would collapse if there were no sense of accountability in the personal and social relationships which characterize that society. Both personal and social morality are based upon it. If we were totally lacking this sense of accountability, our very humanity would appear to be deficient. The amoral person in any society is a mystery to us, while the immoral person is not.

[8]Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), pp. 21, 75ff.



The law of life impinges on us from a variety of directions — from our family, our neighbor, our community, the nation. But in every situation in which we are called to account, there is more involved than simply responding to that particular situation. Our response in any given situation can be responsible or irresponsible, but in and through the situations which make up and shape our lives, we ourselves are ultimately on the line. The demands of life compel us ultimately to answer the more basic (theological) question, "Who are you?" Who are you who fails to do this, or refuses to do this, or is willing to do this? The law of life which operates in the manifold demands of our existence, forces us to face the fundamental question of our own integrity and indicts us in our loss of integrity. For the Christian, this whole process is the means by which God addresses us and calls us to ourselves. God is at work in this law of life.

This is the law prior to gospel, a view described in language similar to my own presentation here in the writings of such theologians as Friedrich Gogarten, Gerhard Ebeling and Gustaf Wingren, each of whom has done his theologizing from a consciously Lutheran perspective.[9] As with Luther, it is law not in terms of content but in terms of effect. It is in the events of our lives in which we are called to account that the issue of life itself is posed, where we are called to responsible selfhood. In our failure to act with integrity we are challenged by a sense of guilt, and the ethical question then becomes the religious question. However — and here Barth's critique is well taken — it is not the law that reveals one's predicament before God as a sinner in need of forgiveness. It rather leaves one in a state of either mild or intense despair; it places a question mark over what life is all about — why is it like this, or why am I like this? This is the impact of law prior to gospel and it provides the situation which the message of the gospel presupposes. This means that the gospel itself cannot be proclaimed without a sense of the tragic or broken dimension of life, a fact which too easily seems to have escaped the secular theologians of the sixties as well as those who currently advocate a romantic celebration of life and the unlimited potential of the human spirit.

In answering the question, how we should speak of the law for the contemporary person, we have arrived at an answer in terms of a law of life which calls us to account and which we believe

[9]Wingren, in his *Creation and Law* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), pp. 57ff., speaks of "the unrecognized demand" of God in which everyone is held accountable for his/her life before God. It is both an expression of divine sovereignty and a demand for faith and trust on the part of us. Human beings believe in some way or another, often in a way that is distorted or idolatrous. But the unrecognized demand becomes recognized as God's work where the gospel is proclaimed.

The good news is that the demands of life are not God's final Word to us.

is capable of being interpreted with some credibility to the nonbeliever. It brings out the moral character of human life and the inevitable presence of guilt through moral failure. It also poses the religious question with its profound possibility of repentance, rebirth and new life. It places law on the existential level, law as the demands of life, and it implies that the formulated laws of a society are "secondary," as Ebeling says. They are derived from the experience of human beings living in community. This means that laws in the form of prohibitions are always the expression of a community with its particular mores and cultural setting. Laws embody the attempt of a group of people to live responsibly with each other, and the more general and comprehensive the law (Thou shalt not kill, steal, commit adultery, etc.) the more "theological" or "moral" it is perceived to be. For Christian faith these commands are rightly understood to represent a divine call to responsibility. But at the same time they are clothed in the dress of a particular culture with its particular understanding of them. Our proper concern is not to establish their validity as *God's* laws by arguing their absoluteness and universality. It is rather to note how they reveal the character of our lives as creatures who are called to account, thereby revealing the character of God as He who summons us to ourselves — to lives of integrity and authenticity. The good news is that the demands of life are not God's final Word to us, and that our failures can be met by that Word which bestows forgiveness and new life to the contrite heart.

The structures of life do change as society creates new conditions under which it lives. The emergence of the technological soceity in the modern era is a most significant development in the story of human evolution. We are often reminded of the fact that our society has succeeded in exercising remarkable powers in shaping our environment, so that we are no longer subject to it in the way our ancestors were. This fact in itself will mean continuing development in our understanding and application of the law. Yet whatever the environment, the law of life continues to confront us as we are called to account. This character of life is powerfully expressed in Paul's words: "What a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). The very nature of life demands our moral accountability; our "response" is inevitably a challenge to be "responsible." The law that is prior to gospel lays this claim upon us; a theology of law interprets this experience in light of the sovereignty of God who calls us to account. To interpret this experience in the existential categories of a Luther is to gain an understanding of law which speaks more effectively to contemporary consciousness. Even in an age of relativism, it affirms our accountability to God as a prelude to the gospel.

The God of the Bible in a Nuclear Age?

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This is an abridgement of two papers delivered in the Iowa District of the American Lutheran Church in 1983. The stimulus for the approach taken was provided by a paper by Gordon Kaufman, Professor at Harvard Divinity School.

In *The Fate of the Earth* (Avon, 1982) Jonathan Schell explored the possibility that a nuclear war could bring an end to human history and human life on earth. His scenario of a devastating holocaust is altogether different from Biblical pictures of the end of the world, for it would be triggered by human rather than divine action and would be devoid of the hopes that were attached to Biblical accounts of judgment and the ensuing new age.

I would like to discuss two responses to Schell's thesis. One holds that the ultimate catastrophe, if it comes, would in some sense be God's will and doing. The other posits that God, as the Redeemer, Savior, and Creator of humankind would never allow the calamitous self-destruction of humanity to occur. Who holds such opinions today, and how should we regard them?

God's Will?

The idea that such a holocaust could be God's will is not a mere theoretical theological conception. Many fundamentalists embrace the idea of an impending holocaust, integrating the event into apocalyptic schemes about the end of the world and the battle of Armageddon, mentioned in Revelation 16.

Hal Lindsey

The basic premise of this viewpoint is a deterministic belief in an omnipotent God who orchestrates history according to his will and plan, revealed in Scripture. The classical example of this viewpoint is found in Hal Lindsey's best seller, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970).

Lindsey argues for the reliability of Biblical prophecy, which in his view, is primarily prediction. The student of the Bible is to search the Scriptures for predictive hints and indications of how God will work his purposes in history. Especially prominent are the books of Ezekiel and Daniel, Mark 13, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation. Since some of the infallible ancient prophecies are not yet fulfilled literally, he seeks modern counterparts to the ancient figures, nations, names and events. On the basis of these identifications, he can weave references from many passages into the seamless fabric which constitutes the orderly movement of history toward its climax in the return of Christ and the beginning of the millennium, the 1000 year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation 20.

The essence of his method is to identify the ancient names with their modern counterparts and predicted events with current events that have either taken place or that can be expected to do so. The establishment of the State of Israel literally fulfills prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. The enemy to the North is Russia, designated by the Hebrew "Rosh." Nasser's Egypt and Black Africa will play their role. The

Lutherans tend *not to be millennialists.*

Antichrist of Revelation will be a Roman leader who will seduce the ten nations of the Common Market to worship him when they see the beginning of the fulfillment of his utopian promises. But the end will draw near as the Russians make an amphibious landing at Haifa and rush into the Valley of Jezreel, where the Battle of Armageddon will take place at the foot of the mound of Megiddo: har-megiddon.

Deciphering Today's Events

Into this scenario, Lindsey fits the events of a nuclear exchange and possibly a holocaust as follows.

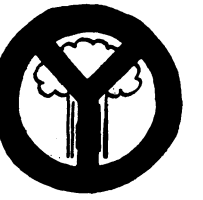
> The description of torrents of fire and brimstone raining down upon the Red army, coupled with an unprecedented shaking of the land of Israel could well be describing the use of tactical nuclear weapons against them by the Romans . . . A fearful thing is predicted as occurring at the time of the Red Army's destruction. God says, "I will send fire on Magog [Russia] and upon those who dwell securely [false hope] in the coastlands [various continents] . . ." (Ezekiel 39:6 Amplified). According to this, Russia, as well as many countries who thought they were secure under the Antichrist's protection, will have fire fall upon them. Once again, this could be a direct judgment from God, or God would allow the various countries to launch a nuclear exchange of ballistic missiles upon each other. (pp. 149-50)

A Happy Ending?

But the terrifying mushroom cloud that Lindsey anticipates has its silver lining: As the battle of Armageddon reaches its awful climax and it appears that all life will be destroyed on earth — in this very moment Jesus Christ will return and save man from self-extinction (p. 156). Thus the frightening prospect of imminent nuclear holocaust — as this has been detailed by Jonathan Schell and others — is the sign and promise of the second coming of Christ, the beginning of the millenium, and the return of Paradise. By positing this turn of events, Lindsey transforms the threat of destruction and extinction into the promise of final salvation. The appeal of Lindsey's approach is evident in the success of his book, which has sold more than fifteen million copies.

An Otherworldly Solution

Lutherans tend *not* to be millennialists. Usually we polemicize against millenarian interpretations of Revelation and we reject the use of the Apocalypse as a key for the interpretation of the rest of Scripture. Few of us joyfully anticipate a nuclear holocaust as a means of usher-



ing in the end-time. Nonetheless, there are factors at work in our theology that can mask the threat of holocaust and provide a rationale for believing that such a holocaust might be an act of the Divine Will. This viewpoint is perhaps best expressed in this familiar hymn:

> I am a stranger here, heaven is my home;
> Life is a desert drear, heaven is my home.
> Danger and sorrow stand round me on every hand;
> Heaven is my fatherland, heaven is my home.

The piety that spawned such hymnody is still very much alive in a wide spectrum of Lutheranism. It is rooted in those Biblical apocalyptic theologies that arose in times of deep distress and oppression. According to these apocalyptists, whom most of us know from the books of Daniel and Revelation, the world was in the clutches of demonic forces. Hope lay in the consummation of history and in a new age characterized by the full exercise of the reign of God. This apocalyptic hope was nourished in the centuries of Christian history that were marked by war, famine, plague, and oppression. Release from an evil world was sought in the end of history, or at least in death and the removal of one's soul to the presence of God and the realm of peace and light. Essential to the scheme, as it developed in Christian piety, was a sharp dualism between heaven and earth, body and soul.

Such theologies contrast one's unhappy existence in the present situation with release or salvation from that situation in the blessed future or heavenly realm. One can bear up now if one believes that God will right the wrongs at a future date and place. When such a theology is modified and translated into the present situation, even the prospect of nuclear holocaust and the extinction of the human race are tolerable because one believes in ultimate salvation beyond the holocaust.

Knowing Good and Evil

Deeply written into many of the Biblical texts is the identification of the individual and his or her cause and actions as good and pleasing to God, and a corresponding identification of one's enemies and their cause and actions as evil and opposed to God. A corollary of this viewpoint is the belief that God will act in one's behalf and wreak vengeance on one's enemies.

In the literature of the apocalypticism, this viewpoint becomes an essential part of the theological system. One's community or the world as a whole is thought to be comprised of two groups: the righteous and the wicked. The leader of the enemy may be construed as the personification of Satan and the executor of his will. In Daniel, the Syrian monarch, Antiochus Epiphanes, the

The possibility of a nuclear holocaust must be rejected as untenable.

archpersecutor of the Jews, becomes the demon who storms heaven and seeks to dethrone God. The battle of the end-time will pit demon against Michael, the patron angel of Israel. The divine victory in this heavenly battle will be mirrored by the historical defeat and death of Antiochus. In Revelation, Satan, the heaven-storming dragon, gives his authority to the Roman emperor and the priests and enforcers of the emperor cult, who persecute the faithful Christians. Thus, in apocalyptic theology, issues of good and evil, the identification of their protagonists, and the problems connected with the execution of divine judgment are raised to high relief.

It is not surprising, then, that the Christian heirs of the apocalyptic tradition have identified their own enemies and their struggle with these enemies precisely in terms of a cosmic battle between good and evil, God and Satan, heaven and hell. Thus Martin Luther could speak of the pope as the Antichrist. Hal Lindsey identifies the Soviet Union with the forces of Magog, while he may be interpreted as suggesting that a Roman pope, in the near future, will be the Antichrist whose false promises and assumption of divine prerogatives will lead the world to Armageddon and the brink of total annihilation.

Is Disaster Possible?

A second possible theological response to the threat of nuclear disaster begins with the same premise as the first alternative: History is the unfolding of a divine plan. However, this approach takes much more seriously the dread and horror of nuclear holocaust and believes that such a fate is clearly contrary to God's will. Therefore, the disaster can never take place. It is theologically impossible.

God's Faithfulness

Scripture emphasizes God's faithfulness to his covenantal promises and his infinite patience with his chosen people when they transgress the covenant. It is utterly inconceivable to some that such a God will abandon the creation and reject the chosen. It is intolerable to suppose that in such an essential matter God's will would not be done on earth as it is in heaven. The possibility of a nuclear holocaust must be rejected as untenable within the framework of Biblical religion.

