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CURRENTS in theology and mission

Cabbage Patch Theology

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Cabbage Patch Theology

The task of the church is to relate the gospel to the realities of our world — its hopes, its greed, its ugliness; its families; its earthiness. In that quest we have had theologies of secularism and feminism, of hope and the death of God, of glory and of the cross. Last December's Cabbage Patch doll craze played on the hopes of our children and often revealed the greed of them and their parents; it turned the ugliness of dolls with sucked-in mouths and puffed-out cheeks into beauty in the eyes of childlike beholders who "adopted" the dolls into their own families. What the church needs to do is to replicate the creativity of the doll mongers and to relate the gospel to real down-home folks, like us. This issue of *Currents* is an attempt at such Cabbage Patch Theology.

Half-way through the church year **Peter Kjeseth** runs through the themes of this year's lead gospel (Matthew) and suggests what modern proclaimers might do with them. The kingship of Jesus refers in Matthew to his power for service or suffering, and the Sermon on the Mount calls not so much for ethical heroics, but for giving food and drink to the most needy. Yet such absolute demands are counterbalanced in Matthew by the mystery of God's freedom to be merciful. Discipleship means forsaking all to follow in memory of the one who goes before. Matthew's great and inclusive mission is a summons for the whole community to practice the mad obedience God requires.

Associate Editor **Robert Smith** takes a look at the "Great Commission" to give us a Matthean perspective on Easter. This grace-full essay is best summed up in its own conclusion: "Matthew proclaims Easter as the moment when God exalted the Teacher of the Sermon on the Mount. God has set this one on high together with the words of his teaching, marked by their incomparable grace and by their scarcely fathomable demand. Both that grace and that demand took concrete shape in one who walked on our earth and who now reigns in majesty not at a distance but in the midst of his people."

We are entrusted, **Walter Brueggemann** reminds us, with guiding and accompanying people and institutions *into* the dark discontinuity and *out of* the dark depths into new possibilities. The zero hour breeds a new algebra; publicly processed pain unleashes new social inspiration. Only those who grieve, groan, and sigh over the old city have a chance of discerning the shape of the earthly city to come. This article explores the hermeneutical possibilities of texts from Ezekiel, Exodus, Amos, and the Psalms. Those who groan are able to protest against despair and complacency; they passionately remember *the* story in order not to forfeit all hope. On "the day after" the baptized will be designated to stand and evoke the new algebra, to promise new gifts after genuine relinquishment.

How our lives have changed! **Ruth Bretscher Ressmeyer** takes us down the memory lane of the 30s and 40s when the world was simpler, larger, and more provincial. Her rehearsal of a past generation suggests a need for equally dramatic changes in the church. An enlarged view of the Trinity would point to the suffering God, but also to the God who chose feminine metaphors at times to disclose divine identiy. By capitalizing on the Spirit-inspired hunger of the laity we can help Christians acquire more openness. Divergent expressions of the faith need cherishing as proof positive of the Spirit's activity. She calls for courageous leadership by the church, risking faulty judgments here and there in order to speak out now for justice, mercy, morality and human life.

Travis DuPriest concludes his series on friendship by describing how a friend mourns for a friend with solidarity and allegiance. He informs us that the old custom of handing a flower or a sprig of greenery to those who mourn was designed to represent life and resurrection. Such friendship, incarnate in a bit of thyme or rosemary, has degenerated into baskets of glads and roses that are innocent of Christian proclamation — and often even of warm friendship.

Those parents lucky enough to get the Cabbage Patch dolls last Christmas had to scheme, wait, pray and persevere; nothing less will do in relating the gospel this Lent and Easter to our several patches. Just as computer technology made every doll unique, so what you and I do with the one priceless treasure need only fit perfectly the peculiar cabbages planted by God in our local gardens. Such good news hails not from a cabbage patch, but from an empty limestone tomb in Joseph's lovely garden. If Cabbage Patch Theology needs technical jargon, let it be: Surrexit!

Indeed,
Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Preaching from Matthew in 1983-1984

Peter Kjeseth

Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

To preach from Matthew in 1983-84 (of nearly sixty texts assigned for the Sundays and special festivals of 1983-84, about forty come from Matthew) is in the first place, to participate with Matthew's community in some unfinished business.

Relationship – Judaism

How, for example, do we battle out and define the proper relation between mother Judaism and daughter Christianity? Matthew is convinced that Israel's scriptures foretold the coming of Jesus, as Messiah; seven times in the first four chapters of his gospel Matthew gives meticulous detail on the fulfillment of prophecy of Jesus. Moreover, Jesus is the fulfilment of Torah (5:17) and the commandments of Israel are still valid (5:19). But, finally, the kingdom will be taken away from Israel (21:43) and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.

The kingdom had not arrived as Jesus predicted (10:23 ". . . you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."). But the community needed to be reminded again and again, that the "day" would come suddenly, unexpectedly but irrevocably (concerning day and hour, only the Father knows, 24:36; you do not know the hour, it will come like the flood, 24:44; the master of the wicked servant returns at an unexpected hour, 24:50; the bridegroom comes while the women with the lamps sleep, 25:10; he was gone a "long time" like the master who gave the talents to his servants, 25:19).

Jesus, the awaited Messiah, had been executed as a criminal under the mocking title, king of the Jews. In what sense could he still be proclaimed as king, Messiah, fulfilment of Israel's hope, the possessor of power and authority?

Relationship to Other Christians

Only part of Matthew's unfinished business had to do with Jewish tradition and expectations. He and his communities had to define themselves in relation to other emerging local Christian communities. Not all who belonged to "the way" walked the same path in the same manner. Matthew affirmed Mark's good news about Jesus and reissued Mark's gospel. But he also edited it and departed significantly from it. Some of his additional material came from what we now call "Q", a source which contained many "sayings" of Jesus. Clearly Matthew believed he had to give greater place for Jesus as teacher than Mark had done in his gospel – which contains nothing as intense and concentrated as Matthew's sermon on the mount. Matthew could not tell the story of Jesus, as Mark had done, without any reference to the account of Jesus' birth and beginnings. He had much more to say about Jesus' baptism, his call to mission, than Mark had deemed necessary. Moreover, at a number of significant places, Matthew alone preserves material which

To preach from Matthew is to give serious attention to the issues which were crucial for Matthew and his community.

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otherwise would have been lost to the Christian community. We have every reason to believe that Matthew had special pastoral-theological motivation for presenting his unique material such as a good portion of the sermon on the mount (chs. 5-7), the parable of the workers in the vineyard (20:1-16), the ten young women (25:1-13), the last judgment (25:31-46) and the magnificent closing passage of the gospel (28:16-20).

To preach from Matthew is to give serious attention to the issues and questions which were crucial for Matthew and his community. Some of these issues have had more continuing relevance than others down through the centuries and up to the present day. The most important of these is undoubtedly the issue of how Matthew and Paul can co-exist in the same canon and in the same Christian community.

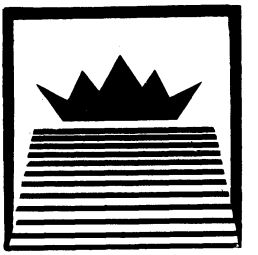
In the December 1983 issue of *Currents,* Benedict Viviano suggested again that at least one of Matthew's battles was with Paul and Pauline Christians whose attitude toward Torah Matthew considered irresponsible (cf. 5:19; *Currents,* Dec. 1983, p. 330). The thesis that Matthew was explicitly responding to, and correcting, the Pauline tradition can not be demonstrated beyond controversy, but neither can we overlook or resolve cheaply the differences between these two traditions of theology and piety. To preach from Matthew, therefore, is to plunge once again into the Paul/Matthew struggle — often painful for Lutherans — which has continued without easy resolution from the earliest beginnings.

To preach from Matthew is, to explore an uneven, dramatic landscape, with towering mountains, intriguing bypaths, puzzling cul-de-sacs and crossroads where the signs appear to point in opposite directions. But the mountain peaks and distinctive landmarks — some of the texts unique to Matthew — stand out distinctively as orientation points in Matthew's landscape. And it is possible to identify major continuing motifs in Matthew's narrative which cut like highways through the tangled terrain.

Five such interlocking themes suggest themselves for finding homiletical paths through Matthew's gospel.

1. Kingship — the issues of power, authority, suffering and service as they are dealt with in Matthew's Christology.

2. Judgment — it is not just that Matthew insists on the inevitablity of judgment; he can picture judgment only on the basis of concrete, lived reality.



3. Grace — for Matthew this notion is determined by God's unfathomable freedom and by the conviction that the Christian community lives from forgiveness.

4. Discipleship — perhaps Matthew's major theme, it speaks of costly, public commitment under the rubric: Follow me for I go before you.

5. Mission — this motif has its definitive expression in the great commission which sums up everything that has gone before and gives the promise, "I am always with you."

The first step, of course, is to seek to understand Matthew in his own context. If we explore the landscape carefully, we will discover deep mines and hidden treasures. But to preach from Matthew in 1983-84 is to be challenged by our age to see new, deeper meanings in the old texts. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God" calls the Christian community to tougher thinking and harder action than was the case before the threat of nuclear annihilation.

The use of the Bible generally — and of Matthew specifically — in situations of poverty and oppression today have changed the nature of interpretation and preaching in our North American situation also. As American Christians we have more profound ties than we often admit to the base communities of Latin America and to the liberation theology which is associated with this most significant movement of Christian renewal in our century. El Salvador and Nicaragua appear daily in the pages of our newspapers. Roman Catholic — and Lutheran — bishops publically challenge U.S. policy in central and South America, in the name of justice and God's will for the human family.

This situation has forced us to see, as never before, that Matthew explicitly addresses questions of economic and political importance. Matthew's gospel is about how one Christian community proposed to live in obedience to God's reign under Jesus' vision of what God wills and enables.

Justice and the reign of God are, therefore, the central issues raised by our contemporary scene. Liberation theology always translates *dikaiosyne,* not as personal righteousness, but as public justice. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for *justice;* they shall be satisfied." "Blessed are those persecuted for *justice's* sake; the reign of God is theirs."

To preach the text of Matthew is to accept the challenge of hearing and seeing new things.

To preach the great themes and texts of Matthew in 1983-84, is to accept the challenge of hearing and seeing and preaching new things.

Kingship

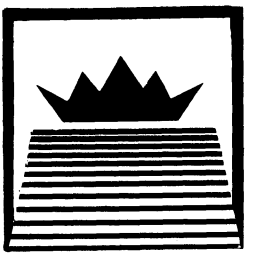
The year opened with First Advent (21:1-11) and the victorious king of Zechariah 9:9 and Israiah 62:11 riding humbly into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass. With this mixed picture the issue of the nature of Jesus' kingly power has been raised for the preaching year. The fourth advent text (1:18-25), with the Emmanuel image from Isaiah 7:14, planted a Christological seed which will grow into the great promise of Matthew 28:20 — ". . . and, lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

The text for the first Sunday after Christmas (2:13-15, 19-23) touched on the kingship motif in the mode of irony, playing Herod and Jesus off against each other. The child that Herod the king attempts unsuccessfully to destroy will be seen finally as the great king who judges the world.

The first Sunday in Lent (4:1-11), the account of Jesus' testing in the wilderness, does not explicitly mention kingship, but the notion of power is central to the text which focuses but does not answer the question of how Jesus will come to kingly power. False paths are rejected, but the path to power which is appropriate for king Jesus is not spelled out. It is clear only that he must depend on God and wait for God's way. Another refutation of false notions of power comes in the text for the fourth Sunday in Lent (20:17-28). The mother of the sons of Zebedee does not understand that, in the Jesus movement, glory involves drinking the cup of suffering. This negative definition becomes clear in vs. 25, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them . . . but it shall not be so among you . . ." In the Jesus movement the opposite is true: the one who serves is greatest.

It is in the text for Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday (27:11-54) that the kingship theme comes to its fullest expression. The governor asks Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," is Jesus' reply (vv. 11-12). Later, in the scene of the praetorium (vv. 27-31), with the mocking battalion of soldiers, the scarlet robe and the crown of thorns, we reach a dramatic climax with the ironic taunt, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Like a musical theme the kingship note is sounded again in the inscription on the cross (vs. 37) and in the mocking of the scribes and elders: "He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross and we will believe in him" (vs. 42). Only at the end of this long text is it finally clear who the real king is. The witnesses are the earthquake, the rending of the temple curtain and a temporary, local resurrection of the dead. It is the centurion who utters the final word: "Truly this was the son of God."

The kingship motif with its notion of power as service and suffering does not appear explicitly in the texts for the



long string of Sundays after Pentecost, except implicitly in such texts as the feeding of the five thousand (14:13-21) and Jesus' stilling of the storm and walking on the water (14:22-33) which are back to back on the 11th and 12th Sundays after Pentecost.

It is at the end of this year of preaching from Matthew, on Christ the King Sunday with the great parable of the last judgment (25:31-46), that the theme of kingly power and authority, combined in this text with the picture of judgment, comes to final statement. The exalted titles of Son of man (vs. 31) and king (vs. 34) are both used of the eschatological judge who decides the fate of each individual. But Matthew does not edit out the more humble image of the shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats. This humble, broken, suffering and serving nature of Jesus' power and kingship is never obscured. The cross of the Palm Sunday text is never forgotten. In it kingship and power find new definition in God's ultimate act of humility and service.

To preach on the kingship motif in Matthew's gospel is to raise the issue of power in our world today, for the individual, the congregation, the church and the nation. Gandhi power and Hitler power are the two great mirror images of power in our century. Is it enough simply to affirm that in every case Gandhi power is the only answer which the Christian community can give? Do not those who seek concrete and proximate justice in this world have to struggle with nuanced answers which correspond to Matthew's multi-dimensional picture of Jesus' kingship?

Judgment

The text for Christ the King Sunday (25:31-46) also brings the judgment theme in Matthew to its climax. In this final scene, the people are judged, not in terms of what they have said or what they have believed but in terms of what they have done. Faith active in service! There is a direct line in Matthew's thought between the sermon on the mount and this parable. But the parable must be allowed to interpret the sermon. The parable teaches us — and this must be Matthew's intent — that the absolute demand of the sermon on the mount asks, finally, not for spiritual heroics, but for the giving of comfort, food, drink, fellowship and clothing to the most needy of God's children.

The judgment note was sounded already in the text for the second Sunday in Advent (3:1-12) with John the baptist's claim that every tree which does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. It appears again in the text for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost (13:24ff). The first impression is of judgment deferred. The good seed and the weeds will grow together until the harvest. But the end does come, irrevocably, and the wheat will be separated from the weeds, just as surely as the sheep from the goats. Consistently throughout the gospel Matthew insists

God is free to be merciful!

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that the time is coming when no more chances will be given. There is a chilling finality to the locking of the door in Matthew's parable of the young women with their lamps waiting for the bridegroom (25:1-13). The judgment is clear and there is no appeal: "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you" (vs. 12). Matthew's consistent dramatization of the judgment picture is seen in his refrain that the condemned will be cast out to weep and gnash their teeth (five times in Matthew: 8:12; 13:40, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30, elsewhere in the N.T. only in Lk. 13:28).

The judgment notion becomes predominant again in the texts for the 20th and 21st Sundays after Pentecost, Matthew's allegory of the wicked husbandmen (21:33-43) and the allegory of the great supper and the guest without a wedding garment (22:1-14). John the Baptist's cry about bearing fruit which we noted in the text for second advent finds echo in the final verse of the parable of the wicked husbandmen: ". . . the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it."

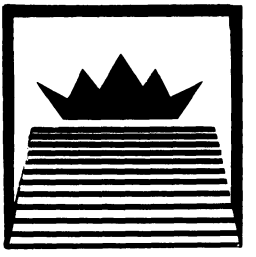
Matthew unrelentingly insists that the way of Jesus' followers is a way of action. He affirms that service under God's reign can and must mean bearing fruit. The tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down.

To preach from Matthew on the theme of judgment is to raise before ourselves an ancient image with which we have considerable difficulty. Were it not for the parable of the last judgment which negates any expectation of super-human heroics, Matthew's texts on judgment would be almost intolerably severe and frightening. In our world where the reality and power of intrenched injustice is so great, a word of judgment appears called for. The one who preaches from Matthew today will want to relate carefully to our own situation Matthew's need to motivate by fear in fearful times along a fearful path.

Grace

Because of Matthew's unswerving insistence on bearing fruit and on concrete action, there is a severity to his gospel which is alarming. Matthew must have sensed this himself. The text assigned for the 18th Sunday after Pentecost (20:1-16), the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, is one of the mountain peaks in Matthew's rich landscape. It towers above other texts and gives orientation to those who preach their way through Matthew. When Matthew placed this parable in his gospel, thus saving it from disappearing with other material of the oral tradition, he provided a point of balance and perspective on all his calls for bearing fruit, working and living out discipleship in terms of concrete action.

The Greek word, *charis,* is not found in Matthew's gospel, but verses 13 and 15 of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard make a powerful statement about grace. When the workers who had struggled all day receive the same wages



as those who had worked only one hour, they grumble. But the master affirms the justice of his action: "Friend, did you not agree with me for a denarius?" No contract has been broken. Strict legality has been served. Something that goes far beyond even-handed legal justice is in operation here: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?"

God is free to be merciful!

One side of the picture is clear. Matthew's Jesus insists that the righteousness (justice!) of Jesus' disciples must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. It must be acted out in concrete human terms. God expects each tree to bear fruit. But finally God is no bookkeeper. Johannes Weiss said about the parable of the workers in the vineyard that it exploded the Jewish doctrine of rewards from within through a dramatic statement about God's freedom and grace. There is an echo here of the Psalmist's vision that mercy and truth have met together, justice and peace have kissed each other. Matthew's references to Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (9:13; 12:7 and indirectly 23:23) are echoes of the note sounded in the parable of the workers in the vineyard.