Triumphalism

A second reason for believing that nuclear disaster will not befall us is based less on theological reasons than on historical conditions that pertain to us as a nation. We have a successful history as a nation. We have risen to great industrial, economic, and political power in a relatively short period of time. The myth of American invincibility governs more of our individual and collective



lives than we generally recognize.

Our operating principle is, "It could never happen here." It guides our approaches to the problems of pollution. It undergirds aspects of our foreign policy. There is little that cannot be solved through technology, the United States Marines, and a bit of help from God who beneficently guides our destiny. Our nation is God's chosen people, and our way of life is what he intends for the rest of the world. To that end he guards and guides us, granting us success and protecting us from evil. Against this background, it is not surprising that many Americans believe that a nuclear disaster, and especially defeat in a nuclear exchange can never befall us. Past history is the guarantee of the future.

Escapism

A final factor contributes to the belief that nuclear disaster could never happen. It involves a common human trait — the attempt to escape the reality of unpleasant events and their consequences. Such escapism may take two forms. On the one hand, we may admit the terrible possibilities of nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare, but we try to believe that these weapons will somehow go away. On the other hand, we may refuse to face up to the possibilities and thus act as if nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare are no worse than other military weapons in history and the wars in which they have been used. Common to both approaches is the attempt to avoid an unpleasant reality. This attitude is compatible with the theological position that God will not let it happen. We need not face the reality of nuclear threat and deal with it responsibly.

In summary, I have sketched two possible theological responses to the threat of nuclear holocaust — both of them based on elements drawn from the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to the first, if such a holocaust takes place, it will be God's will. An apocalyptically oriented theology tends to deprecate this world as evil and corrupt, and seeks solace from its woes and vindication from its injustices in the blessings of heaven and eternal life. The second theological response denies the possibility of such a holocaust on the grounds that it would be contrary to the will of God the Creator and Redeemer.

Some Issues

1. By now it is obvious that the question of God's will is a fundamental issue. Can we say that God's will is always done? Is everything that happens an enactment of the divine will?

2. Related to the topic of God's will is the place of human responsibility. If God's will is always done, are we free from moral responsibility in such matters as nuclear warfare? What is the relationship between God's will and its execution by human agents?

The prophets . . . understood themselves to be primarily God's spokespersons to their own age.

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3. In discussing God's will, we face the question of good and evil. How do we decide what is his will and what is not? Is there a danger that we can identify our own viewpoint with God's will and demonize our enemies or opponents?

4. For persons like Hal Lindsey, the solution to the problem of nuclear holocaust is a personal one: in the face of the impending Armageddon, one must get right with God. It is an attractive and viable position. What are its implications?

5. Not unrelated to this individualism is a traditional dichotomy between body and soul, earth and heaven. When our ultimate personal salvation is in focus, how does this influence our attitudes about the rest of the world and the collective human race?

6. Basic to much of the discussion is our hermeneutics. What are the principles by which we interpret Scripture? What is the nature and place of prophecy in the whole of the divine revelation? In what ways does Scripture speak to us in the present context? In what ways and to what extent is it irrelevant or counterproductive?

Is Nuclear War God's Will?

My first concern is with those who invoke scriptural authority to support the belief that nuclear holocaust may well be an expression of God's will. This position is based on a misunderstanding and distortion of the nature of biblical texts. Contrary to Hal Lindsey and his colleagues, prophecy was not primarily prediction, much less the prediction of events in the remote future. The prophets and their successors, the apocalyptists, understood themselves to be primarily God's spokespersons to their own age.

An essential characteristic of much apocalyptic theology is the author's belief that he is living in the last times. In that context, he speaks of an imminent fulfillment of divine promise. The lack of a literal fulfillment of prophetic and apocalyptic promises leads the fundamentalist to posit fulfillment in our own times — against clear meaning of the ancient text.

An obsession with the Second Coming of Jesus leads a person like Hal Lindsey to find in Scripture 300 predictions of the life of Jesus but 500 predictions of his Second Coming. The coherence of Lindsey's interpretation of Scripture is seductive, but the interpretation crumbles if one listens to the texts in their own right and within the framework of their author's presuppositions. The texts do not provide a blueprint of current and future events, much less the prediction of a nuclear holocaust as a divinely sanctioned consummation to history.

The Relevance of Apocalyptic

Three major factors are noteworthy in apocalyptic theology. 1. The situation: profoundly evil and unjust times. 2. The nature of evil: people were victimized by



forces which they could not successfully oppose. One had no access to the Syrian king or the Roman emperor. 3. The nature of the solution: divine intervention is necessary when there is no human recourse.

Clearly, such apocalyptic thought found in writings like Daniel, the Book of Revelation, and parts of the Synoptic Gospels and the epistles of Paul, is an important constitutive part of our operating theology. We believe that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, whence he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and life of the world to come. Moreover, this theology speaks to our present context. It offers comfort in face of the threat of nuclear holocaust. Even if the world blows up, we shall survive in the world to come.

In many ways, we do live in an apocalyptic age, marked by persecution, oppression, violence, and injustice — much of it wrought by persons in high places. Moreover, many of us feel like the helpless victims of massive and impersonal forces which are difficult to define, much less influence.

Yet the fact remains that in this country we do have access to the sources of power — as much as we complain about the failures of and our frustrations with the powers that be. To cite a single, relevant example: in recent years we have seen the anti-nuclear movement gain considerable influence and muscle, much to the consternation of politicians who are of a different persuasion.

My point is this: Hopes of a blessed future have a legitimate place in our theology, but they can be a cop-out that deters us from striving to remedy the ills of this world. To fall back on a hope for divine intervention and a belief that things will be better in the next world is both bad theology and an evasion of the responsibility that is intrinsic to our humanity.

A This-Wordly Vision

Celebration of God's creation and wonderment over it pervade significant parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. This creation is not defined simply as an act which initiated the world and life on it. Yahweh is continuously involved with his world, creating and recreating, giving new life and sustaining it. Admittedly, there are aspects of the creation that do not conform to God's original intention: Women bear children in pain, and people die prematurely; wolves eat lambs, and weeds frustrate the farmer. But in God's good time the creation will be restored. Not abolished or replaced by heaven, but restored. This is the clear message of Isaiah 65-66, and the idea occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The New Testament presumes much that the Old Testament says about social justice and the goodnes of the creation. For our Lord, the created world was a parable of the kingdom. The birds of the air and the lilies of the field are object

Scripture is the varied . . . testimony to divine truth.

lessons for trust in God, and sparrows are under divine protection. It is striking how Jesus expects human beings to learn from the creation of which they are the crown! We know little of the details of Jesus' eschatological vision; he left no apocalypses behind. But here is a tantalizing hint: "Blessed are the meek; for they will inherit the earth." Not heaven, but the earth! How different this is from the Johannine passage which is especially compatible with the "Heaven is my home" theology: "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am you may be also?" The contrast between these two passages is noteworthy. Scripture speaks with different voices. We need to be aware of these differences and sort them out, asking what God's word is to us today.

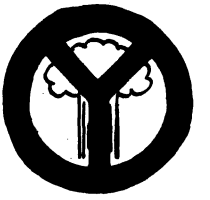
Depreciation of this world, or at least lack of concern about the world, is often thought to be a corollary of a belief in resurrection and eternal life: We may deplore the possibility of nuclear disaster, but we think we can live with it, because we know that we shall live with God. No theology of everlasting life, however, can minimize the tragedy of the creatures' annihilation of God's world. This is God's world, and he has placed it in our care. It is our obligation to work for the mother from whose dust he brought us forth.

The Diversity of Scripture and our Disagreements

Decisions about right and wrong are central to the present nuclear debate, both within the church and outside it. Because we believe that we are God's children and the recipients of divine revelation, we often take what appears to be the next logical step: We assert that we are right and those who disagree with us are wrong. Furthermore, one may begin to wish for the destruction of one's enemies or at least the evil that they champion and personify.

This troubling aspect of the Judeo-Christian heritage has beleagured the church since its beginning. One anathematized one's opponents and burned heretics and waged crusades against the infidel. Such zeal easily moves into the nuclear debate. The Soviet Union is seen as the latter-day embodiment of the satanic Antichrist. Any and all action against that nation or against godless communism is to be applauded and encouraged. One's own attitude and viewpoint are unquestionably right and conform to the will of God. In this scheme of things, there are only good and evil, right and wrong, there are not grays.

Scripture is the varied and complex testimony to divine truth and activity.



For example, it seems quite likely that the author of the last chapter of Isaiah and the writers and compilers of the books of Chronicles were members of opposing parties that contended against one another in the early post-exilic period. The letters of Paul amply document the quick rise of diversity and contention within the early church. Some Christians believed that the divinely revealed Torah was still binding on the church. Paul argued vigorously that Christ was the end of the Torah, and he condemned those who preached otherwise. It is natural for us to impugn the motives of Paul's opponents, but historical evidence that the Jewish Christians were insincere or evil in their intentions is totally lacking.

In short, the history of Israelite religion and of the early church was marked by diversity, disagreement, and conflict over such basic issues as the identity of God's chosen and the distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Moreover, the Scriptural canon itself replaces this diversity and includes writings that represent differing, and sometimes opposing, points of view.

Difference and diversity are a fruitful paradigm for our own theological reflection and our decisions and activity in the ethical realm. Modest tentativity is more appropriate and salutary than blustering, militant certitude. People of good will can and do disagree on issues like the nuclear debate.

Biblical Power

A discussion of the nuclear issue in a Christian context naturally implies consideration of the Biblical attitudes toward war in particular and power in general. As Krister Stendahl has noted, we are scarcely aware of the extent to which our Christian theology has been formulated in the terms of power and warfare. Israel went to war in the belief that their God was marching at the head of their troops or as their rearguard. In the New Testament the language of warfare tends to be spiritualized, but it is still present. We contend against the forces of wickedness and need to clothe ourselves with the armor of God.

Against this background, it is not surprising that the history of Christianity is marked by the repeated use of the imagery of power and warfare. The crusades were holy wars. Moreover, expressions of Christian piety are shot through with spiritualized warfare language: Stand up, stand up for Jesus, you soldiers of the Cross; or Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the Cross of Jesus going on before.

Much Christian comment on the nuclear arms race is governed by the presupposition that this nation is God's chosen people, appointed to stay the forces of Satan personified in the Soviet Union and other protagonists of Satanic atheism. Within the framework of such a mission, it is to be expected that power be met with power, force with force.

Power . . . will be, only *after* and *because* of the cross.

Biblical Weakness

Here again, however, the diversity of Scripture shows us that there is another way — weakness in the place of power, *experiencing* suffering rather than inflicting it. The prime Old Testament example of this viewpoint is the figure of the Servant of Yahweh described in Second Isaiah. He gives his back to the smiters and cheeks to those who pull out the beard. Predictably, the onlookers misunderstand his suffering, believing it to be the result of divine punishment. But they must confess that "he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." It was God's will to bruise him, and through his suffering many will be accounted righteous. In the eyes and will of God, weakness is power, defeat is triumph, and suffering issues in exaltation.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the supreme embodiment of this viewpoint and conduct. In the Sermon on the Mount, he appeals to his disciples to turn the other cheek and to love their enemies. Those who are blessed are the meek, the oppressed, and the peacemakers. One early hymn, now found in Philippians 2, employs the theology of the Servant of Yahweh to describe the career of Jesus: he humbles himself to take on human form; he obeys God's will to its inevitable goal — death on a cross. But such suffering is vindicated, shown to have been right, when God exalts him and bestows upon him the ineffable name, to the acclamation of all creation. Power there will be, but only *after* and *because* of the cross. For Paul, the heart of the Gospel is centered on the foolishness of the cross of the Christ who was crucified in weakness.

The Cross in a World of Power

Here we must face the fulness of our moral dilemma as Christians. The suffering and weakness and shame of the cross are central to the Gospel. We are children of a God whose superlative word celebrates weakness and suffering. However, as such Christians, we live in a world in which power speaks and deterrence by power is logical because, allegedly, it works. In such a world many consider disarmament to be foolish and destructive. How do we evaluate the situation and speak to it responsibly?

The church is not of one mind on this for reasons that I have already discussed. But it seems to me that if we are to be faithful to our tradition, we must be the protagonists of the other way — of redemptive suffering and weakness and giving. We must be ready to contend against the protagonists of power and to suffer the consequences, which at the very least mean-ridicule.

Is a Nuclear Holocaust Part of God's Will for the World?

The idea that God has a predetermined plan for the course of history is found only in a few apocalyptic writings.