The text assigned for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost (18:21-35) though not as powerful as the parable of the workers in the vineyard, nevertheless moves in the same direction. Forgiveness is the heart of the life of the community gathered by Jesus. Peter is told to forgive his sinning brother seventy times over (vs. 22). And the parable of the unforgiving servant is a solemn warning against violating the life-giving covenant of foregiveness and grace which along accounts for the existence of the community.

To preach from Matthew about grace is to move away from traditional formulations about "grace alone" and to struggle with the tensions between absolute demand and the mystery of God's freedom to be merciful. God is not a bookkeeper; nor does God sign blank checks of forgiveness for his erring children to fill in with the amount they need. Yet the Emmanuel promise is also the promise of grace. We do not stand alone under the absolute demand. Where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, there is God's presence (18:20). And God is free to be merciful!

Discipleship

Apart from the perspective of God's freedom to be gracious and forgiving, it would be difficult to deal with the texts of discipleship in this year of preaching from Matthew. Already on the third Sunday of Epiphany the theme of costly discipleship was sounded in the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John (4:12-23): "Immediately they left their boat and their *father* and followed him."

Discipleship is life on "the way:" Jesus going before, disciples following. Life on "the way" is costly because it challenges any existing structures which come between those who follow and the one who goes before. When James and John leave

The texts calls us to risk walking the path of discipleship . . . to remember the one who goes before.

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their father we have an early clue to the radical nature of Jesus' call to discipleship. The text for the sixth Sunday after Pentecost (10:34-42) with its startling opener, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword," will deepen and radicalize even further Jesus' insistence that the call to discipleship comes before any human or even familial commitment. This theme is emphasized again in Matthew 12:46-50, where Jesus affirms that "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."

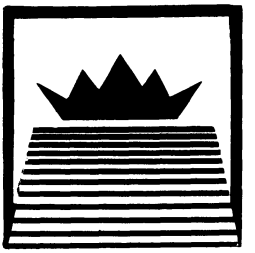
Five of the nine Sundays in Epiphany features texts taken from the sermon on the mount. The cost of following is enunciated at the end of the first text in this series, the text for the 4th Sunday in Epiphany (5:12): "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you . . . falsely on my account." Yet the Epiphany sequence ends with the admonition, "Be not anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself" (8th Sunday of Epiphany: Mt. 6:34). The way of discipleship is the way of faith, one day at a time. Behind the comforting admonition "be not anxious," stands the promise of God's presence, Emmanuel.

Of the two dozen Sundays after Pentecost, twenty-one are assigned from Matthew and one third of these clearly develop Matthew's way of discipleship. The first of these, the text for the third Sunday after Pentecost (9:9-13) begins, as did Epiphany, with the call, "Follow me." Jesus had earlier told his disciples that he would make them fishers of men. Now this text for the third Sunday after Pentecost spells out who the master and his servants will catch: the tax collectors and sinners. It is the sick, not the well, who need the physician. This way of discipleship lives out the words, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice."

Step by step the texts illumine "the way" of discipleship. It begins with God's freedom to be gracious and forgiving and winds its way through Matthew's landscape toward the sinner and the outcast. The way is costly because it traverses and threatens the structures which create outcasts. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword."

The texts call us to risk walking the path of discipleship but especially to remember the one who goes before. "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (10:39 and 16:25). It is the resurrected one who leads the way and, costly though discipleship on "the way" may be, it is the way of life.

Conflict within the community also touches on discipleship and bearing fruit. Matthew's Jesus calls for structures and procedures for resolving difficulties and making the way more smooth. The text for the 16th Sunday after Pentecost (18:15-20) leaves no doubt, again, that confessing sin and seeking forgiveness is at the heart of the life of the community (cf. 18:21-22). But the procedure which Jesus establishes is serious and tough. If reconciliation and forgiveness do not happen between two individuals or in a



small group of believers, disciples are instructed to "tell the church." If this does not work, the instruction continues, let the brother be to you "as a Gentile and a tax collector." The promise "where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them" (vs. 20) is both a great comfort and a statement about the authority which the gathered community possesses for discipline. The mission of the community is serious business. Discipleship involves discipline.

The constant call is for repentance and change. This appears to be the main thrust of the difficult parable of the two sons (21:28-32), the text for the 19th Sunday after Pentecost. One son refused to report for work in the vineyard, but changed his mind and later went. The other son did exactly the opposite. This parable, which is unique to Matthew, is usually interpreted as representing Israel which refuses to repent and the Christian community which has obediently reported for work in the vineyard. This seems to fit with the way that Matthew has laid out the scene: the chief priests and elders are challenging Jesus about the source of his authority (21:23). But the twice-repeated warning that "tax collectors and harlots will go into the kingdom of God before you" (vv. 31-32) would seem to be directed toward anyone who considers the path of discipleship. Regardless of status, the only way to discipleship is the way of repentance and radical change.

Finally the church year draws to a close with the assignment of two texts from a series of three encounters between Jesus and the religious establishment. The text for the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost (22:15-21) contains the famous reply "Render therefore to Caeser the things that are Caeser's, and to God the things that are God's." The reply is not only clever; it invites Matthew's readers to think about who the *real king* is. They know that final allegiance belongs to the one who holds the coin in his hand. The text for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost (22:34-40) sums up the great commandment of the law *and* the path of Christion discipleship as *undivided* love for God and neighbor.

To preach from Matthew about discipleship is to take seriously what Joseph Sittler called the "The Mad Obedience God Requires." He speaks with power about what it means to live under the absolute demand:

> To have to live under the absolute demand is the only way, given the human power of dissimulation and self-deception, to keep life taut with need, open to God's power, under judgment by his justice, indeterminately dependent upon his love, forgiveness, and grace.
>
> To have to stand under God's absolute demand is the only way to keep us open to forms and occasions of obedience that the emerging and unpredictable facts of our involvement in social change constantly present to us for obedience. Even relative obe-

To preach from Matthew is to call the whole community to obedience.

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dience, that is to say, can only sustain itself in the light of the absolute demand.

To preach from Matthew in 1983-84 is to recognize that the "emerging and unpredictable facts of our involvement in social change" are calling us to new levels of obedience and deeper understanding of discipleship.

Mission

Discipleship and mission are two ways of talking about the same thing. In the text for Holy Trinity Sunday (28:16-20), the great themes converge. Jesus claims for himself all *authority* in heaven and on earth. This is the self-authenticating authority of his humble, self-giving, serving *kingship*. It is the authority referred to in the text for the second Sunday after Pentecost (7:15-20, 21-29). The crowds were astonished because he taught them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

The disciples are told to make disciples of all nations. The earlier call to concentrate on the lost sheep of the house of Israel (10:6 and 15:24) has been superceded by a great and inclusive vision of mission.

Everything that Matthew has said about discipleship, about the life and structures of the community, is to be replicated in the mission: "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Costly *discipleship* continues!

And the promise of *grace* — and power — is there in the echo of the Emmanuel text: "and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

To preach from Matthew about mission today is to face the fact that the words of the church are not enough. "Teaching them to *observe* what I have commanded" is to call the whole community to practice the mad obedience which God requires. The reign of God belongs to those who hunger and thirst for justice. God's judgment rests on our deeds, not on our words.

Yet to preach from Matthew about mission today is also to remember the God who is free to be merciful and the Emmanuel who has promised to be with us to the close of the age.

Celebrating Easter in the Matthean Mode

Robert Smith

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At first Matthew seems to have provided what Mark neglected to give us; a happy ending. At least Mark is certainly far more reserved, and his final paragraph (Mark 16:8 is the last line from Mark's own hand) closes with a verse which seems to many to trumpet an uncertain sound. Matthew's Easter narrative seems more like it: earthquake, angel of the Lord (no mere "young man"), ripping off the puny seal, swooning of the guards, Jesus himself appearing to the women, reunion with all the disciples in Galilee, and a final glorious declaration by the Exalted Lord. Jesus' opponents were thrown for a loss and the best they could do was concoct a fiction about his disciples' stealing the body and then bribing the guards to spread the lie (Matt. 28:11-15).

But is Matthew 18 really a happy ending? Does it neatly tie up the varied loose strands of the narrative, solve all riddles, lead our minds easily through the maze of issues, settle all scores, confound all opposition, and simply and neatly record the triumph of Jesus the Great Protagonist? Is Matthew's goal that one read through his gospel, turn the final page, and then close the book with a warm feeling of satisfaction? Matthew 28:1-20 is more unsettling than settling. It is as mighty and majestic as a solitary and overwhelming mountain peak dominating a horizon, stopping mouths. The majesty and the mystery are awesome, probing, disturbing.

This final rendezvous with Jesus lacks the intimacy and the warmth of the meeting with the two disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24). Jesus joined that pair on the downward road, walked with them on the way, dialogued back and forth about hopes and fears, accepted the hospitality of their tribe, broke bread with them. And their hearts burned within them.

Nor does Matthew, like John (20:19-29), record how Jesus wooed faith from a douting disciple, generously offering hands and side to close inspection, gently chiding and coaxing the smoking wick into full flame.

Matthew's prose is lean and hard: no titles are given to the resurrected one, nothing is said of the time of day or the weather, no personal greetings are exchanged, no disciple is singled out by name, no physical description is offered of the appearance or dress or stance of the risen one. Matthew practices an economy bordering on austerity. He simply writes that "Jesus" approached his disciples and uttered 50 words.

It is important to note the thrust of this mere handful of words. This is no last will and testament of a now departed loved one, parcelling out gifts unevenly or organizing the affairs of the community by designating some as leaders and subjecting the rest to their authority. It is especially significant that these half a hundred words constitute neither an intricate argument nor a lapidary statement that the tomb is empty and that he truly lives.

Matthew of course takes the full bodily reality of his resurrection for granted and

Matthew's Gospel ends with a mighty crescendo: all authority, all nations, all commandments, all days.

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has ridiculed the rumor that the tomb was emptied by an act of fraud. But knowing that God has vacated the tomb and raised Jesus to fresh life is the presupposition and not yet the heart of Easter faith for Matthew.

The words of Jesus are the edict of the emperor of heaven and earth. In form and even to a certain extent in content they strangely resemble the edict of Cyrus the Persian permitting and encouraging Jews to return from their Babylonian Captivity to Judah and to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 26:22-23). This imperial proclamation has three parts:

1. Jesus declares the universal reach of his sovereignty:

   All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me — no creature whether visible or invisible is beyond his care, beneath his notice, or past his knowing or reaching.

2. Jesus issues orders:

   Be busy constantly making disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit — by incorporating people of all classes and kinds into the community of its life, and by instructing them to obey all that I as your Teacher have commanded you — initiating people into the way of righteousness as expounded in the Sermon on the Mount and everywhere esle in this Gospel.

3. Jesus provides assurances:

   I AM with you all days to the close of the age — the fact that Jesus is Emmanuel, the presence of God with the fullness of his saving power in our midst (1:21-23), is the beginning and end of all his marching orders.

Four times the word "all" rings out in this final paragraph so that Matthew's Gospel ends with a mighty crescendo: all authority, all nations, all commandments, all days. And yet everything in the edict seems to converge on "making disciples." Jesus' community, founded and grounded on the solid rock, is here summoned to its work. It is hard to say and hard to see that the resurrected one is *not* here calling a few of his people to cross national and geographical boundaries to convert unbelievers to the Christian faith. It is hard to say that the words and deeds of heroic men and women who over the millennia have heard themselves summoned precisely by these words of Jesus to sacrifice ties of family and country, to travel hard miles, to serve unstintingly but joyfully, risking all to utter the name of Jesus where it had never been heard before constitute an incomparable exegesis of this text.

And yet what was immediately in view at the time Matthew's Gospel was composed was a summons not to a future few but to the present all, a summons to be disciples in their present time and space and to make disciples out of all those who come to faith in Jesus. Matthew's Gospel as a whole suggests that the final



summons means that the members of the community are *not* called to display their spiritual gifts so as to garner admiring glances and applause (7:15-23), *nor* to exhibit an organizational genius for setting themselves at the acme of an ecclesiastical pyramid (whether denominational, synodical, parochial or academic — 23:8-10; 20:24-28), *nor* to exercise a kind of spiritual vigilanteeism that would zero in on weeding the field, discarding bad fish, banishing goats (13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 25:31 46; cf. ch. 18). The ultimate summons is to practice and to teach discipleship.

What then is "Easter faith" according to Matthew? It may help to ask another pair of questions. How would Matthew react to the news that the Shroud of Turin is flapping like a banner in a stiff breeze and countless hard headed secularists and pious alike are standing at attention and saluting? How would he respond to the report that an orthodox rabbi has recently published a book announcing his conviction that Jesus was truly raised from the dead? (Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus.* Augsburg, 1983).

Matthew might greet these signs with mild pleasure (that's an 'm' on "mild") and call them promising. He would be particularly happy to dialogue with a rabbi. (Many today see a self-portrait of the evangelist not so much in the tax collector of 9:9 as in the "scribe" or "teacher of the law" of 13:52, who is "discipled" to the kingdom, and who like the honest owner of a large estate pays his bills with coins both new and old). Matthew would perhaps begin the conversation by explaining that in chapter 23 he really had in view *Christian* teachers and leaders of his own generation. He is not the anti-Pharisee he is regularly accused of being. If he is anti-anything, it is anti-hypocrisy, anti-sham, anti-posturing and self-promotion *in the church.*

Matthew is especially concerned with Christian teachers and leaders who know all the right theological formulas (like "Lord, Lord" in 7:21 and 25:44), who love not only the high titles of Jesus but even more high titles for themselves (23:8-10), or who display uncommon power and extraordinary gifts (7:22-23; 24:24). They are altogether impressive, but they lack one thing. Their deeds are more nearly law-less (*anomia*) than law-full, certainly not full to overflowing with the fundamental intention of God, not surpassing and outdistancing the high standard really achieved by many of Jesus' contemporaries (5:17-20).

Matthew's Easter message is that the earth has been shaken by God's shuddering (27:51-53; 28:2), signalling his unwillingness to let Jesus drop forsaken into the tomb and quietly disappear. The splitting of the old eternal rocks means the old with its murderous opposition to God, its peacock piety, its half truths and full lies is cracking up and passing away, and the new world of righteousness is in the process of breaking forth (5:18; 24:34-35).

Matthew's Lord's Prayer, another exquisitely economical masterpiece, offers

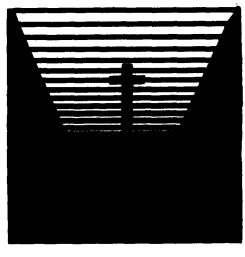
Learning to follow that meek one is celebrating Easter in the Matthean mode.

confirmation of the picture of Matthew's faith, being drawn here. Matthew's version of the prayer (6:8-12) is 19 words longer than Luke's (11:2-4), and still adds up to a mere 57 words. The prayer of Matthew is an explosion of longing for the full realization of God's new creation. What are the signs of its appearing? Comparing the wordings of Matthew and Luke confirms our impressions of the thrust of the great final edict (28:16-20): To the first two petitions, shared by Matthew and Luke, Matthew adds a third. Does it complete the first two, or is the third another way of looking at the first two? Probably the latter.

1. Give us the new world where your reality is overwhelming and your name is adored above all else.
2. a world where your sovereign sway is unimpeded by any competing loyalties or powers,
3. a world where your will is done on earth in human society as angels rush to do your bidding in heaven.

The new creation inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus is inseparable from the doing of the will of God as expounded by Jesus. Another way to put it is to say that Matthew proclaims Easter as the moment when God exalted the Teacher of the Sermon on the Mount. God has set this one on high together with the words of his teaching, marked by their incomparable grace ("Blessed . . .") and by their scarcely fathomable demand ("But I say to you . . ."). Both that grace and that demand took concrete shape in one who walked on our earth and who now reigns in majesty not at a distance but in the midst of his people: "I AM with you" (1:23; 18:20; 28:20).

Coming to him who has come to us, taking his yoke, learning to follow that meek one, discovering his rest (11:28-30) is celebrating Easter in the Matthean mode.



A New Creation — After the Sigh

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This is the second of two lectures given by Professor Brueggemann at a convocation entitled "No Continuing City," held to mark the completion of ten years in St. Louis by Christ Seminary-Seminex. Since the summer of 1983, the ministry of Seminex has continued in three new cities: Austin, Texas; Berkeley, California, and Chicago, Illinois.