However, even in such contexts, divine foreknowledge does not imply that God ordains or consents to all the events of history. Even in deterministic apocalyptic theologies, human beings are responsible for their deeds.

May we say that a nuclear holocaust might be the will of God? In all charity, I consider a positive answer to this question close to a blasphemous caricature of the Biblical view of God as the Creator and the Redeemer who took on human flesh. No theories about the sovereignty and inscrutibility of God, and no theology of resurrection and eternal life can mitigate the tragedy of the annihilation of the earthly creation.

Is Nuclear War, Then, Theologically Impossible?

In the Biblical perspective, many things happen which are not in accord with God's will. A holocaust, brought on by human folly or arrogance, could indeed take place, even if it did clash with the Creator's will.

Far from predetermining history, God responds to it. God responds to Israel's sins; he grieves over them, pleading with his people to repent. Depending upon their reaction, he responds again, either forgiving them or punishing them.

Even if nuclear holocaust is not the Creator's will, he could justly abandon the world to such a holocaust because his creatures have defied his will by rushing down the precipice of violence and self-destruction.

When Satan called on Jesus to leap down from the temple in the expectation that his Father's angels would rescue him, Jesus rejected such an act because he would be toying with God and presuming on his filial relationship with God. Nuclear brinkmanship is the ultimate in such presumption.

How, as Christians, shall we respond to this situation?

I have argued that an appeal to a hope in an afterlife can be a cop-out. Nonetheless, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are the central affirmation of the Christian life. My text is the story of the Empty Tomb. On Easter morning it was the disciples who were dead and, to their surprise, Jesus was alive. For the child of God, no situation is so bad as to be hopeless.

That means that we must not be frozen into inaction. On the contrary, we must take up the responsibility that is rightfully ours as human beings and as Christians. God uses human agents to accomplish his purposes.

Reflection and dialogue are important within the Christian community as we reckon with the multiplicity in our tradition and seek to apply it responsibly to our situation. At the same time, we dare not lose sight of the central and moral affirmation of our religion: the call to listen and speak and act in love, and to be peacemakers. On the other hand, rigidity in our own opinions and demonizing our opponents and enemies

To pray for the presence of the kingdom does not preclude working toward it.

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or impugning their motives are wrong and unproductive.

Finally, we must carry our reflections and convictions into the rest of God's world, where in concert with all people of good will, we must seek to catalyze and to help enact the changes that will lead to peace for all of God's people in this world.

Our prayer is one that our Lord taught us: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. To pray for the presence of the kingdom does not preclude working toward that goal. Indeed, the two are necessarily complementary.



Samaritan Woman

elizabeth-anne vanek
Chicago, Ill.

Tired,
He sat by Jacob's well
and
amid the flies and dust
of midday,
waited for the woman,
waited
for water . . .

She was amazed
by His lack
of protocol.
"You — a Jew —
ask *me*?"

His answer
perplexed her
more:

"If you knew —
if you only knew —
you would ask me
and I
would give you
living water,
a dancing spring,
blue as a fathomless ocean,
cool as a mountain stream,
bracing as rain,
welling, gushing, brimming over,
deep
with the mystery
of what I AM
and of what
you are
if you only knew it.

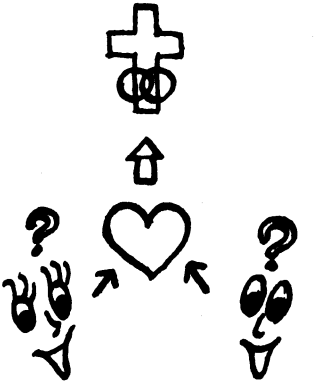
If you knew —
if you only knew —
in that water
you would dance,
immersed
deep deep deep
plunging
deeper still,
washed clean
by river pond lake sea,
breakers and eddies,
high tide and low.
You would let yourself drift,
drift drift drift drift,
if you knew,
if you only knew
that YOU ARE
the water . . .

Of course
she did *not* know.
What she wanted
was
to be saved
from the inconvenience
of drought
and from
back-breaking labor —
the dreary trudge,
the blistered hands,
the heavy burden,
the weary heart . . .

"You have no bucket, Sir,
the well is deep . . ."

But the man
read the desert
in her eyes,
told her
e v e r y t h i n g
she had ever done
and more.

And so
with the taste
of water
on her lips,
she put down her pitcher
and ran
to proclaim
WHO
and
WHERE
and
WHAT
the Master
was . . .



Mate Selection: Cupid's Three Level Radar and Why It Does Not Always Work

Paul Bauermeister

Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of Pastoral Care
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Note: This essay is offered to the readers of Currents *in the hope that they will find it useful at several levels of ministry. Its language and style make it suitable for discussion with a teen age Bible class or youth group. The basic ideas of the essay may be found useful by parents, teachers and youth counselors. Pastors and others who do counseling may find the ideas helpful in guiding couples with troubled marriages as they discover that their own wrong headedness and wrong heartedness are not the* only *causes of their pain. Couples may be able to rescue a few more shreds of their battered self esteem by becoming aware of the complicity of the culture in their difficulties. Divorced people, understandably wary regarding remarriage, may be able to locate a few pitfalls to avoid.*

The essay is purposefully devoid of theological reflection. In my opinion, God's guiding and giving hand is most clearly discerned in lengthy retrospect. I am made uneasy by those too eager to declare God's gift and direction in untested relationships. Reserve that for the fifth wedding anniversary, or at least until the couple has weathered some of life's storms together. A second reason for my theological demure *is my deep conviction that the desired doxology flows more truly and more richly from the hearts of the lovers themselves than ever from the pen of a theological professor.*

Finally, remembering that we humans process but one idea at a time and deeming the mate selection process to be sufficiently shrouded in ignorance and sufficiently important, I wished to address that process clearly and in isolation. The theological reflection can best be added by using ingredients available locally.

PJB

People really do look other people over. Men check out women and women check out men. And then they fall in love; they really do. And while in that blissful condition, some of them make extravagant promises to each other and some of them even marry each other. People have been carrying on that way for a long time, and I expect them to continue for some time to come. In fact, do not try to stop them because it cannot be done.

Mate selection, the methods we use to choose a life partner, will always contain an element of mystery and wonder. There are veils and hidden lattice-work that cannot be penetrated by cold reason and hard logic. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern three sets of tests given by the lover to the beloved. If "tests" sounds too calculating, think of it as Cupid's Radar. As he takes aim with his bow and arrow, Cupid operates first on level one, then on level two and finally on level three.

Level One

The Level One Radar checks out the other person's image. You must have noticed all the attention young people pay to appearance, all the preening, primping, and polishing, the careful and subtle research on hair style, clothing, dance steps, buzz words, issues, beverage and heroes. The list goes on and on and seems endless. Have you asked yourself why all this? At least part of the answer is that all these details are signals that young people send to other young people. They have to be sure they send the right signals and look for the right signals in others.

This is Cupid's Radar Level One. Does he cut his hair short whenever everybody else's hair is long? He may be just the guy I want because of his haircut, or he may be somebody I would not want to be seen dead with. Does she say "ya know" at the end of every sentence? That may make her my dream girl or someone I would never dream of introducing to my mother.

The Level One Radar runs all the time. When you are 45 years old, happily married with two kids in school, you still notice the girl with the wavy blond hair or the guy with the innocent blue-eyed face. Nothing ever comes of it because you are 45 years old and happily married with two kids in school, but you *did* notice. I have even heard of 80 year olds in the nursing home running their Level One Radar on the staff. Level One Radar looks *only* at images. It examines only the surface appearance of a person, never deeper. It is a first test that must be passed before we can go on to Level Two. Could you stand a guy with grease under his fingernails or one who did *not* ride a ten speed? Would you even consider her if she always looked preppie? or drank light beer? Of course you would not, because these people do not pass your Level One Radar. But others do pass Level One, and get picked up by Level Two.

Level Two

Level Two Radar gets us through to a more complicated area called falling in love. Level Two demands at least some preliminary social interaction and some feelings.

Falling in love needs to be handled with care. It tends to be radically over-rated by the mainstream of our culture and often radically under-rated by the technological, scientific, and intellectual community.

The test of the Level Two Radar is a double test. The first test is do I have feelings of love for this person? Test two is, does the person I love have feelings of love for me? The usual sequence for these two tests is first to be certain of my own feelings and then cautiously to check out the other person's feelings, all the while being very careful not to show my own feelings until I am sure the other person has similar feelings. Using your Level Two Radar is a delicate business, requiring skill and finesse. Learning to use your Level Two Radar may take a while, and everybody knows that mistakes are paid for in broken hearts. By the way, broken hearts are not to be mocked. The pain is very real and often very deep.

We said earlier that Level Two Radar is more complicated than Level One. Level One asks only "Is the image OK?" Level Two asks two questions, the first question is about my own feelings. The second is about the other persons feelings, a relational question. If we investigate this feeling business a little, we quickly learn that it is more complicated than we had ever imagined. An important lesson can be learned from the first teen-age crush you ever had. Remember the first time

you were knocked off your feet by somebody? You probably lost your appetite and walked around in a daze, totally preoccupied with your thoughts about how wonderful so-and-so was. You even sighed a great soul shattering sigh at least twice an hour. You were having strong feelings of being in love, but if you were like most people with a teen-age crush you knew very little about your beloved and probably had a minimal relationship with him or her. Chances are very few words had passed between you. All of which suggests that something other than sensory and rational forces were at work. Your beloved had a mysterious key that somehow unlocked some of the doors in your interior behind which you store memories from long ago. They were possibly memories of father and mother though not just memories are stored there. Feelings are stored there too, longings and loves and dreams and delights.

In short, powerful emotions were unlocked by your beloved's key, when she smiled or he seemed more than a little interested. When the key fits the lock, Cupid's Level Two Radar begins to flash the bright green light and says, "Yes! Yes! Isn't it wonderful!"

There is a sexual element to the Level Two Radar, just as there was to Level One. In Level One it was only image: How does he look in a tee shirt, and does he have enough hair on his legs? Or how does she smell and does everything move right when she walks? At Level Two the radar looks first for your own arousal, "Am I turned on?" and then looks for a reciprocal, responsive arousal from the other person. If it is there on both sides, and everybody is willing, then the sexual dance can begin in earnest.

The feelings from deep inside us produce powerful fantasies that can be devastating for a newcomer. The only way to solve the problem presented by the fantasies is to begin to think of the relationship in terms of permanence. The words usually used are "forever," and "faithful" and "only one." Which means we had better get quickly to the Level Three Radar.

Level Three

Level One Radar is sensory and checks out the image. Level Two Radar is much fancier and checks out some feelings in you and in your beloved. Level Three Radar is cerebral. Finally we get to the place where we have to think about our choice. If you go home to meet your beloved's parents and discover father and mother are rednecks, and brother is a freak and sister is a high school drop-out, you might begin to wonder what you were getting into because your father is the Vice-President of the bank, your mother is the President of the Junior League, your brother is at Harvard and your sister plays the flute with the symphony. You might even begin to think. Cupid's Level Three Radar just switched on, in this case to check out a very important area: similarity of background. Your Level Three Radar might also want to check out values, interests, attitudes, and plans for the future. The basic rule of thumb is that the more similarity you have to your beloved in terms of background, values, interests, attitudes, and plans for the future, the better your prospects are for a smooth, comfortable, long-term relationship. You say that sounds dull and unexciting? It doesn't have to be at all. There is still plenty of room for the kind of variety that enriches and adds spice to life.

A problem with Level-Three Radar is that it is not nearly as automatic or as easy or as accurate as Level One and Level Two Radar. Most people never even think about Level One Radar. It seems to work all by itself even when we don't

especially want it to. And Level Two Radar gives such clear strong signals that most people cannot miss or mistake them. We know for sure if people are passing Cupid's Level One and Level Two Radar. But Level Three Radar requires thinking and research and judgment, and takes time. Relationships need to season. Couples need to get past the initial "imaging" phase of their relationship before they can find out who is really there on the other side. Even though you may wish to make moral or theological arguments against the current trend of young people living together before marriage, my minister friends report that most couples that have lived together enter marriage with a much more reality-oriented understanding of their spouse and what it means to live in an intimate relationship. One thing that happens when people live together is that the Level Three Radar gets a chance to work. Level Three Radar will begin to function when couples live together whether they are married or not. When we say that "the honeymoon is over" for a couple, what we mean is that the imaging stopped for a while and the real people appeared and somebody didn't like all the reports that Level Three Radar produced.