I

I begin with *four familiar pairs of images* to move into this second presentation.

a) The historical metaphors for Israel revolve, for the period we are considering, around the themes of *exile and homecoming.*[1] Exile is the geographical, cultural displacement which means to be cut off from all conventional support systems. And homecoming is restoration to the holy city which will be rebuilt. But it is not a continuing city. It is a new city, a rebuilt city, a new Jerusalem rejoicing, wrought out of the administrative finesse of Nehemiah, but mainly wrought out of the poetic imagination of the ones who watched and yearned and hoped.

b) The more universal metaphor for this same experience, now writ large, is *chaos and creation,* or alternatively, the end of creation, new creation, new heaven and new earth. That is why, so soon after the discontinued city, Second Isaiah must speak about new creation and the awareness that God does not make it or will it a chaos (Is. 45:18-19), but it will be an ordered, inhabitable cosmos, wrought precisely out of chaos, we know not how.[2] It is worth noticing that the return to wilderness is a metaphor for the pre-587 prophets (cf. Mic. 3:12), for wilderness is a historical equivalent to chaos.[3] But the end of wilderness and the restoration of created order is an important metaphor after 587 (cf. Is. 55:12-13). The New Testament counterpart is perhaps found in the tradition of Ephesians and Colossians where we think cosmically and not simply historically about the gift of the new creation in Jesus. It is for us an odd metaphor — witness how marginal those epistles tend to be in our theological work.

c) More precisely, our Christological language concerns *death and resurrection,* and so we say with reference to baptism, that we die with Christ, to be raised with Christ (Rom. 6:5). And we are clear that this is not automatic, not cause and effect, not quid pro quo, but strangely, inexplicably, we know and have known new life to be given precisely in the midst of death. And we are amazed.

d) Finally, speaking hermeneutically, many, but none more clearly than Ricoeur, have seen that there must be

[1] The best and most accessible summary of the theme in its various articulations is by Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979). See also Peter Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) and Thomas M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

[2] The theme of creation and chaos also is handled for the same crisis by the Priestly tradition on which see Ralph W. Klein, "The Message of P," *Die Botschaft und die Boten* ed. by Jorg Jeremias and Lothar Perlitt (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) 57-66.

[3] See my paper, "Weariness and Chaos," *CBQ* 34 (1972) 1-38.

The entry into the darkness is dangerous and subversive but utterly urgent.

"scattering" of symbols and support systems and language and creed and all other certitudes, in order that there be a *gathering in new configurations,* that were not dreamed or envisioned while the old ones seems adequate.[4]

Now, in thinking through our ministry for the coming years, I mean to suggest that guiding, enabling and being with people and institutions *into* the dark discontinuity and *out of* the dark depth into new possibility, is what is entrusted to us. And the discontinuity we judge to be real comes at us Christologically, culturally, hermeneutically, experientially. Faithful ministry requires that we not engage in any whitewash of continuity, ideologically, politically, theologically, in order to duck the discontinuity. For that is to try to talk Messiah out of his necessary death (cf. Mark 8:32). And it is to pretend that the city will continue.

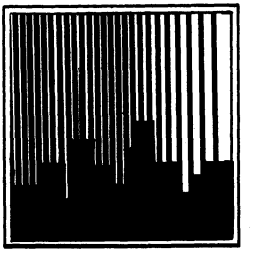
In our last article we considered the ministry of relinquishment which leads into the discontinuity. And the ministerial question is, what must be relinquished to face the life God has given us? Peter speaks for us in imagining, "we have left everything and followed you" (Mark 10:28). And we sing loudly enough, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also." And when I get specific, some kindred can be easily jettisoned, and maybe on a rare day, mortal life, but least of all goods.

So here we think about the yielding involved in there being no continuing city. It is the yielding of:

exile — to be displaced without conventional supports,
chaos — when we sense the world we have known and trusted is becoming unglued,
crucifixion — when the power of evil seems to have its say, and we recognize that even Messiah must die,
scattering — when the symbols systems fail and are exposed as vehicles for phoniness.

These are some of the ways in which the Bible speaks about the continuing city that can no longer continue. The apocalyptic poets are surely right, that the end of the continuing city is never simple, obvious or easy. It is always a pained wrenching, with deep anguish

[4] On "scattering and gathering," see Paul Ricoeur, "Fatherhood: From Phantasm to Symbol," *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974) especially 481-97. Elsewhere he speaks of this process as "re-orientation by disorientation," in "Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 4 (1975) 114. On the way in which Biblical faith breaks and reuses symbols, see Claude Geffre "'Father' as the Proper Name of God," *God as Father?* ed. by Johannes-Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx (Concilium; New York: Seabury Press, 1981) 43-50. Geffre follows the constructs offered by Ricoeur.



and conflict. And the jeopardy of the continuing city causes us to hold on, to refuse to relinquish. I would not guess what the signs of the times are, but I suspect that the nuclear arms race, East and West, is now a desperate refusal to relinquish on the part of these tired giants whose times are come and gone. And this sense of public threat is matched in religion by waves of excessive certitude. That is why the entry into the darkness is dangerous and subversive, resisted by various forms of whitewash, but nonetheless, utterly urgent.

II

Now in this second discussion, I consider the other side of the ministerial task: *to discern in the darkness the shape of the new city God may be giving,* even while others think the darkness is closed. Note well, I say "may," not more than that, for to presume more than that is to deny the reality of dark discontinuity. So we never know. We only presume it on the basis of our memory, a presumption the Bible calls hope. I propose simply that while circumstance invites to prudent hopelessness, it is the task of ministry to invite to concrete hope, an act which in this context is abrasive and subversive.

The programmatic statement I offer for your rumination is from Amos Wilder: "The zero hour breeds a new algebra."[5] What a marvellously spoken line! The "zero hour" is his way of discontinuity: exile/chaos/scattering/crucifixion. The "new algebra" means a whole alternative set of calculations. But it is the word "breed" that is most wondrous, for Wilder wants an organic image of newness wrought by birth (cf. Rom. 8:18-25), not devised, and therefore inscrutable and beyond us. Ministry in the zero hour is to be present to the process of breeding and birthing which will result not only in a new outcome according to the old algebra, but a new mode of calculation. Ministry is to be present at such creation.

To change the image slightly, Emily Dickinson, in a very different way, can say, "After deep pain, a formal feeling comes."[6] That, like Wilder's statement, resonates with our best theology. God does work new life, new form, in the pain. But the poets would ask not if it squares with good theology, but does it square with the way life is lived. And every pastor will answer with astonishment again and again, "Yes, it does not

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[5] Amos Wilder, "A Hard Death," *Poetry* 107 (1965-66) 168-69, quoted by John Dominic Crossan, *A Fragile Craft: The Work of Amos Niven Wilder* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981) 66.

[6] Emily Dickinson, "After Great Pain," *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* ed. by Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960) 162, #341: The concluding line answers the opening:

> After great pain a formal feeling comes . . .
> First — Chill — then Stupor — then the letting go —

I am grateful to Gerald Janzen for this reference.

Publicly processed pain unleashes new social imagination.

always, but very often it does." In more popular form, Granger Westberg[7], from a stance of faith, and Kubler-Ross[8], from a humanist perspective, have understood that grief can yield newness. And perhaps that is why the numb ones in Amos 6 are not grieved, for to grieve to discontinuity would initiate a newly formed Israel. And above all they did not want Israel in new form, for the card stacking in old Israel was just as they wished it.

Much more prosaically than either Wilder or Dickinson, I would say it this way: publicly processed pain unleashes new social imagination. Note well, not just pain, but publicly processed pain. Pain, loss, grief, failure, discontinuity, publicly processed through the arts, liturgy, speech, pain honestly shared, spoken to neighbor, submitted so that it can be heard and received, enables us to move on where there seems no moving on. That of course, is Freud's great insight about talk therapy. Such conversation is public processing of pain too long repressed, which now permits life to come. So we know that now theapeutically. But the ministry task is now the public processing of public pain, the failure of public institutions, the collapse of public value, the banality of public speech, the callousness of what was public compassion.[9] All of these public issues, we know in the most poignant intimate ways. But they are nonetheless public matters. To process such matters publicly is to admit the discontinuity, to face the truth of it, to engage in some harsh, dramatic relinquishment.[10] It is to concede that that world is now really over with and beyond recall. And the world will not be healed lightly (Jer. 8:11), because the hurt is incurable and no one, none of the old allies or lovers, cares at all (Jer. 30:12-14).

III

Now of course I do not say a new thing. I say it to you because:

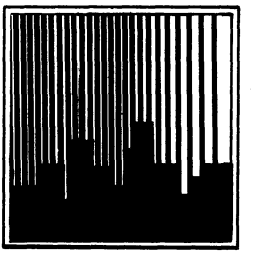
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[7] Granger Westberg, *Good Grief* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962).

[8] Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969). See my correlation of her work with the Psalms in "The Formfulness of Grief," *Interpretation* 31 (1977) 263-75. As I have indicated, Kubler-Ross is not quite able to show the emergence of newness, because she operates in a secular humanist perspective, lacking an agent of address and newness. In that regard, the Psalms and the analysis of Westberg are much more helpful presentations of the process as understood in the covenantal framework of Biblical faith.

[9] Malcolm Warford, *The Necessary Illusion* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976) writes of "compassion fatigue," 37-39.

[10] The theme of relinquishment has been well exposited by Marie Augusta Neale, *A Socio-Theology of Letting Go* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977). However, she confines the matter to economic issues, and this needs to be matched by pastoral process of relinquishment as well. I have suggested, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona: St. Marys Press, 1982) chapter 5, that the Psalms are an important resource for a process of *pastoral* relinquishment which may permit *economic* relinquishment.



a) It is the thing we know best and which is our principal entrustment from God;
b) It is the only door to the future, the only hope of our culture. And that issue must be joined with those who imagine that newness will come from technology, for indeed it will not, for technology always tends to a mode of continuity and a theology of glory. So Hosea understood so well that only the "Valley of Trouble" could be "the door to hope" (Hos. 2:14-15). And one must come in at the door if one is to come in at all. Our society has no other door offered (cf. Matt. 7:13-14).
c) This insight which we may take for granted so that we engage in reductionism, this insight is dangerously subversive and against all the whitewash of continuity that is the governing ideology. And that ideology touches not only nuclear propaganda but pop psychology and too certain orthodoxy of the right and of the left.

So our mandate for ministry is to face the reality of darkness. And the result is that "perhaps" (cf. Amos 5:10) new forms of life, new city may be given. It is not more than "perhaps," and is not a sure thing. But our ministry is to cling to the "perhaps". Consider three texts as articulation of the zero hour that breeds new algebra, and notice the strange appearance of new algebra, for it is new algebra that finally is the task of ministry.

1. The Ezekiel tradition out of 9:4. As you recall, Ezekiel judged that the majority are to be executed without sparing and without pity, because they did not groan and sigh, did not notice and did not grieve. And it happened so. Ezekiel also judged that some who did grieve and notice were to be marked midst the destruction and execution (9:6).

Of course we have no explicit tracing of what happened to the marked ones. They are never named or identified. At the most they are a cipher for Ezekiel of a possible future. Given the canonical presentation of Israel's history in Ezekiel and elsewhere, we dare to say that these marked ones who escaped the execution become the exilic community, the bearers of Judaism, the harbinger of newness and the rebuilders of the city. They were the survivors. But they were more than survivors. They were the ones through whom social imagination was unleashed that made possible new city, new faith in new community.[11]

We do not know why the zero hour bred new algebra. But we may observe that the structure of the book of Ezekiel

[11] It is important that the "good figs" (Jer. 24:4-7) are those in exile. The future of Biblical faith is carried precisely by those who faced the pain. Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) has argued that it is the marginal ones who are the voice of hope in early Judaism.

This community of the mortal ones has the freedom to redescribe social reality.

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bears witness to that inscrutable gift.[12] Chapters 33-37 and 40-48 are a massive statement of newness. One would not have guessed in light of Ezekiel 8-11 and indeed all of 1-24 that the *terminated* city could become the *regenerated* city.

This community of the marked ones (dare we say baptized with water and the spirit?) are the ones who have the freedom and power to redescribe social reality. And that, it seems to me, is the mystery of our faith, that such suffering does produce such hope. Ministry is to be among those who want only to be immune from suffering and turn out to be immune from hope. Hopeless people tend to absolutize the present and are in fact incapable and unwilling to entertain a world other than the one we now have in hand.

But the marked ones! These things are different.

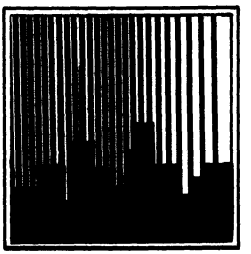
a) They are the ones who dare to speak about and entertain a scenario of the returned glory of Yahweh, when all others thought the glory had completely left the city for good. Indeed, that is why the city does not continue, because the glory has departed. And all our cities of certitude are gone, and precisely for that reason. But here in chapters 43-44, the city begins again:

> As the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (43:5).

b) In Ezek. 34, this marked community of suffering and hope, a minority community, has the imagination to characterize the new shepherd and the restored flock. These were the ones who knew best that the old shepherds, the Davidic kings had failed so miserably, but they found rootage out of which to redescribe a faithful king. (Could it be that the wicked shepherds who eat the sheep (Ezek. 34:2ff) are the same folk in Amos 6:4 who eat lambs from the flock but are not troubled?) But social imagination here has the power for new kingship, new governance, new well-being, new abundant life.

c) In chapter 37, best known to us, the marked minority watched while the whole community became dry bones, lacking power for life. We take this narrative too quickly as an Easter proclamation. But taken on its own terms, the narrative is an incredible envisioning, genuine new algebra, out beyond any human categories. That, it seems to me, is a principal trust of this minority. The first issue is not strategy or procedure or resources, but it is daring vision out beyond the parameters of the known and administered world. And I dare to think that the vision even suggested things to God that God had not thought of until the poet speaks. The vision led to the reality of resurrection, so that in some sense, the new life depends on the hearts and tongues to speak it out beyond the

[12] See Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile*, chapter 4.



domesticated reality and speech we rely on most of the time.

d) And if anyone is tempted to spiritualize this vision of resurrection, we are checked by the vision of 47:13-48:39.[13] It is an anticipation of new land division, when the disenfranchised are to be given back their inalienable turf from which they had been alienated. Isn't it odd that we have kept so closely in touch with chapter 37, but have had this text in 47-48 drop out of the repertoire; no doubt because it is too dangerous and too subversive! But the dream of the text will hold. It is written and it is promised that after exile comes land reform, though then and in every generation some would rather die and some would rather kill than to have land reform. But it is written and it is promised. And it is written and promised through this marked minority which notices such things.

e) Finally, in 48:30-35, there is even a vision of reconstituted Jerusalem, not continuing city, but reconstituted city, wrought by the power of God. And characteristically, the anticipation is both historically realistic and theologically remarkable. Its historical realism is in the concrete description of boundaries, placement of gates and recognition of tribes. But the last word is not political realism. The last word is theology: "The name of the city henceforth shall be, Yahweh is there." What a name for a city! Talk about "no continuing city." Only a new city with a new name, and the name is about God's presence, after the dramatic departure and the long absence. The promise made available to the groaning ones is "real presence." All of the work of implementation remains. But the space and pieces are now available for a genuine alternative. This was not foreseen by the marked ones back in Ezek. 9. There they only groaned. But the groans permitted imagination of a remarkable kind, a kind of imagination not at all controlled by royal ideology. The ones controlled by such ideology perished long ago. And now the hope of the groaners has its dramatic say.

2. In the second text we have considered, Ex. 2:23-25, the whole community of Israel engaged in the groan and cry which the marked ones in Ezek. 9:4 later voiced.[14] Here there is no division in the community of Israel because by definition the community of Israel consists in those who groan against the empire. That text stands as the governing model for Israel. That is how Israel is characteristically to conduct itself in the face of systemic inhumaneness. The groan of Israel initiates the whole history. In that act, Israel noticed, irreversably. As we say, Israel "got in touch with its feelings." Much more, Israel got in touch with its social context and with its odd call. That was an act of freedom

[13] See Walther Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982) 126-29.

[14] On "cry" and "hope" in the text, see J. Severino Croatto, *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981) 18-23.

Suffering produces hope!

against the comprehensive ideology of the state. And what follows in the plague cycle is a progressive dethroning and delegitimating of false power, in which it is shown that the pretensions to authority of Pharoah have no substance, precisely because Pharoah, as contrasted with Yahweh, has no power to give life. And if he has no power to give life, then he will have no glory, for Yahweh will give his glory to no other.[15] And if no glory, then no authority and no reason to be obeyed.

And where does it all lead? Plastaras[16] has shown that the cry of relinquishment in Ex. 2 leads to the doxology and dance of Ex. 15. Suffering does produce hope. But free dance and real praise require liberation which comes only through public entry into pain. Without it, there is only fatigue, despair and numbness, which of course are not qualities of dance and doxology.

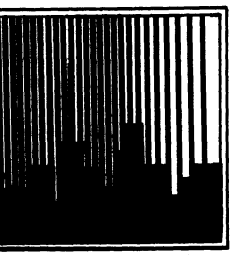
But in the life of the tradition, of course, the move begun in the groan does not end with Miriam's dance. The liberation tradition expresses itself in the extended Sinai tradition and the developing power of Torah. Now these are not exactly Lutheran categories, perhaps closer to Calvin's third use of the law. But I want to try to take it without these traditional theological categories in any case, to see that whatever references are made to law, Moses and his people are clear that Exodus leads to Sinai and to Torah. Or if the categories of Gottwald may be used,[17] liberation leads to the formation of a new community that intends to practice, consolidate and institutionalize the gifts of Exodus. Or to say it this way, the Exodus begun in groan unleashed an enormous social imagination of an alternative kind which generated new community.

The imagination of Hebrew slaves, like all contained and administered people, tends to move in the parameters of the known world. And if such folks are invited to think anew, that thinking tends always to gravitate back to the same models of reality which already have a deep claim upon us. That thinking is circumscribed by dominant ideology. It is a gift and a marvel when a community has enough distance and presence and courage to conclude that the way things are is not the way they could be: even the categories can be broken and rejected. Things could be this alternative way, quite unlike the way it now is. Such a practice of imagining an alternative future can also be understood in terms of the guidance of the spirit. But for now I want to understand it sociologically: imagination requires a break with the dominant ideology that is made only by grief. And I want to put it

[15] The "getting of glory" in Ex. 14:17 is likely closely related to the refusal to share glory in Is. 42:8, 48:11.

[16] James Plastaras, *The God of Exodus* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966) chapter 3.