The reason Cupid's Level Three Radar doesn't always work is because people don't give it a chance. We hinted at the major part of the difficulty when we said that Level One and Level Two are automatic and Level Three is not. Level Three requires time and the hard work of careful thinking. What makes this Level Three thinking even more difficult is that it seems to fly in the face of some conclusions about permanence we drew on the basis of Level One and Level Two Radar. The reason we drew those conclusions lies partly inside us and (whew!) partly outside us. Let's start with the inside ones. We suggested earlier that the positive reports that come from Level Two Radar are strong. Overwhelming might be a better word. To be smitten by love is to be smitten cheek and thigh. Ask yourself, why have there always been love songs? The answer is simple: because such love is a powerful and highly prized emotion. To be able to give yourself without reservations to a cause brings with it a rare and wonderful feeling of purpose and strength, and a profound sense of rightness of self, world, and universe. If instead of a cause it is another person to whom I give myself unreservedly and if that other person is similarly and passionably giving herself/himself to me, a more wonderful state of affairs is beyond imagination. These feelings are powerfully compelling, but the use of Level Three Radar demands critical thought, most of which sounds linear and dull and some of which runs counter to the purple and pink reports of Level Two Radar.

After the quick sketch of our complicity in the failure to use Level Three Radar, you may be wondering what else is needed to shut off Level Three Radar. Not much is needed, but there is a lot more there. It exists outside us and is very carefully preserved by our culture. Level Three Radar stoppers exist in a set of beliefs about the Level Two experience of being in love. These beliefs are carefully transmitted and maintained, and nestle in a great many minds completely unchallenged by any rational evaluation.

The first mistaken belief is that love is a feeling. Allow me a small but important distinction: There is being-in-love and there is love. The two are connected but very different and need to be carefully understood. Being-in-love is a feeling, a wonderful and sometimes overpowering feeling. If you have never felt that way my wish is that you will. It is an important part of the human experience, one in which we can learn a lot about

ourselves, about giving and passion and risk. We can even learn a little about God if we pay close attention and make a few connections.

Love, on the other hand, is not a feeling but an action. Love is something you decide on and then do. A large part of love is commitment, which gets framed in promises, of all things. To be sure, feelings become a part of love, a very important part, but the feeling of love grows much more slowly than the feelings of being-in-love. Love is not the product of some magical instant chemistry, but rather the product of years of shared experience. It is not only the fun experiences that build love. Love is built by *all* the shared experiences, even those we would call painful or difficult or personally expensive.

Simply put, the commitment of love is to care about what happens to another person, to care constantly and consistently, when you feel like it and when you don't feel like it.

The result of this caring, committed love is a resilient living bond between two people, one that gets stronger over time and finally gets to the point where life's adversities and pains only serve to strengthen it further. When you stop to think about it, love is about as different from being-in-love as anything could be. The only connection is that each experience can happen with the same person. And I hope it does for you.

The next belief is that there is one and only one right person for you in the whole world. This simply is not true. Roughly half of the people on earth are members of the opposite sex, whichever sex you may be. And whole bunches of them are about your age and cute as a bug's ear. Now, when it comes time to marry, that is, when all three levels of Cupid's Radar have done their job, it is very nice to say, "you are the only one in the whole wide world for me," but say it knowing that you are talking about how you feel, not about a cold hard objective fact.

Not everyone believes the one right person theory, but many believe a derivative of it, namely that you really fall in love only one time in your life. That belief is such obvious bunk that I am still always surprised when bright, sensible people come up with it, but they do. To convince you that it is bunk, come with me to a wonderful place. It is February and we are on the dock in Miami about to board a great gleaming ship for a cruise in the Caribbean. Imagine that we are both quite unattached having no long term commitment to spouses or lovers. Getting on the ship with us are many attractive people, some men some women. Many of them are in our age group and as unattached as we are. Ahead of us lie sparkling seas, bright white beaches, fine food that somebody else prepares, moonlight dancing on the upper deck, sweet drinks carefully laced with too much rum, the opportunity to pull away from the larger group at will for private exploring on the deserted islands or in fishing villages or in the shops and stalls of the major ports along the route. Oh yes, add to the whole scene the absolute absence of any worry about how much this is costing us. It is the gift of a very rich, very old maiden aunt. Given such an iddylic two weeks, what are the chances that both of us could be head-over-heels in love by the time we get back to Miami? Level One Radar begins to operate in earnest on the gang plank if not before. Level Two Radar would be warming up during our first conversation at the rail as the ship begins to move. It might take us a few days to find the right one, but with those two Radars working and *all that opportunity* it would not take long. Oh, and it would be such glorious fun!

Admittedly, the settings are very

romantic, but the point is made: Falling in love can happen again and again. All it takes is the right setting and an appropriate supply of people. Falling in love really is not that hard to do.

Stemming from the belief that people only fall in love once in a lifetime comes another very popular belief, namely, that there is only one reasonable response to being in love: Get yourself married, and the quicker the better! When the minister asks the breathless couple why they wish to be married the answer is almost always the same, "We are in *love*!"

If it really is true that there is only one person in the world who is right for you, and that you only fall in love one time in your life, then it is perfectly reasonable to move as quickly as possible from a clear positive signal on Level Two Radar to Holy Matrimony. But we have been saying that neither of those things is true, so there must be a better response to falling in love than a hasty marriage. Try this one: Level Three Radar. Thinking! Evaluating! Critiquing! which we had better get to quickly while we still have your attention.

Your Level Three Radar is not that tough to activate once you decide to turn it on. Here are some easy steps to follow.

Take your time. Allow at least 12 months between the time you know yourselves to be seriously in love before you head to the altar. Much of that year you will spend enjoying the experience of being in love. Good! Save a little bit of that year for careful thinking. Yes, making lists of positive and negative characteristics of your beloved, things you like and things you don't like. It is a reasonable thing to do. That year can also be spent getting to know each other's family and each other's friends. While you are at it, quiz your own family and friends regarding your beloved and ask good hard questions and listen carefully to their answers. After all, those people really do care about you.

Spend some time with your beloved exploring your future together. Of course, revel in how wonderful it will be, always together, growing in love and care, but every once in a while get beyond the grand generalizations and get into the details of the future together. Talk about specific plans and goals and timetables and balance sheets and budgets. Will there be children? How many and when? Will there be more education to pay for? Who gets it and where? And what about the demands and necessities of our families of origin? What priorities do those people carry for the two of us? And there are career goals and aspirations. What takes precedence in a conflict between career goals and family goals? I am not suggesting that all these issues can be decided in advance, but an open discussion with your beloved can be very enlightening. In an effort to take seriously the injunction to be specific, take your combined incomes and work out a budget, one that includes not just the tickets to the opera, but the one that includes the car repairs, the dentist's bill, the health insurance and the refrigerator payment right down to the last nickel. Now you have your Level Three Radar working, and both of you will be the better for it. After all you have an important decision to make. One that has to do with commitment, a life-long commitment and a lot of other people, in fact all of us. And keep in mind the fact that you could fall in love again. You know it's not that hard to do.

Dear John — An Apology and Footnote

Duane Mehl

Charlottesville, Virginia

In the December, 1983, issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* I wrote an article titled "Sex and Sacrament in Contemporary Literature: Incarnation as Method." After seeing the article in print, I felt that I had wronged in substance and tone at least one of the authors I had criticized: John Updike. Later I discovered that various correspondents certainly agreed with me. One critic, very close to Mr. Updike, in fact called my analysis "quarter-baked."

Since I was inclined to agree, I felt that I owed Mr. Updike and his loyal readers at least a *half*baked analysis, and decided to consider Updike's book, *The Coup* (1978), primarily from a theological perspective and leave the literary analysis to others. For a good early review of the book, I heartily recommend George W. Hunt's book, *John Updike and the Three Great Secret Things: Sex, Religion and Art,* published by Eerdmans in 1980.

In *The Coup* we meet a characteristic Updike hero, Colonel Hakim Felix Ellellou, the president of a mythical African kingdom called Kush, previously French, but now striving independently toward self-support as an Islamic-Marxist state. To put matters technically accurate, Updike makes his hero create himself through the act of *writing* in exile after the fact, about himself, his memories, country, about his four wives (three black, one white, all different ethnic groups), and one concubine, about sex, about the United States where he attended college in the '50's, about American black radicalism, about Islam, off and on about Marxism, and even more about current American secularism.

All the while, between memories and musings, Ellellou spins out, somewhat in the manner of Melville's Ishmael, an encyclopedic description of his country and culture (a tremendous feat unto itself within the novel), plus a story of political intrigue, taking place at the sidelines of Ellellou's complex intellectual and emotional adventure. As in *Moby Dick,* the reader can skip the descriptive and philosophical sections and catch only the story, easily identified by means of punctuated dialogue. If he does so, however, he misses the "point" of the book which is not so much the story as the oftenn delirious argument between theism and secularism going on in Ellellou's mind.

Updike readers are familiar with the form from *On the Farm,* and have seen Rev. Thomas Marshfield do something similar while writing in his diary in *A Month of Sundays.* The method is peculiarly "existential," highly reminiscent of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea,* where Roquentin pretty well writes himself out of existence, and illustrative of Camus' determination in *The Rebel* to create himself, or will himself moment by moment into existence, through his art. Saul Bellow has followed the same method, I believe, in such works as *Herzog* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet,* with which *The Coup* might be compared.

Father Hunt believes Updike, with a desire to separate in the writing process reality from mere theological or philosophical imagination, was also influenced by Nabokov's *Lolita.*

Regardless of technical and literary variations, this basic form is, I believe, "necessary" for an intellectual sort of hero who finds himself distracted by feelings of uncertainty over God's existence, but unable to act in a manner which provides him a sensation of identity in God's absence. Ellellou is not the type to drink with comrades at the local cafe, or go lion hunting with friends to make himself feel he exists. So like Rev. Marshfield in *A Month of Sundays,* Ellelou does little except think, or occasionally cohabit, and like Bech he travels a lot. Like these two he is also much of the time impotent. Whatever his deficiencies, he never stops creating astonishingly complex and satisfying sentences of the Latinate variety — sentences which should be sounded out to find the exact point of emphasis, the *mot juste.*

Thus, the form of *The Coup* is an immediate clue to its reason for existence: the intellectual Ellellou finds himself forced to establish his own existence by turning over and over in his own mind the question of God's existence and impact upon culture. He is the classical existential intellectual, stranded in his own head in an alien world, thrown into an environment where he experiences no satisfying sense of what Heidegger called being-in-the-world, since for him "nothing connects with nothing."

As a God of pure will, without attributes, and without feelings about human beings, Allah seems an altogether suitable God for Ellellou's plight — better than the Calvinistic God of Piet Hanama in *Couples.* When it comes to inscrutability and pure unadulterated aloofness, not even a Calvinist or Barthian God can, after all, hold a candle to Allah. In *The Coup* Allah has few attributes, and neither bothersome incarnate form, nor clergy and church, to speak for him. Since, in fact, Updike's Allah has himself no being-in-the-world, his situation roughly corresponds to the condition of Ellellou. Both seem trapped in a form of existence which I suspect a disciple of Heidegger, and perhaps even Ellellou himself, would call "being-toward-death."

All of the impressive detail Updike packs into this novel, as in a *Whole Earth Catalogue,* reveals the need of the hero-writer to establish his existence over against his forthcoming death within a dying traditional culture, jutataposing himself against as many memories in the past and reassuring objects in the present as he can possibly name. Together with so many writers and other artists anxious over a sense of non-being in our century, Ellellou finds that past memories and present objects are better than nothing.

Thus, Ellellou, as Rev. Marshfield and all similar Updike heroes before him, considers God's existence the primary theological problem. Though Updike has identified himself as a Christian, has affirmed the resurrection, and commended the Nicene Creed as pertaining somehow to reality as he perceives it, we see no evidences of the impact of Christology, ecclesiology, or eschatology, or any recent forms of process or liberation theology, upon his work. As a result, even Updike's most "religious" heroes seem distressingly unaware of an entire world of pre- and post-existentialist thought and experience culturally available to them.

To make such a lament is not to detract from Updike's supreme gifts and skills. Indeed, I think he is the most

gifted and skillful of American writers presently alive, on a par with Faulkner, certainly much more intelligent, knowledgeable in the language, and skilled in his craft then Flannery O'Connor, whom I so much admire. However, at the risk of sounding like the proverbial sophomore, I do not believe Updike presently has "anything more to say," and therefore has not for some time created any new characters. He has, I believe, successfully characterized the "existential predicament," and now, almost in the manner of an early Sattrean hero, describes the same paradox of meaningless despair grounded in a loss of divine being again and again without end. Unlike Kierkegaard, Updike has not created a character who in purity of heart chooses to will "the one thing needful" to extricate himself from his predicament and move forward toward liberating forms of action.