[17] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, Books, 1979) 102-103, schematizes the relationship of the social function of the Torah of Sinai and the Exodus narrative.



precisely in the Pauline terms which summarizes Israel's move from Exodus to Sinai: "suffering produces hope."

The Torah of Moses, and especially the tradition of Deuteronomy, is to be understood as an act of social imagination that plays out an alternative way of organizing social reality.[18]

In a *slave economy,* either Egyptian or Canaanite, they could image another way to treat slaves:

> You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you; he shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place which he shall choose within one of your towns, where it pleases him best; you shall not oppress him (Deut. 23:15-16).

In a world of *religious technology,* they could imagine another way to receive guidance which rejected the manipulative monopoly of knowledge:

> There shall not be found among you anyone who . . . practices divination, a soothsayer, an auger, a scorcerer, a charmer . . . The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me (Deut. 18:10, 15).

In a world of *power politics,* they knew about rapacious kings and they could imagine another kind of king:

> One from your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. He must not multiply horses for himself, . . . and when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this story, . . . and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life . . . (Deut. 17:15-16, 18-19).

In a world of *blood feuds and endless pursuit of vengeance,* they could imagine a social invention that may curb such unending destruction:

> You shall set aside three cities for you in the land which the Lord God is giving you to possess, so that any manslayer can flee to them (Deut. 19:2-3).

In a context of *exploitative capitalism,* they could think of a way in which some were not permitted to use the money of others, perhaps an early prohibition against excessive "withholding:"

> You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy . . . you shall give him hire on the day he earns it, before the sun goes down . . . lest he cry against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you (Deut. 24:14).

In a world of *exploitative money management,* they could think of an odd and humane way to secure loans:

> When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not go into his house to fetch his pledge.

[18] Refer especially to the acute analysis of Fernando Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981) chapter 1 on the laws of purity and debt cancellation and the tension between the two. The torah of early liberated Israel is a torah of debt cancellation.

The torah is offered as a proposal of how it could be.

> You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge; when the sun goes down, you shall restore to him the pledge that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the Lord your God (Deut. 24:11-13).

In a society perhaps gone crazy with ruthless but *legal punishment,* they could imagine a legal system that set limits on the capacity of the state to punish and humiliate:

> Forty stripes may be given him, but not more; lest if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother shall be degraded in your sight (Deut. 25:3).

And no doubt the supreme act of liberated imagination is the year of Jubilee which runs counter to all conventional economics and land tenure systems in the ancient and modern worlds.[19]

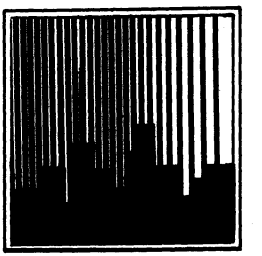
Now this recital of torah spin-offs from Exodus could be continued. You know on the one hand that there are more such offers like this. And you know on the other hand that there are torah techniques that are repressive and not liberating, so it is indeed something of a mixed bag. But the tendency to Deuteronomy is surely in the direction that I have suggested.[20]

One can of course ask if these proposals are practical, if it would work that way. Or one can ask even if they ever acted on these teachings. Indeed, one is regularly asked about the Jubilee year provision, if there is any evidence that it was ever done. But such a question as that bespeaks nothing about Israel, but only our own defensive anxiety. What counts is that in these texts Israel began to notice through its pain that the world does not need to consist in brick quotas without straw, and task masters and rapacious land tenure systems that benefit the managers of the legal system. It does not need to be that way, because that is a social contrivance that has been blessed by the kept clergy, legitimated by the kept legislators, but nonetheless a contrivance. Whether they actually did it or not, Israel noticed and hunched about an alternative.

So the torah is offered as a proposal and a scenario of how it could be. Perhaps more than that. But at least that much. I suggest that in some of its claims and possibilities, the torah teaching is as radical as are the parables of Jesus. They are also acts of imagination of how the world could be alternatively organized

[19] On the Jubilee as a social model, see John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) chapter 3, and Marie Augusta Neale, *op. cit.,* 5-7. But the sense of theological model needs to be kept in close relation to the social realism about land tenure practices. See the brief but helpful summary of Robert B. Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 24-32.

[20] Don C. Benjamin, *Deuteronomy and City Life* (New York: University Press of America, 1983) has proposed that the teaching of Deuteronomy is precisely concerned with *urban* life.



under the metaphor of kingdom. It could be that these torah stipulations could be introduced with the formula, "The kingdom of God is like . . ." The teaching of Deuteronomy is an act of joy in the new possibility of life proposed in torah, a joy fundamentally in conflict with the grief and groan properly belonging to Egyptian reality.

I do not want to overstate the importance of noticing, but I want it not missed either. Isn't it strange how noticing, consciousness raising, is a curious social event when it happens?[21] It does not happen simply by the accumulation of evidence. It happens by a dramatic act of defiance, like Moses killing an Egyptian or Rosa Parks refusing to move to the bank of the bus. It happens by a bold act of poetic *hutzpah,* when there is a tongue given among us who will speak it out just right. And I can think of no more dramatic example of noticing than what has happened to so many of us in a decade about sexism and sexist language. It does not mean we have now got it all worked through. But we have noticed. And once we have noticed, there is no turning back until things are set right. The torah of Israel is the probing and exploration toward setting things right once the notice has been taken in the slave camps of Egypt.

3. In the text of Amos 6:4-7, we may expect the evidence to turn out negatively, precisely because they refused to grieve and groan. Amos 6:7 is not quite as harsh as Ezek.9. But the texts move in the same direction. Amos leads to exile. Ezekiel leads to execution. Both lead to the complete forfeiture of imaginative freedom. Ungrieved and ungroaned life does not notice, leads to a dead end of hopelessness.

In the tradition of Amos, perhaps it is only the person of Amos (so far as we know) who enters into the grief invited in Ezek. 9:4. But he certainly did enter into the grief. This is evident in the "woe oracles" themselves which are an announcement of trouble if not death. He is the one who sees first and most clearly that an end must come (8:2). And he is the one who gives for hopeless Jacob in his poignant intercession: How can Jacob stand? He is so small (7:2, 5)![22] Amos, against his contemporaries, is like the marked ones in Ezekiel. He does notice. And he articulates the incongruity between professed value and actual practice.

Now I would not want to press this easily into a scheme. And there are all sorts of problems in handling the Amos tradition wholistically.[23] And no passage is more suspect critically than is 9:11-15. But having said all of that, as we now have it, the grieved, vexed words of Amos end with an act of hope, of exotic social imagination. What is given as the

[21] See Croatto, *op. cit.,* 43-47.

[22] Notice also his pathos-filled lament of death in 5:2.

[23] See the presentation of Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) 399-410.

It is all promised on the notion that the discontinued city will have a time of favor.

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outcome of the tradition is a receiving of paradise in which creation is permitted to function again and the institutions of Israel (David) are rehabilitated. Childs presents this canonical outcome of the book as an assertion of God's governance of history.

But what I want to stress is that it is precisely this tradition of harsh judgment which is able to anticipate and imagine. Without the judgment and the grief, one could guess that Israel is locked to a social givenness. And policy is reduced to a holding technique. But with genuine relinquishment and honest grief, new gifts are indeed given, even though we know not how or why.

4. Our fourth and final text, Ps. 102, is clearly a complaint. Unfortunately it is not nicely symmetrical, so that one may propose a simple structural analysis. Rather, the motifs that concern us are all interwoven. There is a groaning, a despairing of life. It is deep and candid and knowing.

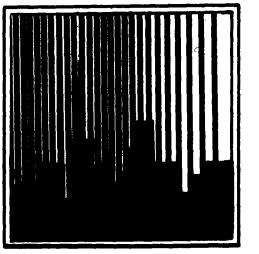
But the course of the Psalm shows this: that such a voice toward Yahweh breaks life open beyond the hurt and immobilization. As is characteristic of Israel's complaint Psalms, there is newness articulated. It offers no very complete sociological practice of the new age. But it hints.

a) Clearly in its complaints, this speaker, like Israel generally, has learned there is still one to address. The zero hour, Israel learns in pain, has not nullified God or God's availability. Unlike the foundations of the earth, Yahweh endures (v. 26), world without end (v. 27).

b) The hope in this text is that Zion will be rebuilt. That is, the terminated city will begin again.

> v. 13 Thou wilt arise and have pity on *Zion;* it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come.
>
> v.16 For the Lord will build up *Zion,* he will appear in his glory (after the glory has departed).
>
> v. 17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their supplication.
>
> v. 21 that men may declare in *Zion* the name of the Lord and in *Jerusalem* his praise, when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the Lord.

So there is indeed exile-ending speech, the affirmation that one will not be forever exiled and hopeless. And the focus of all future hope is that the discontinued city will again be the location of Yahweh's restorative activity. The discontinued city is here anticipated as the place of God's pity, as the place of God's glory, as the place where prayers are given and heard, as the place where all the nations come together in praise. The city has been a crater, a forest, an empty, failed symbol. It is not the voice



of the hymn or the doxology, but the voice of the complaint that can generate such a hope.

c) The Zion restoration will not only be well-being, though it will be at least that. In v. 15, 22, it is clear that the nations will give allegiance. The Psalm seems to appeal to the old vision of the procession of the nations. So there is a largeness of scope. There may also be a kind of triumphalism. In any case, there is a strong move past any defeatism.[24] This is an act of profound hope, a hope not confined to the needs and horizons of Judah.

d) Perhaps most important, this voice which had been so despairing is now able to affirm that there will be a new generation:

> v. 18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord.
>
> v. 24 "O my God, I say, "take me not hence in the midst of my days, thou whose years endure throughout all generations!"
>
> v. 28 The children of thy servant shall dwell secure; their posterity shall be established before thee.

That is extraordinary speech for one who had groaned in such despair. By the time the Psalm ends, and precisely through the groan, the voice is turned to hope, able to see and believe that this is not the final closure to the dream, that there will be more after us. History is open. Gifts are to be given. This current situation is not a permanent fate, but is a situation out of which God will work a newness. One can then imagine that this speaker goes on to think about the new shape and is keeping the narrative alive for the generation yet to come.

We are close here to the distinctive element in Jewish hope, a hope that we may recover in face of the discontinued city. Gerstenberger has seen that even its laments are acts of hope for Israel. So all the grievers and groaners (cf. Ex. 2:23-25, Amos 6:4-7, Ezek. 9:4) all of these are in fact statements of hope. And it is the ones who do not grieve and groan who are the hopeless ones, who do not believe God will work a newness. In Israel it is precisely the act of faithful, believing groan which permits one to anticipate that there is a coming generation, a coming time of praise, a season of glory to come again. And it is all promised on the notion that the discontinued city will have a time of favor, a time appointed for newness (Ps. 102:13).

IV

Now the point I mean to make is that in the very embrace of the zero hour, there is bred in Israel a new algebra. It should not be slotted as "eschatology," but as a liberated, dramatic, rhetorical,

[24] Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen II* (Neukircher-Vluyn: Neukircher Verlag, 1961) 697, observes: "Er tröstet sich und die Hörer seines Gebetes nicht mit vergangenen, sondern mit zukünftigen Gottestaten."

People who genuinely suffer do not suffer from amnesia.

liturgical construction of a new age that despair and oppression cannot halt. These four texts, all of which are deeply placed in the grief of the zero hour of exile, feature remarkable acts of social imagination:

a) Exek. 9:4 leads to restored glory, new shepherd, new land, new city, whose name is "Yahweh is there."

b) Ex. 2:23-25 leads to the dance of Miriam, and evokes visions of a just, egalitarian society in which debts are cancelled and land restored.

c) Amos 6:4-7 leads, for this anguished voice of protest, to a new, paradise of good land and restored king.

d) Ps. 102 which articulates the lost city, leads to a restored Zion with joyous expectation for the next generation of children and the coming of the nations.

None of these is program implementation. All of them lack the specificity and realism of the planning process. But they are voice of social imagination. That social imagination is unleased precisely through grief, groan and sigh. It has been bred precisely in the zero hour which has been embraced and not denied, given speech and not censored. Ministry has to do with being present in that strange breeding ground and not being frightened at the new algebra.

Now I ask myself: does this analysis really cover over the reality? Is this really a new city after a discontinued city? Or is this rhetoric for a city that has indeed all the time in fact continued, albeit in hidden and surreptitious ways? Is it really the case that the city (like a Sunday school) cannot be killed even if one try? Is it really the case that the city has been there all the time, only denied for purposes of dramatic movement? Peter Ackroyd has argued that in the face of discontinuity, the tradition has powerful ways to assert continuity.[25]

Well, I think not. I think the caesura in these traditions, and in the world, is real. I think the new city of Ezekiel is indeed discontinuous from the city of abomination, I think the new community of Deuteronomy is discontinuous from the city of Egypt. And I do not think the new one could have been uttered, evoked or formed without a real break. But if there is discontinuity, what is it that causes this startling and concrete evocation? What is it in the zero hour that does the breeding of new social possibility? At the outset, we must say we do not know. That is hidden in God's way of working. But we can identify two factors at work in the null point.

First, these poets of the new algebra in the zero hour are *passionate rememberers.* The zero hour is not empty space. The stories live there. They are stories in their full, raw narrative power, not polished into creed or program. There is remembering. People who genuinely suffer do not suffer from amnesia.

[25] Peter R. Ackroyd, "Continuity and Discontinuity: Rehabilitation and Authentication," *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* ed. by Douglas A. Knight (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) 215-34.

Ezekiel's plan for new land, new city, new temple surely is governed by the Joshua-David-Solomon realities of the past.

Deuteronomy's hope for a new community is rooted, oddly, in the Abraham promise, as well as in the Moses vision.

Amos' new vision is rooted in oldest curses now turned to blessing. Thus, the wondrous promise of 9:14 is a reversal of the futility curse of 5:11, which in turn derives from old traditions. And no doubt the Amos future here presented is rooted in the dreams around David.[26]

Ps. 102, for all its displacement, is still spoken by one who does understand the God to whom prayer has long been made in this community.

The discontinuation of the *city* does not discontinue the *story*. That is a most important matter for ministry. The urban-technological ideology of our time wants to continue the city, even if it means discontinuing the story, because the story is too abrasive, too subversive, too scandalously concrete. And we may be set for a time when we must choose between the city and the story.[27] The royal consciousness will choose the city we control over the story which savages us, every time. But the ministry of the church holds steady to this affrontive story, even if it contains an assault on the city. The ministry in a time when the city is discontinued must hold with toughness to the story, not in order to be traditional and to have rootage, but in order that we not forfeit the abrasion which is our hope. And we are in process of discovering how hostile our precise story is to the city which stands under judgment.[28]

The stories to be remembered after the city has been terminated, are stories told "against the grain." Ours is a season not hospitable to stories. For it seems like the stories have failed. The opponents of Ezekiel preferred to prop up the city, even though it had died. But just when the stories seem to have failed, just then they are offered as a vocation when all else has failed. The stories are a way into the nullity of the null point. But they are also a protest against that nullity. They do not sustain the old city, but they protest. And they refuse to let the community settle easily into the void. They keep alive the memory that things did not have to turn out so, as the *groaners protested against complacency,* so now the *rememberers protest against despair.* The memory serves to keep the seemingly dead present open for surprising gifts to be given.

Second, the other factor at work in the zero hour [29] is precisely the power of suffering. I do not romanticize or turn suffering into a virtue. But that is in fact what happened. No doubt physical

[26] See the proposal of Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) 266-70.

[27] It is worth considering the positive valuing of the city as "absolute" value which leads to the loss of story which always seeks to undermines such absoluteness. See Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). It may be that exile from the technological city permits the recovery of narrative that has been lost in our passion for the absoluteness of modernity.

[28] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) has provided a remarkably suggestive study of how story works against system, and how story provides the freedom and energy for survival.

[29] It is worth noticing the commonality of symbols used by Wilder and Zimmerli in the works cited, even though they write in very different modes and intend to address very different issues. The commonality indicates how Israel's exile is or could be paradigmatic for every such social displacement. Note that Ricoeur, "Fatherhood," 487, also speaks of "the zero degree of the figure," which brings his understanding of symbolization into close correspondence with Wilder's statement and Zimmerli's historical analysis.

deprivation, but more than that, a loss of focus, a season of melancholy, an experience of emptiness and impotence came upon Israel. That is something not very explicit in most of the text, but it is there. It is there in the assaults of Jeremiah, in the book of Lamentations, in the silence of Ezekiel, in the laments quoted by Second Isaiah, and between the lines. It is an embrace of reality without cover-up, seeing things as they are, when the glory has departed, when the regime tries to deny the trouble, when the power of self-indulgence runs wild, when there is failure of nerve about the next generation. All of that belongs to the suffering of Israel at the null point when the city has been terminated.

But entry into that suffering is not flat and fixed. It turns out to be the place of movement and dynamic, of presence and of gift. We do not understand it, but it is the miracle of our faith. The null point turns out to be the breeding ground. The memory meets the pain and goes through it. And then comes a nervy imagination, unencumbered, so little to lose, so buoyant over possibility. It is given precisely in the zero hour, a freedom from the past and a ready embrace of a newness not yet given and never explained. That newness comes first — not in disciplined theory or in careful analysis. It is evoked by poets, whose words authorize and insist upon realistic planning.

So be dazzled that the groaning slaves at Exodus should sponsor the torah of Deuteronomy.

Be amazed that the Amos who is grieved over the ruin is the one who speaks about the restoration.

Be stunned that this same Ezekiel who grows dumb over the polluted temple is the one who dreams of new shepherd, new land, new city.

Be grateful that the Psalmist who is chagrined over the temple, looks to the praise of the nations and the well-being of the next generation.

All this is given to the ones who do not shy away, precisely in the null point.