Thus, Ellellou, lamenting a vanishing Islam and never extant Marxist state, fails utterly as a leader, and ends with one of his wives in solitary and meaningless exile on the Riviera. He becomes I think, at best an object of pity, mildly interesting as one more alientated hero among a "thousand lost golf balls," but acceptable, I think, only among a dwindling fellowship of "alienated" persons determined to remain luxuriously handicapped by symptoms of a spiritual malaise rife among those who, like Updike and myself, went to college in the 50's.

Now, undoubtedly, Updike creates characters who manage, in the manner of Bech, Marshfield, or Ellellou, to spoof the predicament with an often delightful sense of humor and almost redeeming irony. But we cannot live forever by irony. Witness the cruel dilemma of a Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., seemingly condemned in middle age to write one ironic novel after another about the very same problem: meaningless and random existence in a meaningless and random world.

Now, a writer grown up in the 50's, like anyone else growing up in the 50's, may find he or she has no choice. Everytime I dip into Camus' *The Rebel,* or into Erich Heller's *The Disinherited Mind,* or read "The Waste Land," or see an old Bergman movie, I feel peculiarly soothed. These are "my kind of people," I feel, deep down inside. My brother, grown up in the '60's, likes to call me a "cynic," mired in existential angst, and rather enjoying it half the time.

There is something wonderfully satisfying about saying to your children or to your students in college, "You just don't understand your own predicament. You try to liberate your currently oppressed group, or try to be #1 in health and wealth, but miss the whole point!" or some such self-soothing thing. Misunderstanding Kierkegaard, we may even insist with haughty disdain: "You have despair of the worst sort, since you don't even know you have it!"

The gospel of despair, has, however, grown thin. Whatever the causes, human or divine, hope has come in our own culture to displace previous sensations of existential despair. People of all sorts have found either the means to get along comfortably without a god, or have found God active in the world, the church, culture, and the society they occupy. Despair is out of fashion — because despair is no longer meaningful even to the intellectuals of our society. And though we may find the self-help manuals so characteristic of this mood hopelessly maudlin, we shall, I think, find the theologies of hope, of process, and of liberation tough and truthful, a healthy antidote for sophomore malaise of the existential sort.

The future of theology, I believe, lies not with Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Barth, and Tillich, but with Hegel, Whitehead, Hartshorne, Teilhard, John B. Cobb, Jr., with Moltmann, Gutierrez, James Cone — and perhaps most importantly with C. S. Lewis, whose intensely influential theology of Christian growth within God's developing plan for the world is in part constructed in process terms and models. The future lies with the Apollonians, not the Dionysians.

You might wish to reread, for instance, the last chapter, "New Men," from Lewis' immensely influential *Mere Christianity,* or Gilbert Meilaender's chapter, "The Sweet Poison of the False Infinite," in his definitive story of Lewis, *The Taste for the Other,* to discover again how Lewis incorporated "sanctification" as a process within God's greater plan for the universe.

Meilaender writes that faith "is not central in [Lewis'] understanding of Christianity. Much nearer to the heart for him is the goal of fellowship with God and all creatures, a fellowship which is the culmination of a long process of sanctification." And again, he writes: "Faith as trust is not for Lewis the foundation stone on which to build an exposition of Christian theology. Hence the Christian life is not conceived largely as a turn from consciousness of sin to the proclamation of grace. Instead, it is conceived as a journey, a process of sanctification," in which the entire creation somehow participates. (Gilbert Meilaender, *The Taste for the Other,* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978, pp. 36-7.) Far from rejecting evolution or its implications, Lewis incorporated evolutionary theory into his popular theological and fictional writings.

We cannot say that process thinkers have perfected for consumption a systematic theology satisfying our need for a God who exists — for Descartes' God who vanished a long time ago. The process thinker instead helps us realize that in searching for an isolated and absolute God in the cosmos, we have not only been looking for the wrong god, but thereby thinking the wrong thoughts, and feeling wrong and useless feelings. Academics would tell us we have trapped ourselves within the "Cartesian dilemma" for which there is *no solution.* Neither a wholly other God nor a wholly other ego may exist. If so, continuing pursuit of either is bound to produce within us tremendous frustration, depression, and malaise.

Since I admire Updike's writings so thoroughly, and have at times in my reading relied upon the instincts of his characters as guides for my own existence, I sincerely hope that Updike — and other writers, perhaps younger, but with similar gifts — will develop believable characters who experience the realities of life in process, in ecological interdependence with others and with nature, and thereby find hope for the liberation not only of themselves but of other oppressed peoples.

I realize that some readers will accuse me of trying to remake Updike in the image of others. I have written enough myself, however, to know that even middle aged writers continue to read, to meet new people and to have new experiences that bring about radical change. I hope the same for Updike.

In a future Updike book, I secretly envision a hero enmeshed in a family and social grouping he truly enjoys, and from which he can learn to live with a hopeful eye upon the future — perhaps a theologically inclined Rabbit, hopeful in his old age. Please, no more isolated heroes trapped in their own heads!

It's time for a change, John. *Pace et gaudium.*

So You Want to Buy an Old Testament Commentary

Ralph W. Klein

Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of Old Testament, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Eight years ago *(Currents* 3 [1976] 54-55), I wrote a brief article recommending the best commentaries for each book in the Hebrew Scriptures. The intervening years have seen a never ending stream of new commentaries appear. Some are quite technical or represent narrow interests; some are obviously "better" than others.

I have selected those volumes which I consider best for people engaged in active ministry — the list would be somewhat different if I were only making selections for professional scholars or for people without a seminary education. My initial intention was to select one commentary for each book of the Bible. For certain books the wealth of available commentaries made that principle impractical, and, alas, for some books, no outstanding commentary is yet available.

A list such as this ought not be accepted on blind faith, but I do feel confident that there are no clinkers here. In the near future *Currents* will publish a similar list for the New Testament.

Commentaries on the Old Testament

Genesis

Gibson, John. *Genesis. Volume 1 (chapters 1-11); Volume 2 (chapters 12-50).* The Daily Study Bible. Philadelphia: Westminster. Each Volume, $6.95 (paper).

von Rad, Gerhard. *Genesis.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $15.95.

Vawter, Bruce. *On Genesis.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $13.95.

Westermann, Claus. *Genesis 1-11.* Minneapolis: Augsburg. $29.95. (Volumes 2 and 3 of this mammoth commentary will appear in 1985 and 1986).

Exodus

Childs, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $22.50.

Leviticus

Noth, Martin. *Leviticus.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $15.95.

Wenham, G. J. *The Book of Leviticus.* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $13.95.

Numbers

Noth, Martin. *Numbers.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $13.95.

Deuteronomy

Mayes, A. D. H. *Deuteronomy.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $8.95 (paper).

Joshua

Boling, Robert G. and Wright G. Ernest. *Joshua.* The Anchor Bible 6. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $16.00.

Butler, Trent C. *Joshua.* Word Biblical Commentary 7. Waco, TX: Word Books, $18.95.

Judges

Boling, Robert G. *Judges.* The Anchor Bible 6A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $16.00.

Ruth

Campbell, E. F. Jr. *Ruth.* The Anchor Bible 7. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $14.00.

Fuerst, Wesley J. *Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations.* Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: University Press, $11.95 (paper).

1 Samuel

Klein, Ralph W. *1 Samuel.* Word Biblical Commentary 10. Waco, TX: Word Books, $18.95.

McCarter, P. Kyle. *1 Samuel.* The Anchor Bible 8. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $18.00.

2 Samuel

McCarter, P. Kyle. *II Samuel.* The Anchor Bible 9. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $18.00.

1 and 2 Kings

Gray, John. *I & II Kings.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $27.50.

1 and 2 Chronicles

Williamson, H. G. M. *1 and 2 Chronicles.* The New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $8.95.

Ezra and Nehemiah

Fensham, F. Charles. *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $12.95.

Myers, Jacob M. *Ezra-Nehemiah.* The Anchor Bible 14. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $16.00.

Esther

Fuerst, Wesley J. See under Ruth.

Moore, Carey A. *Esther.* The Anchor Bible 7B. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $14.00.

Job

Pope, Marvin H. *Job.* The Anchor Bible 15. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $18.00.

Psalms

Craigie, Peter C. *Psalms 1-50.* Word Biblical Commentary 19. Waco, TX: Word Books, $18.95.

Allen, Leslie C. *Psalms 101-150.* Word Biblical Commentary 21. Waco, TX: Word Books, $18.95.

Anderson, A. A. *Psalms.* Two volumes. New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $9.95; $8.95.

Proverbs

McKane, William. *Proverbs.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $27.50.

Ecclesiastes

Fuerst, Wesley J. See under Ruth.

Gordis, Robert. *Koheleth, the Man and his World.* New York: Schocken, $10.95.

Song of Solomon

Fuerst, Wesley, J. See under Ruth.

Pope, Marvin H. *Song of Songs.* The Anchor Bible 7C. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $18.00.

Isaiah

Holladay, William L. *Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $6.95. (not a commentary, but a good popular guide to the whole book).

First Isaiah

Clements, R. E. *Isaiah 1-39.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $7.95 (paper).

Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 1-12.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $19.95.

Isaiah 13-39. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $17.95.

Second and Third Isaiah

Clifford, Richard J. *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah.* New York: Paulist, $8.95.

Westermann, Claus. *Isaiah 40-66.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $15.95.

Whybray, R. N. *Isaiah 40-66.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $7.95.

Third Isaiah

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, $8.50.

Jeremiah

Thompson, J. A. *The Book of Jeremiah.* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $22.50.

Lamentations

Hillers, Delbert R. *Lamentations.* Anchor Bible 7A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, $14.00.

Ezekiel

Zimmerli, Walter. *Ezekiel 1, A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, $39.95. *Ezekiel 2, A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, $39.95.

Daniel

Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel.* Chico, CA: Scholars Press, $9.00.

Lacocque, André. *The Book of Daniel.* Atlanta: John Knox, $19.95.

Hosea

Mays, James Luther. *Hosea.* The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $13.95.

Wolff, Hans Walter. *Hosea.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, $22.95.

Joel and Amos

Allen, Leslie C. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah.* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, $13.95.

Wolff, Hans Walter. *Joel and Amos.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, $24.95.

Obadiah

Allen, Leslie C. See under Joel.

Jonah

Allen, Leslie C. See under Joel.

Fretheim, Terence C. *The Message of Jonah.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, $6.50. (Not a commentary, but an excellent study of the book.)

Micah

Allen, Leslie C. See under Joel.

Hillers, Delbert R. *Micah.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, $17.95.

Mays, James Luther. *Micah.* Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, $13.95.

Nahum

Watts, John D. W. *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.* Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: University Press, $9.95. (paper).

Habakkuk

Watts, John D. W. See under Nahum.

Zephaniah

Watts, John D. W. See under Nahum.

Haggai and Zechariah 1-8

Hanson, Paul D. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic.* Philadelphia: Fortress, $14.95, pp. 240-262. (Not a commentary, but an insightful approach to these early post-exilic prophets.)

Zechariah 9-14

Hanson, Paul D. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic.* Philadelphia: Fortress, $14.95, pp. 280-401. (Not a commentary, but the best available study of this early apocalyptic material.)

Malachi

Baldwin, Joyce G. *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentary-Inter-Varsity, $6.95.

Book Reviews



TOWARD A CHRISTIAN POLITICAL ETHICS. By José Míguez Bonino. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. 126 pages. Paper. $5.95.

This book is only a programmatic essay that identifies the questions that must be dealt with in developing a Christian political ethic and provides some helpful and "conservative" answers to some of them. Míguez Bonino describes the second half of the book as nothing more than "a table of contents" that lists topics that will have to be worked out carefully by the people involved over a period of years while the struggle continues.

The author builds into his Christian political ethic the cross of Jesus Christ, the centrality of effective Christian community life, the need to free the oppressors, the reality of suffering and death and the dynamic of Christian love. He affirms the principle of God's preferential option for the poor and argues that the "rights of the poor" ought to be the criterion of good government, rather than the fullest possible preservation of the status quo as the criterion.

In the epilogue he has some wise words to say about the problem of hatred of the oppressor by those who are oppressed. Hate will be present and is a Christian response, he says, but hate must be subordinated to love for the brother and the sister. He quotes Hugo Assmann, "Love frees the revolution for the practice of truth in its cause." One is impressed throughout the book by the author's own patience and love in the face of continued oppression, frustration and the killing of friends.

Herbert T. Mayer
St. Louis, Mo.

AUGSBURG COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT: JAMES, 1 & 2 PETER, JUDE. By R. A. Martin and John H. Elliott. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982. 191 pages. Kivar. $7.50.

As the individual volumes of Augsburg's New Testament commentary series appear, they are quickly establishing this series as a helpful, non-technical, yet solid and reliable tool for Scripture study.

Both by design and limitation of space, these commentaries are neither exhaustive nor novel. They utilize the RSV as the basic Scripture text, and bold printing of individual words and phrases from the RSV affords easy reference back and forth from text to commentary without having to print out the whole text of Scripture. Approximately ⅓ of the page space for each book is given to introductory questions, while the other ⅔ provides comments on the text itself.

Martin puts Luther's (in)famous comments about James into a balanced perspective. He also provides an extended study of 2:14-26 (almost ⅓ of the total textual comments) and the tension between James' and Paul's approaches toward faith/works.

Elliott's commentary on 1 Peter is his fourth book dealing with 1 Peter, which explains in part the particulary rich and incisive treatment. His thinking is crystallized, he has good sensitivity to the flavor of the original, and he is especially adept at seeing the whole of the book in any particular part of it.

Though Elliott handles 2 Peter and Jude separately, his comments refer back and forth and richly illustrate the similarity in thought-world and theology between the two.

This volume, like the series overall, is a fine tool. Some questions inevitably arise: a second century dating for 2 Peter; Elliott's suggestion that Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison in 1 Peter 3:18 actually is part of Christ's ascension. However, the textual comments are fresh, clear, and stimulating. This series would be a good one for a church or personal library.

Henry Rowold
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Chia Yi, Taiwan

LUTHER THE PREACHER. By Fred W. Meuser. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983. 94 pages. Paper $4.50.

This book represents the publication of the C. C. Hein Memorial Lectureship for 1983. For the theme of his lectures, Meuser chose a topic of enormous importance for present and future Luther scholarship. Indeed, as the author points out in his Preface, the study of Luther's preaching represents a major lacuna in the whole field of Luther research. One can only thank him for lifting up this concern for serious reflection. Luther preached frequently, sometimes two or three times a day. The Weimar Edition of Luther's collected works provides texts or transcripts of over 2,300 sermons. Thus, the very weight of Luther's pulpit productivity makes scholarly treatment difficult at best. Added to this is the further problem of the editing and transmission of Luther's sermons, which makes recovery of the authentic Luther problematic.

Meuser identifies some important motifs in Luther's preaching. The idea that through the preaching ministry of the church, God himself speaks in and to the church motivated all of Luther's preaching. The encounter of the Christian with God in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives preaching an almost sacramental character for Luther. Meuser argues this point forcefully and well. His selections from Luther's sermons are also appropriate and instructive.

However, the shortness and the original context of this book are major limitations for scholarly use of these reflections. Important questions are left unexplored, such as just how Luther's preaching actually differed from late medieval preaching, both as to form and content. Meuser seems to continue the old line of argument that sees Luther's preaching as a radical departure from previous preaching. Research into the great late-medieval preachers and biblical interpreters such as Geiler, Biel, Tauler, or Lyra indicates that a process of development in the art of preaching may have culminated in the preaching of the Reformers, but did not originate there.

Even so, as an introduction to this important, understudied area of Luther research, Meuser has done us all a service.

Dennis A. Laskey
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BREAKING BOUNDARIES: Male/female friendship in early Christian communities. By Rosemary Rader. New York: The Paulist Press, 1983. Paper. 177 pages. $6.95.

This book is a useful addition to the literature on the early church. Rader has pulled together about all that can be known about male/female friendships in that period. It would have been helpful if she had offered a more comprehensive definition of Christian friendship along the lines of that which Aristotle, Cicero and other philosophers undertook with respect to pagan friendships. She points out that the phenomenon of male/female friendships was rare in the pagan world and while the evidence of its practice among Christians is very limited, it did exist. She places considerable emphasis on the dynamic of shared martyrological experiences as an explanation of the Christian practice, but it is doubtful if the shared experiences of the martyrs can be shown to have influenced other friendships among the non-martyrs. She underscores the truth that almost all friendships of which we have any knowledge involve celibate women. Her chapter on "spiritual marriages" is an ex-excellent overview of this practice that caused so much anxiety to the leaders of the church.

Herbert T. Mayer

LOVE COMMANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. By Pheme Perkins. New York: Paulist Press, 1982. 130 pages. Paper. $5.95.

What words have guided Christian ethical reflection? In other ages, the key concepts have been "duty" or "virtue" or "station." One of the guiding words for our age has been "love." Pheme Perkins leads her readers on a short excursion through New Testament commands involving love. Her motivating question is quite simple: Is there anything distinctive about the way the New Testament speaks about love? Each of the eleven short chapters, as well as the introduction, includes study questions for reflection, making this book appropriate for a parish adult study group which would like to use the Bible as a tool in discussing Christian ethics.

In the introduction, Perkins notes how early Christians were not too concerned about distinguishing themselves culturally from their society by articulating a unique Christian ethic; Christianity feels quite free to adopt both Old Testament and Hellenistic ethical standards for itself. What is unique — the "critical edge", according to Perkins — is Jesus' and Paul's rejection of ethics as "tell me the rules to get the reward." Christian ethics, instead, must be an open-ended invitation to self-criticism and the possibility of new life under the graciousness of a God who opens the future.

In chapters 1 and 2, Perkins considers the command to love God and neighbor and the command to love enemies in light of Old Testament, intertestamental, and Hellenistic parallels. In both cases, Christians were not framing some new, unique ethic. Rather, common ethical insights were being subsumed under the revelation of the gracious Creator-God shown by Jesus, friend of sinners.

In chapter 3, Perkins paves the way for discussing parables of love in chapters 4 and 5. Christian ethics cannot be reduced to a neo-Marxist critique of false consciousness, nor to an existentialist reduction of mythical categories, nor to a psychological model of human potentiality. The biblical message sees the heart of Christian ethics in the action of God, and parable is metaphorical language calculated to confront the listener with that action of God and the actions which God's rule encourages. These principles are worked out concretely through a discussion of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine Pauline love passages. The discussion of food to idols in 1 Corinthians leads to an investigation of "conscience." Love, rather than conscience, is the key ethical quality for Paul, especially as that love is exercised toward weaker brothers and sisters and toward the non-Christian. Galatians 5 shows how love makes possible an ethic consonant with freedom, an ethic which does not depend on law but rather on Spirit. Chapter 8 is extremely short (four pages) and shows how James 2 is distinctive and yet complementary to Paul's understanding of love as fulfilling the law.

Chapters 9 and 10 return to the theme of love of enemy, comparing texts from Romans and 1 Peter. Love of enemy is understood both as witness to non-Christians and also as part of the Christian's submission to political authority in a world still straining toward eschatological freedom. Perkins has some helpful comments on not overemphasizing submission in the Christian ethic.

Chapter 11 looks at Johannine love texts, from both the gospel and first letter. Johannine dualism between those inside and outside the community creates some interesting shifts. The command to love enemy disappears, while love becomes a category expressing the community's own cohesiveness. Perkins suggests that the hostile world in which the Johannine community found itself is probably responsible for this.

A short Epilogue includes eight helpful conclusions from the study for applying love as an ethical category to modern situations. After finishing this book, the reader may be puzzled why Perkins did not spend at least one chapter to consider the relation between love and marriage in the New Testament — a most curious omission. Perhaps that would have taken us into an area which would have vastly expanded the book. Nevertheless, as it currently stands, the book is a fine popular introduction to New Testament ethical thought.

Ronald W. Roschke
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THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH. By F. Charles Fensham. **The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.** Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982. xv and 288 pages. Cloth. $12.95.

To produce a commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah is to perform a genuine labor of love: the text is difficult (even after the Aramaic is mastered); historical and chronological problems are complex; the era involved has little supplementary material; most important, the religious spirit of these books needs sensitive relating to earlier Yahwism and to later Christianity.

These difficulties make the few commentaries available in English very precious commodities: Fensham's is one of the more thorough and positive of them all. His studies into the text and into names and places are much more detailed than any in English, except perhaps Myer's Anchor Bible commentary. He offers a new, very literal translation, which provides a good study tool, even if literary beauty is sacrificed. Fensham has clearly mastered the secondary literature and maintains an open conversation with other scholars. His introductory section gives a helpful overview of the historical background and theology of Ezra-Nehemiah, plus a full bibliography.

Of course, no commentary can provide everything. Indeed, the strengths of Fensham's study only highlight several weaknesses. One is a tendency to psychologize and idealize Ezra and Nehemiah, often in anachronistic terms, as in his praise for their democratic spirit or their diplomatic and administrative skills. Some of the crucial historical-chronological problems are smoothed over in a deceptively facile way. Finally, the body of the commentary has too little theological sensitivity for the kerygma of the books or their relevance for the Christian faith. For example, how do the drive for "pure religion" and the consequent putting away of foreign wives and children relate to Paul's approach or to the mission proclamation of the church in a pluralistic society?

Weaknesses aside, Fensham has provided the linguistic and historical building blocks for theological reflection and application, which in any case is a personal task.

Henry Rowold

A HISTORY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION. By Stephen A. Schmidt. Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1983. 207 pages. Paper. $14.95.

The Religious Education Association (REA) commissioned Schmidt to write a history of the association commemorating the first seventy-five years of its life. The book has now been published on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the association. Schmidt attempts to trace a "history of ideas" of the association from its beginning to the present. The central idea was that religious education was a public function that could transform a culture. That vision become narrowed in time to the idea of church education.

In order to tell the story of a vision that became more narrowly defined and domesticated, he organizes his book according to the tenures of the general secretaries of the organization. In the first chapter Schmidt describes the context of the birth of the REA. It was an age in which many people viewed science as an effective aid to the understanding of religious transformation and religious education as a transforming agent for all of American society, a society which was destined to portray the fullness of the kingdom of God. Two people who espoused such views were William Rainey Harper and George Albert Coe. Harper, president of the University of Chicago, was the catalyst for the formation of the REA. As Schmidt notes in the second chapter, Harper was concerned that the Sunday School, one of the most widespread settings for religious education, was not fulfilling its promise because of the way in which it isolated religious education from all other education and the lock-step pattern of lesson planning and teaching. Harper called for the formation of a new association which would address those problems as well as be concerned about the education of all of society.

The REA had its beginning in February, 1903, with over four hundred people present, including most of the notable leaders in liberal religious and educational thought. The fledgling organization was off to a good start, but it would have to do without Harper, who died in 1906. George Albert Coe became the theoretical mentor of the association and Henry Cope the general secretary. The membership remained modest, Schmidt notes, because it committed itself to serving the widest possible diversity of persons. This diversity led to a lack of focus in the work of the association which still hampers it today.

When Henry Cope died in 1925 the leadership of the association fell to Joseph Artmore. The REA dedicated itself more and more to modern science and focussed on educational method, behaviorism and character formation. That emphasis moved the association toward humanism. The economic recession of the late twenties and early thirties caused a decline in membership and finances. By 1935 the association could no longer afford a general secretary and it was in debt to the one it had. A handful of faithful members carried on the work of the association, striving to pay off its debts and keep the movement alive. Schmidt's fourth chapter details the low years of the organization from 1935-1952 in which aging liberals gave old responses to new situations.

The rejuvenation of the REA began with the tenure of Herman Wornom (1952-1970). He was most successful in the areas of research into religious behavior and in opening the association to a more ecumenical membership, especially Roman Catholics. However, Wornom's concentration on research in character development, teaching methods and learning theory further domesticated the larger ideal of the transformation of a culture. Still, Wornom steadfastly held to the vision that the REA could be a unifying force in a divided society. He wanted the 1969 convention to the REA to demonstrate their unifying force. Instead, the convention, torn by clashing views on civil rights, ended in confusion. The account ends in 1970 because, as the author notes, it is impossible to gain a historical perspective on events which have happened so recently.

The Schmidt account of the REA has some weaknesses. The paucity of primary resources available from the early days of the association means that the author supplements his story with data from a wide variety of sources. The first weakness leads to a second. Due to the paucity of primary resources about the REA itself, Schmidt resorts to writing about what was going on in three major centers of thought about religious education from 1935-1952 — Chicago, New York and Boston. Thus, a sizeable part of the fourth chapter seems extraneous and can be omitted by the reader without losing the thread of the story. The author could have placed this material in an appendix.

The book serves as a guide to the development of Protestant liberal religious thought and its relation to education. The book should also serve the members of the REA as an occasion for remembering the past, assessing the present and planning the future. It is an opportune time to do so due to the resignation of its most recent general secretary, Boardman Kathan. Will the REA learn from its past, or will it continue along the same path? The next history of the REA, if there is one, will reveal the answer to that question.

Robert Conrad
Christ Seminary-Seminex
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DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY: Interpreting Biblical Texts. By Terence E. Fretheim. Nashville: Abingdon, 1983. 160 pages. Paper. $7.95.