V

And that is where I would center our analysis of ministry in time to come. I tried to say in the February issue of *Currents* that ministry guides folks into the reality of the zero hour. But in the zero hour, the ministry is mid-wife of the birthing pains, even supervisor of the breeding process, to watch over, sponsor, administer, legitimate, welcome, teach the new algebra which at first seems like such funny numbers. But the new algebra is always such funny numbers, the throng who comes to the banquet when the effete did not answer, the mass of blind and maimed and poor who are welcomed at the gate of the kingdom, the seventy who went down into Egypt and there became great and mighty and populous. The new numbers of the kingdom do not fit our statistics which belong to the old age.

Note the argument. I am not urging a new ethic, but a fresh imagination, for imagination will have to proceed new obedience. The poets are always out front of the technicians. And ministry must take care that it does not engage in a technical activity, but keeps focused on the new algebra. This takes some doing because it requires very careful attention. Or change the image. Speak not as a scribe, which means a care-taker for the known world, but as one with authority, to move well out beyond the known world into a new world.[30] Thus, the task

[30] On scribal wisdom as a means of control, even in exile, see George Mendenhall, "The Shady Side of Wisdom; the Date and Purpose of Genesis 3," *A Light Unto My Path* ed. by Howard N. Bream, Ralph D. Heim, Carey A. Moore (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974) 319-34.

of ministry is to evoke a new algebra, to nourish and legitimate new social imagination, to keep inviting the community to move into and beyond the point of pain, to see what futures are offered there, to move beyond the ideology that holds us passive and docile in its partisan grip.

That is what all of these narratives are doing:

Exodus to a new Israel in Canaan;
Amos to a restored creation under David;
Ezekiel to a restored Jerusalem where Yahweh dwells;
Ps. 102 to a restored Zion for a new generation.

Nobody doubts that policy information and strategic implementation are important. But there will be no humane policy formation and no transformative strategy implementation unless there is a new algebra, a new imagination of what is possible, what is promised, what is hoped for, what is worth holding for in the public arena. The new city, the one given after the terminated, dismantled city, is not simply a new assembling of bricks and steel. It is, first of all, a dream, a poem, a conjuring of words that brings to be what was not, until it was spoken into newness. The new city, the discontinuous city will be a new creation — fresh from the word.

Now of course, it is a long step from the grim, driven, frantic, docile, fatigued, anxious people with whom we minister — and who we are — to the kind of voices of imagination we are considering. And we might doubt about how folks like that — like us — could be folks toward newness. But we believe, as did Ezekiel (35:26-27), that folks like that — like us — can be changed with a new spirit (which means new power), new heart (which means among other things, the capacity for alternative imagination). That change comes about as it did for Israel in the sixth century, through faithful shepherding at the zero hour.

The agenda for such new imagination is of course well known. And we may state it around the theme of the *new city* displacing the *city discontinued:*

1. Concerning public policy generally, the *formation of public institutions,* such as courts, schools, hospitals, which are promised, those that displace the schools which lock people into class, courts which serve according to connection, hospitals which become brokers of accessability to the goodies. Out of the zero hour the people around these texts know other public institutions are possible.[31] So Israel imagines:

> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me . . . to bring good tidings to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives . . . to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor . . . to comfort all who mourn (Is. 61:1-2).

The text is about transformed institutions.

2. Concerning *war and peace* policy, the poets authorize a policy which does not require the city to be an armed camp of fear and greed, with exploitative taxes, but imagines a way of ordering life-resources so that a policy of fear and coveting is not required in order to be safe. So Israel imagines:

> They shall beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his vine and his fig tree,

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[31] On possibility as a public matter, see my discussion, "'Impossibility' and Epistemology in the Faith Tradition of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:1-15)," ZAW 94 (1982) 615-34.

and none shall make them afraid (Mic. 4:3-4).[32]

3. Concerning the *formation of human identity,* the poets know that our tired self-identities should be displaced by persons valued in the community, that our restless striving for place be replaced by a life of unthreatened and undoubted gift, persons through whom promises are being kept, which lets life be just, whole and abundant. So Israel imagines:

> Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; he who has no money, come, buy and eat!
> Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness (Is. 55:1-12).

4. Concerning the placement of *the church in such a city,* a church no longer the tool of ideology, no longer ally of *status quo,* no longer agent of "whitewash", but servant filled with wind, entry of justice in the world, regarding the weak and marginal as the first-fruits of the new age, Israel imagines:

> . . . a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.
> He will not fail or be discouraged, till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his torah (Is. 42:3-4).

New categories, new agendas, inviting ministry out of the posture of holding action in which we tend to get caught. Now of course, not many of us have access to the policy makers. Not many of us will be the new Nehemiah who rebuilds the city of mortar and walls. But the new city will not come by grand stategy. It will come in concrete actions powered by dream, so that the new city appears here and there as a possibility that stands in awful judgment on the old city death-bound.

I dare to talk about these things for two reasons in this context: First, the authority for such statements comes proximately out of this exilic community that is Christ Seminary. These colleagues (and those of you who have gathered around them) have learned in the most difficult and most exquisite ways that new algebra does strangely appear in the darkness. So what I have tried to do is exegete and extrapolate from this faithful history worked among us. I hope I have done that faithfully.

Second, I dare to say these things because I share with you this calling of ministry rooted primarily in baptism and not in ordination. But insofar as ordination specifies, my urging is that the ministry is not trivial or marginal to the world in which we live. It is a crucial calling, because no one else in our society is designated to stand precisely in the zero hour and evoke the new algebra. The promise through this ministry is new, reconstituted Jerusalem — next year. But the cost of the city sounds like this:

> The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary . . . The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; He who vindicates me is near (Is. 50:4-7).

The deep sigh that moves in that poem makes a new creation visible.

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[32] See my discussion, "Vine and Fig Tree A Case Study in Imagination and Criticism," CBQ 43 (1981) 188-204.

Toward the Twenty-first Century Church

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The world has changed vastly since World War II. It is difficult for my grandchildren — or even my children — to comprehend the earlier America which formed my generation. The making-do, hand-to-mouth existence of depression economy, before charge-plates and indulge-yourself affluence, is foreign to those not forever programmed by experiencing those lean years. Though we were casually alerted in the thirties at Chicago's "Century of Progress" and the New York World's Fair to the coming population explosion, to a growing shortage of natural resources, to yet-unimagined medical miracles, synthetics, electronic marvels, and new vistas of knowledge which would affect the future, the world of my youth was simpler, larger, more provincial, one to which no one can return.

Radio — as recent an innovation as around 1920 — brought us the pleasures of Little Orphan Annie, Jack Armstrong, Amos n' Andy, the Hit Parade and the Big Bands. We played Monopoly but not Scrabble, enjoyed Burma Shave's roadside limericks, the first chocolate-chip cookies and the first zippers. The original nylon stockings — seamed, of course — lasted almost forever in days before built-in product breakdown and obsolescence; there was pride in seeing how long a car or refrigerator could be kept running. Black-and white movies offered newsreels, cartoons, coming attractions and double-features for a quarter, with nickel candybars. Only Buck Rogers invaded our space fantasies, and on October 30, 1938 Orson Welles' simulated broadcast of H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" terrified a nation. When we didn't walk somewhere, we usually peddled second-hand, no-speed bikes with balloon tires. Neighborhood kids organized their own sports and games, adventure books occupied our solitude, and the memories are still warm.

Churches found meaning and mission in ministering to physically deprived, spiritually downcast, financially immobilized and hungry people. Instant gratification was not a sermon topic, nor did we hear much about materialism. We could still enjoy nature — our senses were not on overload from constant bombarding by artificial stimuli, product glut or the multiplication of trivia. (When I took a nursery school class to a nature "treasure hunt" recently, they became excited only as we passed the supermarket.) Then, one Sunday afternoon, as we washed dishes in St. Louis to the strains of the weekly New York Philharmonic Symphony concert, the program was interrupted with the terse announcement of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The world changed overnight.

Those born after the mid-1940s cannot conceptualize a time without knowledge of the Holocaust in Germany's Third Reich and of a restored Israel; atom bombs, nuclear weapons and energy demonstrations; environmental, noise and graffiti pollution; plastics and fiberglass; cocktail parties, fast-food chains and microwave

cooking in a gourmet-fed, diet-obsessed society, with its daily revelations of cancer-producing items; polaroid cameras and television, instant replay and video games. We didn't live with satellite communication and multi-media simulcast, push-button international telephones and exploding computer technology, faster-than-sound jet and space travels. Planes cruised at 125 mph in 1932!

Back then every kid anticipated childhood diseases as rites-of-passage and we were immunized only for smallpox. People spoke of the "flu" and "grippe" and polio season, not viruses, herpes, anti-biotics and -histamines (we had mustard plasters!), specialists, transplants, group theraphy, Medicare, napalm, acid-rain, test-tube babies or genetic cloning. The politics of silence kept us largely insensitized to the needs of blacks, women, the poor, senior citizens, or any feelings of responsibility for battered wives, abused children and handicapped people. Still to come were the Berlin wall, detente, the World Council of Churches, Vatican II, Vietnam, Watergate, Reagonomics, air-hijackings and the vast proliferation of political assassinations. Teacher, football, public transportation and sanitation department strikes, revolutionary upheaval in sexual patterns and moral codes, these claimed no headlines then.

Though the seeds for turmoil and change were present in earlier times, it was possible to be more blissfully ignorant, less aware and centripetally pressured in the world before television, when women and men still had a few adult secrets and children were not robbed of their childhood; and the whole world was not seen daily — with all its violence and horror and anxiety-producing tensions — in our living rooms. Sports were entertainment, not antidotes for insanity.

This earth was my universe — except for heaven and hell — and man (literally) the pinnacle of creation. No one stressed how infinitessimal was our planet, not to mention how insignificant one human on this terrestrial speck. Reading Saint-Exupéry's *Wind, Sand and Stars* at sixteen began to cut me down to size, but the process has been nothing like the steady diet of our inconsequential minuteness on which today's kids are raised. How can I communicate with them from such a different perspective? How can the church, with its ancient trappings and tradition?

In my day a high school religion teacher described the fourth day of creation as God's taking a fistful of diamonds and tossing them willy-nilly against the backdrop of a black velvet sky. When I look up at night I still see diamonds against a two-dimensional setting, not visions of galaxies of stars, planets, black holes and men walking on the moon. But what do today's children "see" out there — alá Challenger and Carl Sagan?

Youngsters in the thirties seemed to understand that their elders had once been where the youth were now, but that the reverse was not true. Today perhaps older people need to be more conscious of the opposite — that our children are growing up in a vastly different world than did we. So much change so fast — is it even possible for us to catch up, to grasp or absorb such radical differences? And how can the church keep abreast?

Change and the Church

Of course, such incredible change in the life-span of one generation has left its mark also on the Christian church. The past thirty-five years have taken Christians from Bad Boll conferences in postwar Germany to Episcopal-Roman Catholic-Lutheran ecumenism, from "God is Dead" theology through

charismatic renewal to sacramental-liturgical re-emphasis and cooperation, life-after-life speculation and end-times plausibility, from rationalism and liberalism to fundamentalism and creationism and eastern transcendentalism, from neighborhood churches to video and media religion, from colonial missions to indigenous churches, from patriarchalism to slowly unfolding sexual equality in the church, from Lutheran isolationism to "New Church" promise, from rigid church and state separation to pragmatic understanding and more broadly interpreted interaction, from Jewish-Christian dialogue to citizen-lobbying for the world's hungry and unjustly imprisoned, to blossoming lay involvement and ministry.

While the Moral Majority pushes for reinstating prayer in the nation's classrooms, the Civil Liberties Union successfully deprives a New England town of its Christmas crèche tradition. Politicians and League of Women Voters take a stand on pro-life or pro-choice candidates and Social Security positions. Third-world, feminist and black theologies demand that biblical liberation themes be heard. Gay-rights congregations seek admission to the National Council of Churches. Tax exemptions for church properties and federal assistance to various programs of religious schools are constantly re-examined. Increased secularism and aggressive atheism flourish alongside new forms of pietism, revivalism and debate over scripture inerrancy.

Young people face a "modern crisis of hope" today, according to Campus Pastor Don Ranstrom of the University of California at Davis. Students, in their "pervasive sense of gloom," are seeking more counseling help than ever before. Yet simultaneously, I hear a young man in his twenties say, "Yours is the last generation that is going to believe in pre-historic, superstitious religions of the past, like Christianity. My generation and those of the future can no longer adhere to or accept such out-moded beliefs in this nuclear, electronic space-age."

Is that true? For myself, the old answers, if glib, are still adequate and comforting: that the history of Christianity proves again and again it never was mere humans who keep the Church of Christ alive and functioning, nor ever will be; that one can never look at narrow-visioned, bickering, poorly-practicing Christians for reassurance regarding the truth of Word and Gospel, but only at Christ; that the Spirit alone perpetuates the church from age to age; that ancient Christian creeds have always defied reason, historical change and scientific advances but will continue to prevail because of a gracious God; that the universe is still in the hands of a caring Creator and victorious Savior. But as I contemplate the young man's statement, I know that it isn't enough to tell him what *I* believe to turn him around. The gift of faith is not ours to give . . .

Cynicism and cold logic have many strong proponents today. Church people are often seen as being hopelessly out of touch with realities of this age, blind and deaf to the staggering concerns about environmental, nuclear and economic annihilation that threaten young people and their precious offspring all over this globe. Is that how I come across, too? Then how can I ever share the eternal hope that lives within me? Traditional believers become fearful if the faith is worded in any ways different from familiar, catechism jargon. Simultaneously, those in better contact with the world in which we live seem to despair of most Christians bridging the time-gap from the past to the current 1980s. We are wrong when we write off such critics for caring and for living more

realistically today than perhaps do we. But how *are* we to re-connect? Having offered this potpourri of contrasts, I am challenged to attempt the more difficult, to offer at least some possible avenues toward solution. No matter how well the church may be meeting the needs of those already on the inside, my concern here is how the magnetic field between church and society might be improved to draw and attract more people from without.

Bridges of Hope

Despite the accusations that the church is obsolete in the face of so much radical change in such a short time, some do see signs for continuing hope. For Winthrop S. Hudson, writing in the 60s, "vigorous renewal of Protestant life and witness rests with the Lutheran churches" because, he believed, their long-time insulation from American life had made their "confessional tradition, surviving liturgical structure and a sense of community" less subject to the theological erosion experienced by other denominations. *(American Protestantism,* p. 176). There is evidence of that Lutheran strength still today.

More recently, Franklin H. Littell saw possibility in the tremendous upsurge of a Pentecostal-style religion in Latin America and in Africa since World War II (some scholars predict that the majority of Christians will be found on these two continents by the turn of the century), surpassing even Roman Catholicism and conventional Protestantism in these lands and also making strong inroads in Europe and America. Littell described Pentecostalism as having derived its strict basic doctrine from the 16th century Reformation and its free ecstatic expressions from later Revivalism, with its restoration of primitive Christianity's "signs and wonders" and its emphasis upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He concluded that, while organized cooperation and reunion have strongly shaped the future of Christianity in our century, "the actual course of coming events now defies prediction." *(The Macmillan Atlas History of Christianity,* New York, 1976, p. 163).

Meanwhile, the effects of the feminist movement upon church and society today was accurately predicted almost a century ago by a grass-roots activist, speaker and writer named Matilda Joslyn Gage, who spoke with prophetic relevance. A deeply religious, dedicated Christian, Gage was part of the triumvirate, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who championed women's rights. Using many of the same scriptural arguments presented by Christian feminists today, Gage's major work, *Woman, Church and State,* "The Original Exposé of Male Collaboration Against the Female Sex," was as pertinent when it was first published in 1893 as when reprinted by Persephone Press in 1980. She wrote (pages 245-6):

> A brighter day is come for the world, a day when the intuitions of woman's soul shall be accepted as part of humanity's spiritual wealth; when force shall step backward, and love, in reality, rule the teachings of religion; . . . as never before is there an arousing sense of something deeper, holier in religion than the Christian church has given . . . A generation has passed since the great struggle began, but not until within ten years has woman dared attack upon the veriest stronghold of her oppression, the Church . . . Looking forward, I see evidence of a conflict more severe than any yet fought by reformation or science; it will be the rebellion of one half of

the church . . . woman against the tyranny of Church and State . . . its end will be a regenerated world.

Lutheranism . . . Pentecostalism . . . feminism . . . ecumenical strivings . . . greater civic consciousness and social responsibility . . . new emphases, renewal and change from within the church. What shall we keep from the past, what let go, and who is to decide? How shall Christ's people present the eternal Word with realistic pertinence and vitality to today's chaotically spinning society?

The Continuing Challenge

A recent poll indicated that 87% of Americans have a fair knowledge of the biblical facts about the life and death of Jesus, but very few grasp the significance of his birth, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension for their own lives. Are there better ways of proclaiming this timeless message with relevant clarity and conviction? A few possibilities present themselves, four ways (there must be many more!) in which the church might enhance its witness:

1. Through enlarging its view of the Triune God.
2. Through helping Christians acquire more openness.
3. Through demonstrating more genuine love.
4. Through asserting more courage leadership.

Though these may seem obvious, let me elaborate at least briefly.

1. **The church should enlarge its view of the Triune God.** J. B. Phillips' earlier challenge that our God is "too small" still holds. Though there are glorious moments in our creeds and liturgy which declare, "How great is our God," there are subtle ways in which that perspective is lost in an atmosphere of easy familiarity sated with celebrity-deities and gurus. We dwarf and fragmatize the Almighty when we emphasize Threeness and Christ's humanity but not Oneness and his divinity, when we revere distinct Persons but do not acknowledge, overlapping functions within the Godhead, when we portray our Spirit-God only in male metaphors despite the rich (albeit less frequent) biblical female imagery also used, when we violate the Creator by refusing to recognize and name through inclusive language the woman-half of humanity.

In a constantly unfolding universe, the church too often misses the opportunity to introduce the eternal, Cosmic Christ who presided when all things were made, the "first and last" who lives and holds the keys of Death and Hades. Jesus' incredible, earth-bound thirty-three years and his atoning mission are only enhanced when he is also seen as the still-interceding Lamb on the throne of heaven, who has already subdued this world's prince, who still sends the same Spirit, who still heals and makes whole in every baptism and eucharist. To begin to appreciate the whole Christ, the members of his Body must see the Head as well as the wounds, must know the passages describing a higher Christology as unforgettably as John 3:16 (i.e. John's Prologue, Col. 1:15-20 and 2:9; Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 1:7, 12-18; 5:12; 11:15-17; 19:11-16). A hero-less generation has already subjected the universal Savior to peeping-Tom scrutiny and "how do you feel?" non-sequitur. It is for the church to paint him in bold strokes across a blazing sky, to reinspire awe and reverence for the Holy One who is coming again, soon.

Our God is too small when we do not understand the role and work of the Holy Spirit, and many Christians do not today. To resist the Pentecostal inroads out of fear of possible excesses runs the risk of resisting the Spirit. There's such a

wealth of biblical help and the study is so rewarding, it is still difficult to comprehend why there is so much criticism but so little exploration of and instruction about the Lord's favorite Gift.

Finally, in the process of enlarging our concepts regarding God, there is another image that is poignantly timely — that of a suffering Servant who saves the world not through power but through weakness, through vulnerability and unused strength, who demonstrates not passivity but a more effective way of winning, known only to the few very courageous — Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Lech Walensa — a pain-enduring God who grieves over and hurts with and dies for lost children. The tortured Saviour stood silently alone, deliberately absorbing rather than resisting the jeers and torments of a whole battalion — 500 Roman soldiers! (Mt. 27) — and still prayed ". . . forgive them." Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke experientially of how we look in our distress to the power of God in the world, but how ". . . only a suffering God can help, the God of the Bible, who conquers power and space in the world by his weakness. This is the decisive difference between Christianity and all religions." *(Letters and Papers from Prison,* Macmillan, 1962, p. 164). Bonhoeffer knew about misused power and the seductive enticements of military weapons and might. We need his confidence in the Source of Goodness and Compassion and Gentleness loose and ever victorious in our decadent world.

A suffering God, yet a cosmic Christ and an empowering Spirit . . . Might the Church also re-direct focus upon the "Beautiful Savior" who is "fairer" still than all the beautiful products of affluence we tend to worship today? Despite a shaky economy, the average American is able to delight in the aesthetic, to own more that's beautiful, to see more that's lovely, to have more free time to pursue art and music and nature in a variety of forms and places, than ever before. The church must point us away from the created to the Lord of Creation. And as it does that, the church is also in a position to offer a third alternative to the stand-off controversy between evolutionists and creationists for textbook space. Many Christians would not endorse the movement by fundamentalists that a narrow interpretation of the first two chapters of Genesis be taught in our public school classrooms. But all believers might welcome a minimal "In the beginning, God . . ." teaching to the nation's students as an alternate possibility to the evolution theory. Such a basic introducing of the Creator God might prove more enduring, less discardable in later years as the young are exposed to the further intricacies of science.

The possibilities for presenting a larger, yet still scriptural God in today's universe are varied and intriguing.

2. The church must help Christians acquire more openness. How is it that Christians are sometimes the most inflexibile, rigid, opinionated people around? We may be poorly informed and myopic in vision, but many of us seem to express our zeal for the Lord by being adamant and intrenchable. In our unyielding attitudes we preclude any possibility of growth and we knock people around us down like bowling pins. How such "O how we love Jesus" certainly must grieve him as gospel proclamation suffers!

Are there ways that the church can help people become more open and tentative in their thinking about controversial issues without robbing them of their salvation assurance? Irrefutable doctrines must not be sacrified, but rigidity born of ignorance is a luxury God's church cannot afford.

I believe much could be done to lesson the educational gap between clergy and laity. Despite constant accusations that

"no one reads today," twelve lay people of both sexes from our parish are just completing a rigorous two-year deacon-training program which has involved seminary-level courses and texts, lengthy reading assignments and written papers, plus practical ministry courses, to the tune of a $200 annual tuition fee plus book costs. Despite the demanding work, enthusiasm has been a constantly escalating thing, prompted by a real desire to know more in order to serve better in parish and community outreach as para-professional church deacons. Imagine what this can mean when these twelve people volunteer up to twenty hours apiece per week of unpaid time to enlarge our parish outrach! What a bonus to an overworked clergy staff! But for the program to succeed, it means the shifting of tradition-bound gears, of greater openness and new, unthreatened attitudes among both pastors and people to incorporate the gifts and talents and dreamings of so many more maturing workers. It has been a revelation to see old biases and entrenched opinions fall away as the group, most of whom are only high school graduates, joyfully delved into scripture, church history and theology, creeds and confessions, the Reformation and American Protestantism. Here is proof positive that more rigorous teaching and training can enrich the entire church, that it is time to capitalize on the Spirit-inspired hunger of the laity and their yearnings to express their faith in more tangible ways.

3. The Church must demonstrate more genuine love. Our senses and wallets are bombarded with the symbols of love today, yet so few know the demands of real loving and forgiving. Despite all the church rhetoric, so often our caring is restricted to our own kind — to those of similar ethnic or economic background, fellow "charismatics," or our peers in age, education or personality. It's natural for us to gravitate to our own kind. What we need help in is learning how better to accept and celebrate God's gifts of variety and differentness in others, to cherish diversity.

Christians are often still so law-oriented that they see no disparity between their professed credos and the practicing of exclusivity, judgmentalism and a critical withholding of grace. Many are unable to love even Christians who are a little different from themselves. In an era of exaggerated reverence for feelings (I challenge the philosophy that proclaims — feelings are neither right nor wrong, they just are), it's easy to dislike another for unexamined reasons, to fail to extend trust or acceptance. Psychology has isolated at least sixteen unique personality types, nine of which are apparent in the maternity nursery even before newborn infants go home; yet most of us spend our lives trying to make others conform to our own image. These tests, applied to the biblical Jesus of the gospels, showed that he alone embodied all of the characteristics which the Creator-Spirit apportions in varying combinations to all of us.

Might there be sins we retain (John 20:23) because of our reluctance to forgive and forget and to assimilate differences? Are any of us to be at our best when we know those around us are hypercritical. Perhaps we deny some the right to be themselves by our disapproval. When we say disparagingly, "Oh, he/she'll never change!" is it actually *we* who *won't* change? Are *we* locked in to seeing another person forever negatively, with resistant hostility? All of us have such a narrow range of "acceptables," and if we happen to be fairly strong personalities, we tend to pass on our prejudices and also influence others to adopt similar attitudes toward those who "offend" us. The church must do a more thorough job of teaching and

demonstrating the truly rare commodities of genuine love and forgiveness. Forgive me as I forgive? God — do not judge me as I judge! We abuse the power we hold from Christ when we do not permit and encourage and expect others to blossom before our eyes.

Preaching must produce follow-through change, not just occasional guilt and confession. Those who are healed must become healers. Instead of seductively making it impossible for others to resist our "Thank goodness, you're not like her!" poisonings, we need help to develop and exercise deliberate, responsive compassion more uniformly, less selectively.

And beyond compassion, all Christians must learn to be more supportive of one another's efforts in differing areas of the Savior's vineyard, to withhold condemnation and to be more open to learning about issues and causes in which we ourselves are not yet engaged. Pluralism is not only an American dream, it is evidence of an active Spirit in the divergent expressions of the Christian faith.

4. Lastly, the Church must assert more courageous leadership. The times are precarious. People are often confused, fearful and "shepherdless." They look to the church for guidance and strong leadership, yet the church often hesitates to step out in faith, to speak up with conviction and courage.

That isn't all bad, for there *are* times when cautionary silence may be preferable to reckless pronouncement. Still, there is something courageous and commendable about a church that will risk making a firm statement based upon careful, responsible weighings and research. The Catholic bishops who took a stand against nuclear arms recently have evoked criticism; they have revised their earlier declaration, are continuing to study the issues, but are not cowed into total abdication of leadership. Political voices are often inaccurate or biased. Surely the church, resting squarely on the foundation of a victorious, living Christ, can risk the discomfort of possible faulty judgment here and there to speak out forcefully for justice, mercy, morality and human life. Scripture is not totally clear on many controversial subjects today. Mistakes can be made. They may cause embarrassment, but they are not the unforgivable sin. It is callous indifference, ineffectual overcaution and timidity which hurt the cause of Jesus today. To wait forever for perfect knowledge and absolute clarity before venturing any statement or discussion indicates weakness and confusion, even cowardice, while encouraging disrespect and contempt. The people of God await the clear voice of the church, expressing a *leadership of concern* (different from smug judgment) regarding many issues — apartheid, racism and sexism, hunger and poverty, human sexuality, religious and political prisoners, nuclear freeze, oppressed humanity everywhere — to guide and direct both members and nonmembers.

Christians still believe a changeless Jesus Christ is the answer for a vastly changed world. As the church approaches a new century, some beginnings toward a more effective witness may lie in portraying a "larger" God and in demonstrating greater openness, more genuine love and more courageous leadership. It is the Holy Spirit who works faith, but the Body of Christ can do much to enhance the setting out of which the Spirit operates in our midst to attract those around and beyond us. That is, if we share the weight of the cross and Easter triumph lives in our hearts.

Spices for the Tomb

Travis DuPriest

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In her novel *Shine On, Bright and Beautiful Object,* Laurie Colwin describes from the point of view of a twenty-seven-year-old widow the almost-ubiquitous phenomenon in our culture of immediately forgetting or pretending to forget the deceased: "I was elbowed by aunts and cousins, patted on the arm by the people from Sam's firm, taken aside by friends . . . and I was talked up quite a lot. No one wanted to talk about Sam at all: the idea was to distract the attention of the bereaved, but I didn't want my attention distracted, and as the afternoon went on, I felt awkward and distorted."

I myself have experienced such when my father died; and I know that for my mother the experience of having friends and relatives pretend as though her husband of thirty years never existed was excruciating.

People are, of course, cautious at times of death. Cliches seem to be what get us through. We don't know how any comment will affect relatives of the deceased, so we hold back. None of us feels comfortable, especially in public, with grief. And too, as the narrator of Laurie Colwin's novel goes on to say, some sentiment and some emotions are summoned up — are bought — for too cheap a price and perhaps are better left unsaid, unsummoned.

Friendship, though, has allegiances we are perhaps not aware of, or which are in need of clear articulation. I speak of allegiances to a dead friend.

A true friendship lasts forever. As with the case of marriage, an elevated form of friendship, this does not mean that when a spouse dies the remaining spouse might never remarry. What it means, rather, is that if one is a true friend, the honor and respect and nuturing of that friendship continues even after your friend's death. In his "Discourse" on friendship Anglican divine Jeremy Taylor puts it like this, "when he (my friend) is dead, I will not run into his grave and be stifled with his earth; but I will mourn for him, and perform his will, and take care of his relatives, and do for him as if he were alive."

A friend mourns. How uncanny for Christians to try to "control themselves" or "hold back" at times of grief and sadness. Christ himself wept at the death of his friend. It could be only vain glory to allow restraints at a time when mourning is the charitable and necessary response. We have yet learned how to mourn together so that the sharing of grief is itself supportive, sustaining — sacramental.

Second, performing the friend's will. Surely a friend in life is equally a friend in death. If we would do favors and acts of kindness while our friend were alive, why would we cease upon his or her death? The same acts need to be done, the same relatives and property needs attending. One of the most touching, lasting friendships I have ever witnessed was between an elderly neighbor of ours and a man who had worked for our

neighbor's family since he was a little boy — doing odd jobs such as putting up and taking down storm windows. Well after the man's retirement from his full-time job with the local newspaper, he continued to help our neighbor around the house. When our neighbor fell and was taken to the hospital and eventually a nursing home, her friend continued to look after her house as if she still lived there. Indeed, for two years after her death, he cared for the house as carefully and lovingly as if his life-long friend were still alive. The nobility here lies in the situation's stability; no change of status, financial or physical, altered the essential bonds or the essential rites and duties and gifts of friendship. As Taylor notes in one place, on the garments of classical figures is carved, *Mors et Vita,* thereby symbolizing that friendship, highest of virtue, was in life and in death.

"To do for him as if he were alive" is the key to Christian posture at times of death. Our friend has died, and the death of a body needs to be mourned and acknowledged. Yet the friendship still lives, and this evokes joyful service beyond so-called "memorials" or politeness at the time of the funeral.

Time and again, those who have had a spouse, or child, or parent, or relative or friend to die admit that the real pain — pain in no way prepared for — is that of isolation and neglect in the weeks and months after the funeral. The awkwardness may be there, yes; the fear of "losing control" in an emotional way will be there, yes; yet the knowledge that the friendship is still alive summons us to words and acts.

The ancient custom of handing a flower or sprig of greenery to those who mourn in order to represent life and the resurrection of the body has evolved into having arrangements or sprays sent to homes or funeral parlors. The tradition, in other words is perpetuated but with the proportions off balance — more flowers but less personal contact and expression of the spiritual verities. As Taylor expresses the usefulness of friendship, he would rather have thyme and rosemary that are sweet and helpful than tulips that are beautiful but good for nothing. Let us, then, as those who mourned for Jesus, take spices to the tombs of our friends and offer ourselves as ointments in time of grief.

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

Book Reviews



MILITIA CHRISTI: THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND THE MILITARY IN THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES. By Adolf Harnack. Trans. by David McI. Gracie. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981. 112 pages. Cloth. $13.95.

Dr. Gracie has prepared the first English translation of Harnack's classical study of the early Christian attitude toward military service. The chief present merit of Harnack's work, as Dr. Gracie points out in his useful introduction, is that so many pertinent passages from the fathers are brought together in the compass of one small treatise. Gracie's introductory essay evaluates the major critiques that have been addressed to Harnack's study without attempting to question the basic value and importance of Harnack's original work.

One reaches the conclusion that the sort of "nose counting" and "proof-text method" that Harnack employed does not really get at those issues that were basic to the early Christian thought on military service. For example, Harnack argues from a comment made by Dionysius of Alexandria (cited in Eusebius) about Roman persecution directed against many groups, including soldiers, that there must have been many Christians serving as soldiers. We who in our generation have witnessed the public impact that a few conscientious objectors or nuclear protestors can generate may not be fully persuaded by Harnack's logic.

The translation is clear and smooth. The book would make an ideal seminar text, and would also be useful in discussion groups of many kinds.

Herbert T. Mayer
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MINISTERING IN THE PAULINE CHURCHES. By Pheme Perkins. New York: Paulist Press, 1982. vi and 110 pages. Paper. $4.95.

Perkins, an Associate Professor of Theology at Boston College, discusses such aspects of ministry as discipleship and evangelization, worship and community in Paul, and christology and the ministry of reconciliation. There are also two sections which emphasize the role of women: women in ministry and women and gnosticism.

The author succeeds well in conveying basic thoughts and concepts with regard to ministry in the New Testament and what that means for Christians today. For example, "Biblical faith is built on human thanksgiving for the saving action of God" (77). The author makes some good basic points about who we are and how we are to relate to one another as Christian people.

A third of the book is devoted to affirming the role of women in ministry. Unfortunately, she often only restates what others have already said. Thus, little new is to be gleaned from either her validation of women to be ministers or their contribution to ministry within the Church.

The limitations of the book do not deny its worth, but rather focus its application. For beginning students of ministry and other interested persons, this book is a good starting place.

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HEBREWS COMMENTING FROM ERASMUS TO BEZE 1516-1598. By Kenneth Hagen. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981. 125 pages. DM 59.

Hagen has previously traced the story of Hebrews from Chrysostom to Luther. Here he concentrates on the 16th century. He threw out a fine net and drew in as many works on Hebrews as he could possibly trace. Most are by individuals, but two have composite authorship: the Geneva Bible of 1560 and the Rhemes (Rheims) New Testament of 1582.

Hagen focused on the introductions, concentrating on the handling of the question of authorship and on the declarations regarding the purpose and importance of Hebrews. Hagen reviews 45 authors in chronological order.

Among his conclusions are the following:

1. Only Bugenhagen followed Luther in sharply setting OT and NT against one another, regarding Christ as the end of the law. Most commentators saw Christ as the end of certain ceremonial laws and emphasized continuity between old and new, between law and gospel.
2. Cardinal Cajetan emerges as one of the most modern exegetes, if modern connotes detachment from tradition and attachment to the canons of critical reason.
3. Contarini, a Roman Catholic, spoke most extensively and winsomely of faith in Hebrews.
4. Calvin is praised for his balanced judgments and for his genuinely illuminating comments.
5. Commentators struggled with the question of authorship. Luther said on one occasion, "The author is whoever he is." Increasingly the epistle is simply ascribed to the Holy Spirit.
6. These commentators were well aware of the difference between covenant and testament, but they reached no consensus regarding the meaning of *diatheke* in Hebrews.

Anyone interested in the Letter to the Hebrews or in the history of exegesis will be grateful to Professor Hagen for his labors.

Robert Smith
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Pacific Lutheran
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JESUS, MAN, AND THE CHURCH. By Karl Rahner. Theological Investigations, Vol. XVII. New York: Crossroad, 1981. 260 pages. Cloth. $14.95.