This book deals with the books of Joshua through Kings by offering a commentary on a series of nine well-known passages together with an introduction to the study of these books. Seven of the nine passages are appointed in the new Lutheran lectionary. (Only nine pericopes in that lectionary are from Joshua-Kings!) Four of Fretheim's passages are from the editor of these books (so ingloriously dubbed "Deuteronomic Historian"). The other five come from the earlier traditions

he/they used. Taste in such choice varies. This reviewer wishes for more from the Deuteronomic speeches, especially I Kings 8 or something dealing with the editors' evident concern with the Jerusalem sanctuary.

Fully a quarter of the book is given to a most useful introduction. Fretheim finds the key to interpretation in the first commandment and is concerned with the meaning which the work as a whole had to the exiles. The exile was God's judgment, yet God had not finally rejected Israel and holds out a future to them. The introduction also includes a fine nine-page discussion of historiography and a plea for an integrated approach to interpretation which does not sharply detach faith concerns from historical concerns, nor what it meant in the past from contemporary proclamation.

Fretheim again displays his gift for communicating solid scholarly work and theology in clear English which is readable by layperson and technically trained alike. The commentaries contain much thought-provoking material worth pondering. Such readers will profit: pastors from the choice of pericopes and attention to the task of contemporary proclamation, lay readers from the balanced, wide-ranging studies, and those interested in the technicalities of the Deuteronomic History from his comments on the editor's work.

Carl Graesser
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THEOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, VOLUME 2: THE VARIETY AND UNITY OF THE APOSTOLIC WITNESS TO CHRIST. By Leonhard Goppelt. Translated by John E. Alsup. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982. xx and 348 pages. Cloth. $17.95.

This volume, together with Goppelt's first *(The Ministry of Jesus In Its Theological Significance),* forms the most recent significant (600+ pages) New Testament theology around.

Goppelt divides this volume into three major sections: Primitive Christian Community, Paul (about 120 pages), and Post-Pauline Christianity (1 Peter and Revelation, James and Matthew, Hebrews and Luke, and John), which includes all but the deuterocanonical 2 Peter and Jude.

This diachronic approach has the advantage of allowing the themes and developments of each individual book/tradition to stand out clearly — and Goppelt does a good job of isolating those individualities within the overall New Testament witness. It does leave the disadvantage, however, of ending up with a series of NT theologies rather than *the* theology that the title suggests. Topics are selectively dealt with, so that a topic like baptism or faith can be pursued only with the index. Another way to say this is that the New Testament is dealt with more as a collection than a canon. This perhaps needs another chapter (or volume).

The adjective that best describes this book is "intensive." Its selectivity of topics keeps it from being exhaustive — justification, for instance, rates only a couple of pages. This means that Goppelt's work needs to be used together with other theologies. Yet, those topics dealt with are done intensively. The background of concepts (baptism, gospel, logos) is most helpful. Passages and concepts are juxtaposed in very creative and challenging ways.

Unfortunately, Goppelt died before completing this work. Traces of that unfinished status remain: the tendency of later sections to look more like theological introductions than theologies, and the ponderous, uninviting style (though the first volume suffered from this feature too).

Difficulties aside, this is a significant book. It is creative, intensive, positive, and theological. We stand in the debt of Goppelt's student, Jürgen Roloff, for completing and editing this work.

Henry Rowold

EZEKIEL, 1-20. The Anchor Bible, Vol. 22. By Moshe Greenberg. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983. xv and 388 pages. Cloth. $16.00.

Greenberg, who now teaches in Israel, here publishes a learned and quite original understanding of Ezekiel that surely will rival the massive two-volume commentary on Ezekiel written by W. Zimmerli. In addition to making available comments from the premodern Jewish world (Rashi, Qimhi, etc.) and offering many worthwhile individual interpretations of his own, the author differs primarily from Zimmerli in sticking rigidly to the Masoretic Text and in refusing to distinguish between primary and secondary passages.

Each pericope is treated in six ways: translation, textual annotation, clarifying comments on matters of the lexicon, grammar, relation to immediate context and parallels, and discussion of the pericope's structure and themes.

The translation is literal or one-to-one and gives the English reader as close a proximation of the Hebrew text as possible. Textual criticism is virtually avoided though variants are cited when the MT is intelligible. His regard for the MT arises in part from his observation of how many critical judgments of predecessors have subsequently been overthrown. While many will regard this allegiance to the received text as excessive, it has the advantage of providing explanations for and interpretations of the text we actually have.

Under structure he detects a pattern called "halving," in which a theme A is followed by a related theme B, and then B is followed by a coda mixing themes A and B. The result of this analysis is that much matter deemed inauthentic by critics is found to be organized according to this pattern. Whereas Zimmerli argued that the original oracles of Ezekiel were expanded and reinterpreted by a subsequent school, and whereas he usually tried to reconstruct the original message of Ezekiel, Greenberg assumes that the present book of Ezekiel, even with all its repetitiveness, is the product of art and intelligent design.

Greenberg's innovations are not limited to his textual conservatism. Zimmerli, for example, understood the original call vision (chaps. 1-3) as teaching that Israel's God is active and present in exile, but Greenberg understands it as a private vision vindicating the prophet and proving that right and divine favor were with him, not with the many.

This is not the place to rehearse my abiding admiration and preference for Zimmerli, but we all should welcome this spectacular alternative and learn much from both.

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

PRINCIPLES OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY. By Carl E. Braaten. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. xiii and 144 pages. Paper. $8.95.

In the helpful introduction, Braaten describes the book as the 'here I stand' manifesto of my career as a theologian." He also comments that it represents his personal faith-stance more than any other books that he has written. These comments alone call for careful reading by all who take Lutheran theology seriously.

But the book has another most attractive feature: brevity. In 144 pages of text, Braaten offers clear and developed statements of his own views and useful critiques of most of the views that he questions or rejects.

He announces that his intention is "to revise not only the Christian tradition in general, but also the Lutheran articulation of the gospel in particular, from the standpoint of the contemporary rediscovery of the eschatological horizon of primitive Christianity." This principle he applies consistantly to his analysis of seven principles: canonical, confessional, ecumenical, christocentric, sacramental, law/gospel and the two kingdoms principle.

This book will make its way by virtue of its own intrinsic strength and wisdom into Lutheran classrooms and into the classrooms and studies of all who have a true ecumenical concern for the church's future.

Herbert T. Mayer

DISCOVERING JERUSALEM. By Nahman Avigad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983. 270 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

This book is a model for the writing of a popular, yet authoritative report of a significant archaeological excavation. After Israel captured the West Bank in 1967, she annexed Jerusalem and began the reconstruction of the old Jewish Quarter by establishing the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter. Their work of demolishing irreparably weak buildings led to the creation of open space in the Jewish Quarter, leading the Company to agree to allow excavation in advance of their work. The first opportunity ever to excavate this area emerged — and Nahman Avigad assumed the directorship.

The excavations began in September, 1969, and have continued almost without interruption til the present. The results are spectacular and extend over a long period of occupation. A long-standing debate about the extent of the city in the Iron II period (Divided Kingdom) was resolved by the discovery of a 65 meter long section of an Israelite wall (7 Meters wide and rising 3.3 meters in height in places). The small finds confirm the dating: fertility figurines(!), ceramic typology, ostraka, and seal impressions on storage jar handles date the wall to the 8th or 7th century B.C.E.

Houses of the first century, with impressive remains of stone tables, vessels, etc. give dramatic evidence of the destruction under Titus. Frequent remains of cisterns and rural baths, magnificent mosaic floors (a first century date for polychrome mosaics is unusual), and architectural fragments combine to give an unusual glance into the crafts of first century Jerusalem. It is clear that on the artistic level the Jews of Herodian Jerusalem were strongly influenced by Hellenistic models. (I wish that the author had noted the presence or absence of Terra Sigillata stamps.)

Three impressive finds of the Byzantine era were also made. The Byzantine Cardo Maximus (main north-south street) was traced for almost 200 meters. It was colonnaded on both sides, well drained, and in places fitted out with shops. The Corporation modified some of its construction plans to save this important discovery for restoration. In addition, the foundations of the great New Church of St. Mary (about 545 C.E.) known from Procopius and tentatively identified on the Medeba Map, were also located and measured.

Avigad tells the story well, interjecting details of the frustrations and the excitement of excavation life. The numerous illustrations — 303! — including small finds, are of great value. The pottery pictured on p. 226, for example, seems to firmly anchor wavy combing as belonging to the early Islamic potters. In short, this is a clearly written account of an exciting series of discoveries that extend dramatically our knowledge of Jerusalem and its history. One looks forward to the final, scientific report of this excavation.

Edgar Krentz
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SPIRIT AND MARTYRDOM: A study of the work of the Holy Spirit in contexts of persecution and martyrdom in the New Testament and early Christian literature. By William C. Weinrich. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981. xiv and 320 pages. Typescript. Paper. $12.25.

This book is a "slightly revised version of [the] dissertation which [the author] submitted in 1977" to Professor Bo Reicke at Basel. According to Weinrich his thesis is that "early Christians understood the relation between the Spirit and Christian martyrdom in Christological and ecclesiological terms," thus ranging himself against the thesis of Karl Holl that the martyr was a charismatic person who did his or her thing under the special and solitary impulse of the Spirit.

He examines Old Testament literature, 2 and 4 Maccabees, the Martyrdom of Isaiah, ten New Testament documents, Ignatius of Antioch, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas and Tertullian. His bibliography reveals a thorough canvass of the literature.

Herbert T. Mayer

HEBRÄISCHES UND ARAMÄISCHES LEXIKON ZUM ALTEN TESTAMENT. By Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner. Third edition by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm. Volume III. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983. ix pages and pages 625-1080. Cloth. 210 Dutch guilders.

Despite the enormous increase of inscriptional data bearing on the vocabulary of the Old Testament and hundreds of articles and books devoted to the subject in the 20th century, there is not available a modern Hebrew lexicon in English. The Brown, Driver, and Briggs lexicon, while still excellent, is over seventy years old, and the concise lexicon of William L. Holladay does not contain exhaustive definitions or any references to comparative Semitic data or secondary literature. An earlier edition of the Koehler-Baumgartner lexicon (1953 and 1958), that even included a wooden translation into English, is now out of print.

Serious students of the Hebrew scriptures, therefore, welcome the gradual production of the new Koehler-Baumgartner (Vol. I, 1967; Vol. II, 1974) that has been considerably slowed by the death of Baumgartner in 1970. The present volume begins in the middle of the letter *nun* and ends with the word r'h (= to see).

In addition to including findings from Ugaritic, Akkadian, and other ancient languages, the editors have also studied post-biblical Hebrew in the book of Sirach, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and rabbinic writings. There is hardly an entry without references to other modern secondary literature, including references to the best English commentaries and standard tools like the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* Students with even a rudimentary knowledge of German can therefore gain much by consulting this lexicon.

Naturally, the price (ca. $70 for this volume) will make this dictionary inaccessible to many, but those who want to use the best of modern lexical research in their study of the biblical text really have nowhere else to turn. And given the variety of scripts included in this volume, the price by today's standards is reasonable.

Ralph W. Klein

JOB AND THE SILENCE OF GOD. (CONCILIUM-Religion in the Eighties, 169). Edited by Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristán. English Language Editor Marcus Lefébure. Edinburgh/New York: T. & T. Clark LTD — The Seabury Press, 1983. 89 pages. Paper. $6.95.

The book is a collection of twelve thought-provoking articles written by French, Spanish, German and Canadian scholars, most of whom are teachers in the Roman Catholic tradition.

After an editorial by Duquoc and Floristán the book is organized as follows: Part I — The Situation: Roderick MacKenzie, "The Cultural and Religious Background of the Book of Job"; Philippe Roullaird, "The Figure of Job in the Liturgy: Indignation, Resignation or Silence?" Part II — The Profile of Revolt: Claus Westermann, "The Two Faces of Job"; Franọis Chirpaz, "Ernst Bloch and Job's Rebellion"; Dirk Kinet, "The Ambiguity of the Concepts of God and Satan in the Book of Job." Part III — Hope in another god: Jean Lévêque, "Tradition and Betrayal in the Speeches of the Friends"; Luis Alonso-Schökel, "God's Answer to Job"; Jean-Claude Sagne, "The Cry of Jesus on the Cross." Part IV — The Topicality of Job: Enrique Dussel, "The People of El Salvador: the Communal Sufferings of Job"; Jean Collet, "From Job to Bergmann: Anguish and Challenge"; Marc Bochet, "Job in Literature." Conclusion: Christian Duquoc, "Demonism and the Unexpectedness of God." I cannot imagine anyone writing on Job without a serious personal investment. Those who study the book know that the Book of Job is "dynamite," or, as the editors put it (p. vii): "The Book of Job is a fire-ball. It destroys the neat arrangement devised by some adherents of the religion of Israel to reject painful questions. It disturbs the harmony of biblical teaching about God's plan; it makes room for chance, for the irrational. It refuses to soften what everyone seeks to control, suffering and misfortune."

MacKenzie places the composition of the book in its cultural and historical setting, which according to him fall between 500 and 350 BCE, which was certainly a turbulent time, but he admits: "To attempt

to situate the Book of Job in its proper time and space is an enterprise bordering on the foolhardy."

Roullard examines the various images of Job presented in the liturgy for the dead and in the liturgical year and compares the situation before and after Vatican II, clearly demonstrating the liturgy's hesitation over controversial outbursts of Job.

Westerman tries to put the patient Job of the Prologue and the impatient Job of the Dialogue into perspective by turning to the "complaint" literature in Scripture: "Where some wrong has been done it is right to complain. The innocent sufferer has the right to lodge a complaint. In the Old Testament the complaint before the law and the complaint to God are seen as the same thing addressed to different authorities." He concludes: "The final verdict, that Job has spoken correctly of God, means that Job still clung to the God whom he experienced as his adversary. In turn this implies that God even accepts the despairing words of a sufferer who doubts his justice, if only he will cling to him in this abyss of despair."

Chirpaz leads us in a discussion of the struggle of the Marxist philosopher Bloch with Job and his God. Bloch knows (what many Christians do not) that the Bible is "the most revolutionary of all religious books." Job's effrontery goes beyond that of Prometheus: "Job offers violence to God (and to a greater extent that Prometheus does to Zeus in the Greek myth), but the Lord recognizes the justice of this attitude, because this violence is in the image of that offered by Yahweh of Israel: violence that cannot be separated from tenderness, from trust, and in a word, from home." Only the loyal believer has the right to accuse God of injustice. Job presents an attitude towards God that is unheard of. Only a free being can demonstrate such audacity, daring to ask such forceful questions because he is capable of a hope that is far beyond simple rebellion.

Dussel reminds us that "Job" is not only "incarnate" in Israel and the Jewish people (before and after the Holocaust), but also again and again in a person, or in a whole people or nation. Of the many peoples who must endure the sufferings of Job, Dussel singles out the people of El Salvador. What makes this example particularly horrifying for Americans is the fact that our government is apparently contributing to their suffering. The "comforters" have become the torturers and murderers of "Job." There are many peoples today who have to endure untold suffering and even genocide. The list is almost endless: Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians . . . How long O Lord?

Walter L. Michel
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Briefly Noted

Women and Religion: A Reader for the Clergy. Edited by Regina Coll, C. S. J. (Paulist, $4.95). Among the ten essays is one by LSTC professor Karen Bloomquist, who writes about the ordained woman: embarrassment or gift. The embarrassment comes in ecumenical conversations about mutually-recognized ministries — then women clergy are kept out of sight!

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

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Bloomquist suggests a number of pastoral situations in which women clergy may have easier entree into people's lives than their male colleagues. Clergywomen present an unusual combination of the traditional and the unexpected, akin to the life-transforming dynamic of Pentecost.

Of War and Love. By Dorothee Sölle. (Orbis, $7.95). Sölle calls for explicit action for peace: "We have to become as militant, as nonviolent, and as illegal in our actions as Jesus and his friends were." This is a disorganized collection of poems and short essays addressed originally to a European audience, passionate in their desire for peace, but — alas — probably convincing only to the already converted.

Miracles and the Critical Mind. By Colin Brown. (Eerdmans/Paternoster, $18.95). The author is a staunch believer in miracles. In fact, he is convinced that Christianity without the miracle-working Jesus of the Four Gospels is an impossibility. He deals at length with David Hume's attack on miracles and with the apologies of people like B. B. Warfield and C. S. Lewis. A concluding chapter on the New Testament is much too short for adequate discussion of the issues. Is it really so that the miracles of Jesus provide the key for understanding Jesus and for understanding why the Jewish authorities of his day sought to put him to death?

The Quest for the Kingdom of God. Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall. Edited by H. B. Huffman, F. A. Spina, and A. R. W. Green. (Eisenbrauns, $20). Mendenhall began his teaching at Hamma Divinity School, but has spent the greater part of his career at the University of Michigan. Most famous for his comparison of the biblical covenant with treaties from the ancient Near East, the honoree is also a skilled linguist and decipherer of ancient languages. His interpretation of the Israelite conquest as a kind of peasants' revolt has precipitated fruitful, if widely divergent, investigations into the sociology of early Israel. The twenty-one essays in this Festschrift deal with the tribal league and the early monarchy, covenant and law, prophecy and poetry, archaeology and history, and biblical ideology.

Archaeological Commentary on the Bible. By Gonzalo Báez-Camargo. (Doubleday, $17.95). This widely-acclaimed book was first published in Spanish, and its translation into English reverses the usual direction of intercultural influence. The author cites phrases from the Bible chapter by chapter and then clarifies them by citing ancient Near Eastern texts, the results of excavations of specific sites, and the like. Thirty pages are devoted to Genesis and thirty-two to Kings while Galatians and Ephesians check in with one entry apiece. Much can be gleaned by reading this concise account of the archaeological record.

Ezekiel 2. By Walther Zimmerli (Fortress, $39.95). In this volume, Zimmerli, who died in December, 1983, brings to completion the Hermeneia commentary on Ezekiel. Chapters 25-48 are expounded in some 600 pages and deal with the oracles against foreign nations (chaps. 25-32) and with the hope oracles (chaps. 33-48). This is the place where Ezekiel lays out a theology of God's presence, centered on a new temple located in the midst of an equitably reconstituted Israel. Few prophets excel Ezekiel in stressing the theocentricity of salvation (e.g. in the vision of the dry bones), and our century is not likely to find a commentary that excels Zimmerli's two volume set in depth and overall excellence.

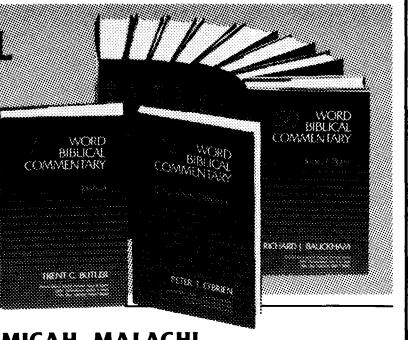
II Maccabees. By Jonathan A. Goldstein. (Doubleday, $18.00). In this new addition (vol. 41A) to the Anchor Bible, Goldstein provides excellent and massive historical and philological comments dealing with this apocryphal book's central themes: God's relationship to the Jews, the holiness of the temple of Jerusalem, the position of the Hasmonaean family and their opponents in God's scheme of history, the value of martyrdom, and the doctrine of resurrection. He argues that the writer aimed his book at those Jews for whom the facts of history seemed to prove that God had not accepted the second temple as holy. II Maccabees, written between 78 and 63 B.C.E. according to Goldstein, was an abridgement of a history written by Jason of Cyrene about 86 B.C.E. Jason, in turn, wrote in opposition to Hasmonaean claims to royal and high priestly legitimacy, particularly as

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they were expressed in I Maccabees, written about 90 B.C.E.

A History of Prophecy in Israel. By Joseph Blenkinsopp. (Westminster, $16.95). Here is the best available textbook for a seminary course on the prophets or for an update on the prophetic movement for lay people or pastors not enrolled in formal courses. Blenkinsopp discusses competently the usual preliminaries (canon, history of research, Near Eastern parallels, and the history of prophecy in Israel) before going on to essays on each of the canonical prophets (for each prophet he provides a bibliography of the most crucial secondary works). The author is in the main stream of scholarship though he does not hesitate to plow his own furrow. Gleanings: He disassociates Hosea and Deuteronomy from the Levites; identifies the servant in Isa. 42 with Jehoiachin, but sees the servant in chaps. 49, 50, and 52-53 as an anonymous prophetic figure who was arrested, imprisoned, and executed; and criticizes those who depict eschatological faith as directly opposed to a community of law and cult.

Growth Through Meditation and Journal-Writing. By Maria Santa-Maria. (Paulist, $7.95). Santa-Maria discusses Jung's notion of the receptive/feminine mode of consciousness and other aspects of contemporary and classical Christian spirituality (including a helpful chart of Teresa's *Interior Castle*). She also offers a way to engage in seven dimensions of spirituality, individually or in a group setting, and through journal exercises. The book is quite basic and covers only one aspect of Jung's thought; the journalling section is influenced by Progoff's models. God is defined as "the ultimate Object of the search for meaning and wholeness." Psychology and religion seem coterminous in this book. Judge for yourself. (Jay C. Rochelle)

Recent Discoveries and the Biblical World. By Raymond E. Brown (Michael Glazier, $4.95). Brown presents a clear, concise summary of the contributions of archaeology to the understanding of the Bible. First he surveys ancient texts discovered in excavations (Ebla, Ugarit, Mari, Nuzi, Amarna, Elephantine, Qumran, Nag Hammadi, etc.) and then moves on to discuss the significance of major excavated sites. In the latter case he clarifies the relationship of excavated remains to the biblical text, including the difficulties raised for OT chronology and religion. The only error I noted was his crediting the excavation of the theater of Caesarea Maritima (and the Pilate inscription) to the Israelis; it was actually dug by an excavation team from Milan, Italy. The text is illustrated with thirteen plans and pictures and includes a helpful bibliography for further reading. (Edgar Krentz)

In Good Conscience: Abortion and Moral Necessity. By David Mall. (Kairos Books, $8.50). Mall is indebted to Piaget and Kohlberg as he applies cognitive development analysis to the abortion question. He shows how the human mind makes moral decisions and how these can be stimulated through effective educational techniques. In short, humans *can* be persuaded to change basic values. The author hopes to make rhetoric more effective for those who oppose abortion; his is a nonreligious argument against it.

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That We May Be Christ's Body in the World

Roger Fjeld

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An inaugural address offers opportunity to reflect on matters one sees as important to the life and mission of the church. Recently I used such an opportunity to address the matter of the models we use to understand the church and its relationship to the world. It is my conviction that we need to underscore the Biblical image of the church as the Body of Christ. It is not the only image, to be sure, but it may be the one most helpful for our day and our tasks.

Protestant churches in America have tended to adopt a congregational self-understanding. We have conceived of ourselves as a gathering of like-minded believers. We have uncritically used language about congregational autonomy and even about congregational sovereignty in describing the way we make decisions and do mission. That model has a democratic ring to it and a structural flexibility that served well on the American frontier. It serves less well today, especially if it is the only image we use.

Congregationalism too easily allows Christians to avoid those tasks they prefer to avoid. It puts a premium on common values and life-styles rather than on the common experience of grace and salvation. At its tragic worst, the congregational model allows people to reinterpret scripture and doctrine to suit their own preferences. It allows people to neglect caring for others in their communities; to look after only their own needs.

For our day some of the needed corrective comes as we learn to understand ourselves as the Body of Christ in and for the world. The church is helped to a better understanding of itself and its tasks when it confronts that Biblical description of itself as Body of Christ and of Christ as alive and active in the world.

There is, if you will, an identity crisis for the church, at least as it exists in the Western world. Congregational or hierarchical, exclusive or inclusive, pious or dogmatic, the church has difficulty grasping what it means to be the Body of Christ. It is easier to talk about and live out the relativities of dogma, polity, liturgy, or life-style, because relativities leave us relatively in control. It is easier, then, to ascribe to God and Scripture what we in fact prefer; to pick and choose what we want to be.

But the Body of Christ does not have the luxury of picking and choosing! We are attached to Christ, called only to be what he has made us and to do only what he has called us to do. We can exercise the freedom to make certain choices as individuals and groups; to worship one way without having to worship every known way; to develop a variety of life-styles; to grasp certain facets of the mission of the church, without needing to do everything. But our freedom is only within the knowledge that we are, individually and corporately, the Body of Christ.

The effectiveness of the church in the years ahead will depend in large measure

on our ability to teach and to learn what it means, that the church is the Body of Christ. We've been shorn, by secularization and by our own ineptness, of the societal props for a religious community. The civil religion of our land becomes steadily more civil and less faithful to the will of God. The traditional sources of institutional church power in America are drying up — immigration, ethnicity, denominational exclusivity — what is left is either to serve, certain of the faithful as enclaves of the past, or to dare to probe deeper into what it means to be the Body of Christ! That probing must be a key task for our churches in the years ahead, so it must be a key task of a seminary of the church. To prepare men and women for ministry in our day, it is essential that we understand, teach, and practice what it means to be the Body of Christ.

A liturgical passage in Contemporary Worship II put the matter especially well. In the midst of the eucharistic prayer there are these words:

> That we who receive the body and blood of Christ may be his body in the world, living according to his example, to bring peace and healing to all people.

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