Father Rahner has divided this volume of essays into four parts. Part One deals with the topic of the experience of Jesus Christ; Part Two with the subject of man in the Spirit; Part Three with the question of the ministry and the Spirit, and Part Four has as its theme, "Signs of the Times for the Church."

The essays in each section range widely and cover topics that are usually not related to each other. Each essay is marked by Rahner's unique ability to treat complicated subjects in depth and with brevity. He accomplishes this in part by steadfastly refusing to allow any of the important and fascinating side trails that constantly occur to him. His favorite sentence is "Unfortunately we cannot at this time go into this question in the detail it requires."

This reviewer was especially interested in the essays on the church in Parts Three and Four. His essay on "Transformations in the Church and Secular Society" contains the challenging insight that one thing the church can do in society is to help society rethink and reformulate the stock of basic convictions which is critical to a healthy society. It seems that Father Rahner might also have commented on the important symbolic role that the church has played in the past and will continue to play in any society where it has the right to exist. The church is called by God's Spirit to be a symbol of the unity that can characterize a society when people take that goal seriously.

In the essay in Part Four on "The One Church and the Many Churches," he repeats a theme which has become widely identified with his name. The church, he argues, must find its unity by recognizing how almost all those points that now divide are really parts of the long catholic tradition of the church. If, he goes on, churches come to this point, then they should also be ready to acknowledge the Catholic church as the legitimate and logical center for the unity of the church for tomorrow. He argues this point with grace and clarity. It deserves a respectful hearing from Lutherans and Protestants.

Herbert T. Mayer

CONCERN FOR THE CHURCH. By Karl Rahner. Theological Investigations, Vol. XX. New York: Crossroad, 1981. 191 pages. Cloth. $12.95.

This volume consists of thirteen essays that are gathered under four heads. Part One is titled "Faith and Church," Part Two is on the "Priesthood," Part Three deals with "Life in the Church," and Part Four talks about the "Future of the Church."

The only essay in Part Two is on "Women and the Priesthood." In this essay, Father Rahner repeats arguments and conclusions that he has advanced elsewhere to the effect that the decision of the Magisterium against women in the priesthood is authentic but open to revision and reform, and that the discussion must continue because not all arguments against women in the priesthood are marked by theological coherence and integrity.

His essay in Part Three on "The Church's Responsibility for the Freedom of the Individual" is a reasoned, calm discussion of a highly volatile topic. He affirms the full and radical freedom of the Christian in his or her possession of eschatological salvation, and then warns the Christian against ignoring all the social, historical, economic and political factors that impinge on that freedom.

An essay in Part Four with the comprehensive title "Unity of the Church — Unity of Mankind" lives up to its promise in a striking way. Among his arguments in this essay are that the various denominations already manifest a significant degree of unity in their common confession of the Creed, but need to make this impressive unity more evident to the world. Then he calls again for the Protestant (and Lutheran) churches to manifest their unity to the world by affirming the genuineness of the Petrine ministry and its manifestation in the office of the pope.

Herbert T. Mayer

THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS. By Eduard Schweizer. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982. 319 pages. Paper. $12.50.

This powerful commentary is one volume in the as-yet incomplete series Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar (EKK). The EKK is a joint Protestant-Catholic project involving Swiss and German authors. The commentaries are intended to be not only 1) rigorously historical and scientific but also 2) theological and 3) ecumenical.

Thus Schweizer says that no section of his commentary has been written without having first been preached. Especially in the summary sections he proposes images which lead in the direction of using the text and commentary in sermonizing. And as a joint project of Evangelical and Roman Catholic exegetes the commentary rests upon personal discussions at meetings of the EKK authors. Schweizer pays special tribute to Rudolf Schnackenburg, but says he, like all the authors of the series, has attempted to cast his net widely and read very consciously and deliberately in literature produced outside his own denomination.

The results are impressive, as we would expect in any case with a major work from Schweizer's pen. The commentary is remarkably readable. The basic comments are clearly presented in running paragraphs. Technical matters are relegated to footnotes, so that

the upper paragraphs remain uncluttered, and the flow of thought is not constantly interruped.

Schweizer calls the thought of Colossians "neither Pauline nor post-Pauline." Non-Pauline features are the notion that the sufferings of the apostles benefit the church, the teaching that the law is a (positive) shadow of the future fulfillment, the lack of any reference to the Spirit, and any number of stylistic differences. On the other hand, the detailed notes about individuals and the personal greetings of individual people by name make Schweizer conclude that a forgery seems inconceivable.

In trying to account both for Pauline and non-Pauline elements Schweizer suggests that Timothy composed the letter when the conditions of Paul's imprisonment worsened to such an extent that the apostle himself was not able to write.

Steeped in Paul's own thought, Timothy rather freely composed the letter in the name of both of them, leaving the apostle to write the closing greeting (4:17-18). He extolled Paul's ministry with less restraint than the apostle himself would have done, and he included the great hymn to Christ (1:15-20) and the traditional household code (3:18-4:1). Schweizer's analysis of the hymn and the household code are extremely perceptive and helpful. His discussion of authorship is a short course in Pauline thought: How Paul thought and spoke of Christ, his death and resurrection, his relation to the church, the present time in which we are alive, the Spirit, the law, new life.

Indeed the commentary from beginning to end is a marvel of information and encouragement, useful information and solid encouragement. It is simply one of the very best commentaries on Colossians available.

Robert Smith

AN EXEGETICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: MATTHEW AND MARK. Ed. by Günter Wagner. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983. 667 pages. Cloth. $35.00.

The most remarkable feature of this collection of bibliographical data is the inclusion of references to encyclopedias, Festschriften, volumes of collected essays, and monographs. Thus the editor and his students have gathered for us more information than can be gleaned from NTA, IZBG and the Elenchus.

Nowhere to be found is an explicit statement of criteria guiding the selection. A few pieces published in the 40's (or more rarely the 30's) are included, but the bulk of the material referred to was published since 1950 in English, German or French, although Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Polish are also represented.

Robert Smith

THE NEW CHARISMATICS II. By Richard Quebedeaux. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983. XV and 272 pages. Paperback. $8.95.

About five years ago a number of us who were serving on a committee then called LCRS (Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services) were invited to dialogue with some of the bishops of the AELC along with several members of the Seminex faculty on questions relating to the so-called charismatic renewal. I don't believe any of us felt it was a howling success and for that each of us had our own reasons. My disappointment came in learning of the wide-spread ignorance regarding charismatic renewal among these leaders in the church. Most were still operating with a seminary-inculcated knowledge of classical Pentecostalism and perhaps some first-hand pastoral experience with a few extreme Pentecostal types (sometimes even found in Lutheran clothing), but few had much sensitivity to the necessary distinction between classical Pentecostalism and charismatic renewal. If they could have read Quebedeaux's book, even in its 1976 Doubleday edition, they would have been better informed and our dialogue of a day would have progressed further. Moral: A day-long dialogue won't get too far if most of it is spent explaining the data which should have been familiar to the dialogue partners before the dialogue began. Quebedeaux has prepared an excellent one-volume work to bring the uninformed into the picture.

Unlike the book by Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Eerdmans, 1970), Quebedeaux does not make the mistake of interpreting charismatic renewal as little more than an unfortunate intrusion of Pentecostalism into the mainline churches of the second half of this century. He carefully notes both the connections and also the important differences, recognizing that charismatic renewal need not be anti-sacramental, anti-intellectual, anti-cultural, or anti-ecumenical. But for all of that, his book would still not do an adequate job of preparing Lutheran bishops to dialogue with Lutheran leaders in charismatic renewal. He seems only to have heard of Larry Christenson among Lutherans and besides that mentions no book of Christenson's later than 1974.

But the definitive book on Lutheran Charismatic Renewal which you are all waiting for will be available about the spring of 1984. It is presently being written by an international team of leaders in Lutheran charismatic renewal and it will be must reading for all Lutheran bishops, pastors, and teachers who wish to deal responsibly with a movement which is impacting all Christian denominations, not least among them Lutheranism. Meanwhile read Quebedeaux in order to get the broader background, but don't for a minute believe his final sentence that the charismatic renewal has "run out of steam." There's a new surge coming and its impact upon the churches will be as deep as the first surge was broad.

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JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SELF-DEFINITION. Volume 3: Self-Definition in the Greco-Roman World. Ed. by Ben F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. 295 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

This is the third volume in a series growing out of a project at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, inquiring into the social self-definition of Judaism and Christianity. By about the middle of the third century both religions had acquired the characteristics which would make them recognizable for centuries to come. On the one side the Mishnah was codified and the rabbinate firmly established, and on the other side were the New Testament and the episcopate. The present volume grew out of the effort to answer the question whether there existed in other religious institutions of the Roman Empire any persuasive analogies to this Jewish and Christian movement towards normative self-definition. The answer is almost entirely negative, but its investigation yielded fascinating results in these papers here collected on Orphics and Pythagoreans (by Walter Burkert), Stoics (by John M. Rist), Epicureans and Cynics (by Abraham J. Malherbe), Later Platonism (John M. Dillon), and the cults of Sarapis and Isis (Tran tam Tinh), Asclepius (Howard C. Kee), Dionysos (Albert Henrichs), the Emperor Cult (G. W. Bowersock), and the Greek Magical Papyri (Hans Dieter Betz).

Robert Smith

CHRISTIAN TOLERANCE. PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE MODERN CHURCH. By Robert Jewett. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982. 168 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Robert Jewett of Garrett Theological Seminary offers an impassioned plea for toleration of variety in the Christian church on the basis of Romans 15:7: "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." Romans was written to deal with a church split between the strong and the weak, between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul, argues Jewett, urges them to accept one another's differences as insignificant for the faith. And that is Jewett's message to the church today.

Jewett argues the case in four chapters. The first argues that tolerance flows from a vibrant faith; it is not the mark of weakness as so many seem to think. Rather, it reflects the tolerant love of God, and so gives God glory. The second chapter deals with the role of conscience in tolerance; it serves to guide the individual, but dare not be bound on others (cf. Romans 14:22-23). Both faith and

tolerance are needed, for tolerance without faith is simple relativism, while faith without tolerance is a form of arrogance. Love sets the limits to tolerance in the Pauline schema.

Jewett concludes his book with a chapter on guidelines for tolerant congregations. He suggests that many want to expel difference or fight it, while the true Christian attitude is to let it flourish. One does this by protecting the integrity of others, by preserving one's own, and by fostering growth among all. Jewett clearly holds that inner-Christian warfare destroys the credibility of the Gospel, makes true Christian life impossible, and is a mode of self-assertion. While some of what he writes sounds a bit like a tour de force on Paul, one can only applaud the concern out of which it springs.

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN. Volume 1 by John Huckle and Paul Visokag. Volumes 2 and 3 by Josef Blank. New York: Crossroad, 1981. I: 182 pages. II: 244 pages. III: 169 pages. Cloth. $10.95 per volume.

Josef Blank was commissioned to produce this commentary. He began at chapter 13, the opening of "the Book of Glory," and carried through to the end with a very moving and powerful commentary on the text. However the publishers had a schedule and when the commentary on chapters 1-12, "the Book of Signs," was not forthcoming, they turned to John Huckle and Paul Visokay who have done a very competent and commendable job of bringing the project to conclusion.

The result is just a bit odd. Huckle and Visokay were allotted—or took—182 pages (including the full text of John 1-12). They offer no footnotes. Volumes 2 and 3 do not offer the text of John 13-21, and Blank has produced 413 pages of commentary including 352 endnotes. He had the room to be more daring and more penetrating than his partners in this enterprise. Furthermore in his work on chapters 13-17 (volume 2) Blank divides his comments into two sections: exegesis and meditation. In volume 3 he integrated meditation into the exegetical sections, and reduced the amount of meditative material.

In spite of their odd collaboration, the three authors have managed to produce a work which is genuinely edifying and which rests upon a scholarly understanding of the gospel. For those who have not met Josef Blank previously, this work will serve as a fine introduction.

Robert Smith

BECOMING HUMAN TOGETHER. THE PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF ST. PAUL. By Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982. 224 pages. Paper. $6.95.

Murphy-O-Connor, Prof. of New Testament at the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, has reissued, in a somewhat revised form, a work first published about 1978. The work falls into three parts. In part one, Christology is used to describe what the human being can be and should be (pages 19-86). The second section describes the human condition: under sin, alienated from God and the world, and egocentric (pages 89-138). The third part discusses life in the body of Christ as the mode of existence that overcomes egocentric alienation in the true freedom of the mind of Christ (pages 139-218).

In short, Murphy-O'Connor provides a small Pauline theology organized around an anthropological focus. But it is anything but the existential anthropology of Bultmannian theology. There is a Christological point of departure, and the community plays a key role. It is also a far cry from liberation theology, though liberty is a key motif in Paul's thought. Jesus, as the perfection of humanity, models truly free and authentic human existence.

Edgar Krentz

MARK AS STORY: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NARRATIVE OF A GOSPEL. By David Rhoads and Donald Michie. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. xvi and 159 pages. Paper. $8.95.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP: A LITERARY STUDY OF MARK'S GOSPEL. By Augustine Stock, OSB. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1982. 208 pages. $7.95.

Ever since that actor in England discovered a few years ago that he could pack the theatres with a one-man rendition of the gospel of Mark, folks have been taking the literary and dramatic qualities of the shortest evangel more seriously. And it's about time.

Back in the early days of historical-critical study it was fashionable to think of Mark as little more than a scissors-and-paste collector of early traditions about Jesus. The idea was largely to look behind the forms of the stories and their redaction to get a peek at an earlier Christian community and even at the historical Jesus himself.

In recent decades, however, literary-critics (building on the results of form- and redaction-criticism, and adding the insights of rhetorical-criticism) have been investigating the dramatic impact of the gospels in their wholesome integrity. They have been analyzing such things as character and plot, structure and movement, and the effect which these stories have on modern readers.

Both of the books reviewed here are such literary analyses of the gospel of Mark. Both insist that Mark 1:1-16:8 is a worthwhile narrative which can stand on its own two feet without having to be compared to or completed by Matthew, Luke or John.

Mark As Story analyzes the rhetoric, the settings, the plot, and the characters of this gospel. Character analysis is its strong suit.

The authors distinguish between Jesus (the richly characterized protagonist of the story, whose many and varied traits bring the enigma of the rule of God onto the stage), the authorities ("flat" characters whose incessant opposition to Jesus provides the antagonism in the plot), the little people (such as the leper, Jairus, the widow in the temple, etc., who regularly respond to Jesus in the "correct" manner), and the disciples (whose frustration with Jesus and incomprehension of his purpose provide the point at which the implied readers identify with the story).

According to Rhoads and Michie, "the narrative defines the implied reader as a faithful follower of Jesus. The implied reader travels the journey with Jesus, like a disciple who understands the ways of God when others do not, accepts Jesus' teaching when his disciples resist, and arrives in Jerusalem prepared to go through death with Jesus" (p. 140).

Call to Discipleship maintains that Mark's gospel can best be studied according to the canons of classic tragic drama. It's not as though Mark intended his work to be performed on stage; rather, like many similar writings from roughly the same decade, his was meant to be read aloud by individuals and small groups.

"What matters in tragedy is not that the tragic hero should receive the knowledge issuing from suffering, but that we, the readers or audience, should receive it," says Stock. "This situation fits Mark's purposes perfectly. He has a vision of Christianity and he wants to impart this 'knowledge' to his readers. He does this by the way he structures his narrative of Jesus' ministry." (pp. 29-30)

The upshot of it all is that by the time we readers have experienced the dramatic impact of Jesus' integrity in the face of opposition and suffering, we will also have experienced the kind of catharsis which leaves us determined to emulate his style of self-giving service in our own lives.

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VERDICT ON THE SHROUD. By Kenneth E. Stevenson and Gary R. Habermas. Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1982. Cloth. 224 pages. $21.95.

History knows some famous forgeries. *Der Stern* sank $4.1 million into 62 volumes alleged to be Adolf Hitler's secret diaries. One day after the first installment was published, they were denounced as fakes not only because of the handwriting

but on the basis of a chemical analysis of the paper, cover, bindings, labels and glue. Polyester threads were discovered in the binding, for example, and polyester is a post-war invention. Heads rolled at *Der Stern.*

But what about the Shroud? Is it a clever forgery produced in Europe in the late Middle Ages? Or is it ancient, and does it come from the Eastern Mediterranean? And could it possibly be the actual burial cloth of Jesus?

The Shroud was first exhibited in 1357. It remained a little known relic until it was photographed in 1898 during a rare exhibition at Turin, Italy. A photographic negative of the Shroud looked like a positive print and was far more lifelike and revealing than the Shroud itself. The Shroud achieved limited fame within a small circle, but especially in the last decade it has become widely known and carefully studied.

In 1973 pollen analysis revealed that 33 of 49 pollen spores in the fibers belong to plants which grow only in Palestine, the southern steppes of Turkey and the area around Istanbul. The fabric is linen with a trace of cotton. Cotton is not grown in Europe but is common in the Middle East. The weave is of a distinctive type known from the first century A.D. in the Middle East.

The image on the cloth is superficial. It lies on the topmost fibers of the threads and did not soak into them as paint or dye would be expected to do. There is no evidence of capillary flow. A standard hemoglobin test in 1973 failed to find blood on the cloth, but perhaps hemoglobin had been altered by the heat of a fire that singed portions of the Shroud in 1532.

The major modern study of the Shroud (and the focus of this volume) came in 1978. A team of 40 American scientists with 72 crates of instruments and equipment arrived in Turin in October 1978 to spend five days subjecting the Shroud to the most rigorous examination ever undergone by a religious relic. Scientists examined the Shroud across the electromagnetic spectrum with infrared, visible, light, ultraviolet, and x-ray radiation. They photographed fibers viewed on slides under microscopes.

Habermas and Stevenson report that the 1978 team found strong indications that blood had stained areas of the surface of the Shroud. More sophisticated tests were conducted than those of 1973.

How did the image get on the cloth? The team concluded that the image was not produced by dyes, stains, inks, powders, pigments or acids (not a painting). Nor could it have been produced by vapors rising from a corpse because of some chemical reaction between ammonia on the body and aloes and olive oil on the cloth (not a vaporgraph).

Could it be some kind of scorch? Ultraviolet and visible light reflectance tests show that the image and the obvious scorches are redder than the body image and the two areas fluoresce somewhat differently under ultraviolet light.

The team seems to have concluded very cautiously that the image consists of cellulose fibers yellowed by some sort of dehydration process. They most seriously considered a) scorching and b) a chemical reaction involving sensitizing material applied directly to the cloth. Both hypotheses have difficulties but Habermas and Stevenson state confidently that the image was produced by scorching with light or heat.

Working with similar cloths, members of the team attempted to produce an image by means of short intense burst of energy—with flash lamps, and with ultraviolet, visible and infrared light lasers. They did scorch linen superficially but the results did not resemble the image on the Shroud.

It is clear that Habermas and Stevenson regard the Shroud as the actual burial cloth of Jesus. It is also clear that they think the image was produced by the release of energy at the instant of Jesus' resurrection.

Stevenson was formerly an assistant professor of English at the Air Force Academy and is now a salesman for IBM. Habermas is associate professor of apologetics and philosophy at Liberty Baptist College in Lynchburg, Virginia. Their book comes with a disclaimer. Legal action prompted the publisher to begin inserting a slip of paper: "Clarification: Verdict on the Shroud is not an official publication of the Shroud of Turin Research Project."

However, the authors were associated with the Shroud of Turin Project and in spite of the disclaimer with which the book now appears, it carries a foreword by Lawrence Schwalbe, author of the official Project report to Umberto II (exiled King of Italy and owner of the Shroud). Schwalbe vouches for the book as an accurate representation of present scientific understanding of the Shroud.

Habermas and Stevenson have produced a clearly written and helpfully illustrated work, summarizing the historical fortunes of the Shroud from 1357 down to the present. And they argue forcefully for the authenticity of the Shroud. Not yet has it been exposed as a forgery.

Robert H. Smith

AMERICAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL ETHICS: TWENTIETH-CENTURY APPROACHES. By Charles E. Curran. Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982. x and 353 pages. Cloth. $21.95.

Think of Protestant social ethics, and names of Americans like Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr come to mind. Think of Catholic social ethics, and one thinks of popes. But perhaps no longer. Charles Curran, professor at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., has demonstrated with this book that America has producd Catholic ethicists as well as activists who have grappled with the socio-economic problems of this century.

Curran highlights the relationship between the American ethos and Catholicism, examining in detail the writings of five representatives of five different approaches to social justice and their related movements. First there is John A. Ryan, once dubbed as "the Right Reverend New Dealer," certainly the foremost exponent of American Catholic social liberalism. William Engelen is studied in connection with the German-American Catholic Central-Verein movement of the 1920s. The more radical Catholic Worker Movement is connected with the name of Dorothy Day, but Curran examines the writings of sociologist Paul Hanley Furfey as representing it most systematically. Curran then looks at John Courtney Murray, who championed both natural law theory and the American tradition of religious liberty, and concludes with a discussion of James W. Douglass, an exponent of non-violent resistance to nuclear warfare and the Catholic peace movement.

Curran's presentations of these five approaches is scholarly and substantial yet lucid. He is respectful of all of them but also critical of their shortcomings, and each chapter ends with an evaluative critique. In an epilogue Curran briefly (too briefly) outlines his own position on social ethics, based on the fivefold Christian mysteries of creation, sin, incarnation, redemption, and resurrection as destiny. He refuses to separate the realm of the supernatural from that of the natural and insists that social ethics must stress both a change of heart and a change of social structures, not just one or the other. The church, in his judgment, cannot be absolutely pacifist or committed to total poverty, but must be grateful for the presence within it of those generous individuals and groups who give prophetic witness to poverty and peace.

For the author's insights as well as the material he synthesizes so masterfully, this is a valuable book. Charles Curran is always worth reading.

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PAGANISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE. By Ramsay MacMullen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981. xv and 341 pages. Cloth. $23.00.

MacMullen is an unusual historian, to say the least. He has a way of reading sources that others seem to overlook: obscure inscriptions, minor authors of antiquity, excavation reports of out of the way places, ancient coin types, to say nothing of scholarly publications in a clutch of modern languages. Beyond that, he asks questions that do not seem to have occurred to other people and challenges some long held views. As a result his works have a freshness and cogency that often is lacking in other historians of antiquity.

His *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Harvard, 1966) clarified the changes in attitude of Romans (and the conquered peoples) to the Roman principate from the first through the early fourth centuries. It provided a healthy counterpoise to romantic notions of the *pax romana* by describing the sources of unrest in the early Roman Empire. No wonder that it has become a work frequently cited by New Testament scholars. MacMullen has also dealt with population characteristics and the role of the army in the Empire.

The present volume is vintage MacMullen. It provides a fresh revision of ideas about religions in the Roman Empire. MacMullen does not discuss the religions one by one, but takes up aspects of religious life as they are reflected in texts and monuments. He describes religion in the life of the people, not just in the literate upper classes. He begins with a chapter that describes the phenomena of religion: the ranking of gods, the value of religious texts, the activities in cult centers that attracted crowds (theater, dance and mime, festivals, processions, debates and lectures, displays), the accoutrements of a cult center (dining areas, parks, ponds), and the routine of the temple. Much of this is undebatable marshalling of the evidence.

The second longer section deals with the more debatable interpretation of ancient religions. Topics covered include "Needs and Answers," "The vitality of paganism," "How the divine world was envisioned," "Conversion," and "The dynamic cults." MacMullen questions the oft repeated idea that the mystery religions fostered hope for the afterlife. He finds little or no evidence for that in the texts. He regards gnosticism as the "lunatic fringe" of the religious world—and implies that New Testament scholars give it far too much attention. The "push toward monotheism" that many find in the early Empire has no echo among the masses; it is an upper crust phenomenon. Magic, devils, and "the broad underpart of the world above this" are where the average person experienced religion.

The whole is fitted out with magnificently detailed footnotes, often as interesting as the text itself. The notes constantly amaze one with the broad reach of the author. This is a book to be read and reread; one cannot absorb it in one reading. The publisher is to be thanked for having recently issued it in paper. If you have serious interest in the first century, this is a book for you.

Edgar Krentz

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE LAND OF ISREAL. By Yohanan Aharoni. Edited by Miriam Aharoni and translated by Anson F. Rainey. Philadephia: Westminster, 1983. xx and 344 pages. Cloth. $27.50.

This posthumously published work was largely dictated, we have been told, in the last months of the author's life. It serves the valuable function of setting in print the final opinion of this leading figure among the first generation of Israeli archaeologists, the head of the Archaeology Department of Tel Aviv University.

The book surveys archaeological discoveries in the Holy Land from the prehistoric era down to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 587/6. Not surprisingly, the author's own significant work at Hazor, Arad, Ramat Rachel, Lachish, and Beersheba, as well as some of his noted debates with other archaeologists, receive full but not overfull treatment.

A high point is the illustrative material: 55 photographs, 88 line drawings and plans, as well as a fine set of 31 plates of flints and pottery characteristic of each successive period. One regrets, however, that the author did not have the opportunity to integrate these pottery plates (and occasional photographs) more fully into the text. Likewise, there are no footnotes at all to direct the reader to further details, or equally important, to conflicting points of view.

In short, there is much to be gained from this book, It will be especially useful when read as a "second professional opinion" in conjunction with other similar works.

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TRADITIONS OF MINISTRY: A HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY IN LUTHERAN THEOLOGY. By James H. Pragman. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1983. 208 pages. Paper. $15.95.

The task Pragman (Concordia College, Seward) assigns himself is to illustrate the constants and variables in the four centuries of Lutheran thinking on the ministry of the church — a topic still very much alive today.

He devotes a chapter each to Martin Luther, the Lutheran Confessors (the Book of Concord and its primary authors, Melanchthon and Chemnitz), Lutheran Orthodix Theologians, Lutheran Pietism (Spener and Muhlenberg), nineteenth century Lutheranism (including Loehe, Grabau, and Walther), and twentieth century Lutheranism. During those centuries debate has focused on questions of the relation of the universal priesthood and the office of the ministry, the nature of ordination, and women's ordination. All eras of Lutheran theology together afiirmed the validity of both the universal priesthood of all believers and the office of the ministry, and all have held high views of the ministry and its ordination.

Since Pragman's interest is primarily historical, he does not deal with biblical material nor does he attempt either to construct a new theology or advocate any position. What he does do is to dig into the primary and secondary literature to document what has been said and why, to illustrate how things have developed as they did (why the LCA has a "ministerium" but the LCMS does not), and to isolate those elements common to all Lutheranism. Unfortunately, the closer a descriptive study approaches the present, the less obvious the trends are and the less sharp the focus is — through Pragman does share recent issues and documents among Lutheran bodies in the USA. Unfortunately, too, this book does not address one question very much alive and debated in the church, the relation of the ministry and the ministries.

In presenting four centuries of very diverse material clearly and concisely, Pragman has performed a service to the church. This book is an introduction to Lutheran thinking on the ministry, a review of related theological questions, and a handy reference to four centuries of leading Lutheran theologians — to say nothing of being a model of the historian's task.

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BIRTH AND DEATH; BIOETHICAL DECISION—MAKING. By Paul D. Simmons. Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983. 276 pages. Paper. $13.95.

Paul Simmons has taken on the formidable task of relating insights from biblical theology to current problems in bioethics. It is a formidable task because the Bible addresses none of the complex problems raised by advances in modern medical technology. the book meets a great need in the church for some biblically-based reflections on ethical issues which affect every citizen. The literature in the field of bioethics is expanding by leaps and bounds, but it is dominated by utilitarian and deontological ethical theories which are rooted in philosophical wordviews. Rarely is there a reference to a Christian point of view, much less a biblical perspective.

The first two chapters of the book are devoted to a discussion of how the Bible is a resource for bioethical decision-making. Simmons makes a strong case for the relevance of the Bible for medical ethics, arguing that there is no irreconcilable tension between the Bible and science. The central issue, according to Simmons, is how one understands the authority of the Bible for decision-making. The author distinguishes three approaches — the prescriptive (rules), the deliberative (principles), and the relational (faith response). Each approach has some validity, but Simmons clearly favors the latter two, mainly because the prescriptive approach is too simplistic and lends itself too readily to legalism.

The remainder of the book is problem centered. Four topics have been chosen: abortion, euthanasia, biotechnical parenting, and genetics. In each of four chapters the author first sets the issue in

context by examing how the problem arose and what the moral issues are. Second, he explores the relevant bibilical teachings from a theological and ethical perspective. Finally, he states his own position on the issue and supports it on the basis of the biblical witness.

The methodology is admirable. The results are a bit uneven. For example, the abortion chapter includes some useful historical perspectives and some excellent material on the biblical view of a person. Yet when discussing abortion and the will of God, he states that "an abortion may be a particular response to the command of God to preserve the human race." (102) To suggest abortion as a method of population control without even a passing reference to education and methods of birth control as the primary response to overpopulation is irresponsible at best. The ame uneveness can be seen in the chapter on genetics. After noting the value of an eschatalogical perspective for understanding what it means to be human, a perspective often overlooked in the literature on bioethics, Simmons proceeds to draw out an image of "the new humanity" which is oblivious to the ambiguity of progress and the potential by the most well-intentioned of people to use knowledge and power in destructive ways.

I would recommend this book to pastors and intelligent laypeople who are looking for some help in addressing complex medical problems from a Christian point of view. The reader should be forewarned that Simmon's own position is consistently on the liberal side. Because his position is stated so clearly and forcibly, the book should provide a useful point of departure for some healthy discussions on important issues.

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WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT PAPAL PRIMACY? By J. Michael Miller. New York/ Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983. v and 102 pages. Paper $3.95.

Miller's brief volume provides a most helpful guide to and review of one of the most significant ecumenical achievements, at least theologically, of recent years – that Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Anglicans see a role for the papal ministry as a visible expression of the church's unity and mission.

Miller begins by examining "Our Roots: Polemical Traditions." While Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans have had well-articulated views of the papacy (or, better yet, well-entrenched positions), Miller points out how these two latter traditions, in spite of their polemical stances, contain "the basis for a positive re-evaluation" of papal ministry. Such a basis has been indeed exploited by the twentieth-century ecumenical movement.

The re-evaluation of traditional stances on the origins and necessity of the papacy presented in Chapters 2 and 3 has been a prudent and solid achievement of ecumenical scholarship on biblical, historical and theological levels. While admitting there is no compelling biblical evidence for the doctrine of papal primacy and ministry, a growing agreement has been reached regarding a "providential development" of this office for the church's faith and life. But, does such an agreement necessarily mean that the papacy will always remain a ministry in and for Christian communities?

Miller takes up this question in Chapter 4 of his book, "Church Without a Pope?" He notes that Lutheran willingness to reconsider the papacy contains a major *caveat.* It "is *not* the papcy as it now exists in the Catholic Church." (p. 62; my emphasis) Lutheran difficulties with the papal office center on the manner and authority of its exercise. But, if this office is renewed in the light of the Gospel and is faithful to this Gospel, Lutherans can see it exercising "a Petrine function within the Church," i.e., a ministry to the whole Church that serves and promotes and preserves the Church's oneness as well as assists in its mission. Miller examines this concept of the Petrine function in Chapter 5 from the viewpoint of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican theologies and observes that the theologians of these traditions have found such a concept "to be a positive contribution to ecumenical discussion on the papal primacy" and agree that the pope can fulfill such a function for the good of the Church.

In the concluding chapter of the book, "Where Do We Go From Here?", Miller proposes that remaining difficulties with the issue of papal primacy and ministry can be resolved with the aid of new theological terminology. For example, a key term such as "by divine institution" should be changed to "by divine design" if a theologian wishes to stress the derivation of an ecclesial structure from God's will and to interpret the consequent historical factors which have shaped and reshaped such a structure. Such a terminological change, argues Miller, can assist us in dealing with the knotty issue of historical origin and development of the Petrine function and its possible ecclesiological consequences.

Miller's proposal for the adoption of new or different theological terminology to resolve difficult ecumenical questions is the most problematic feature of the book. Such a proposal reflects, it seems, a traditional Western notion of language as a sign which gives us only hints of another reality, presumably "spiritual." I think that what we have in this final chapter is yet another example of the need, articulated by Eric Gritsch and Robert Jenson in *Lutheranism,* for a radical and decisive break with traditional Western ways of sorting out reality. Simply changing our terminology, as Miller proposes, will not do the job.

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THE LAST AGE OF MISSIONS. By Lawrence E. Keyes, Pasadena: Wm. Carey Library, 1983. xiv and 235 pages. Paper. $10.95.

For several years we have been hearing about the rise of Third World missionary sending agencies. However, hard, reliable data on these organizations, their number, locations, and effectiveness have proven almost as elusive as the quark.

Lawrence Keyes' new book represents the most ambitious attempt yet to supply the needed data. Almost half of the book consists of a voluminous set of appendices giving detailed information on 368 active Third World mission agencies. Thirty-one major non-Western research and study centers involved in world evangelization are also listed.

The author traces the development of world missions through four phases, as the center of the movement shifts from the Middle East, to Europe, to North America, and finally to the Third World. In noting the significance of this final phase, he suggests that Third World missionaries are often more effective, more economical, more plentiful, and more flexible organizationally than their western counterparts.

Keyes stresses the need for international and interracial partnership in missions so that the "receiving" churches also become "sending" churches and full partners with the West in the evangelization of the world. He traces the sometimes agonizingly slow process by which the world mission movement has gradually shifted from the paternalistic attitudes of previous generations to the present-day emphasis on partnership as the biblical model.

Up-to-date statistics, charts, and graphs provide a treasure trove of information on indigenous missionary agencies and their personnel. Detailed comparisons and analyses of the interrelationships of these data assist in visualizing emerging trends. The author concludes that Third World mission agencies are deeply committed to intensive pre-service and in-service training for their missionaries, to indigenous funding, and to partnership with both western and non-western agencies. He suggests that now is the deicisve hour for such partnership ventures.

Keyes' book is valuable, not only because it gives the latest and most complete information on the burgeoning phenomenon of Third World missionary agencies, but also because it helps to point the way to future partnerships in missions. In his insightful proposals, he both suggests what needs to be done, and provides guidelines as to how to proceed.

This book will be of special interest to teachers and students of missions, as well as to church and mission agency executives charged with charting the course of further missionary advance.

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Briefly Noted

Ugarit and the Old Testament. By Peter C. Craigie (Eerdmans, $5.95). C. provides a competent and non-technical introduction to the archaeological and literary history of the ancient city of Ugarit. Hundreds of texts have been discovered there since 1929, now paralleled in part by the finds at Ebla and a small town near Ugarit called Ras Ibn Hani. The author evaluates nine cases in which Ugaritic has been used to illuminate the Old Testament, showing the excesses and mistakes of past scholars, but also the genuine advances that have come from the comparative method.

Introducing the Holy Land: A Guidebook for First-Time Visitors. By J. Maxwell Miller. (Mercer, $13.95). Miller, a leading archaeologist and historian, presents a most useful guidebook that has been tested in annual trips led by him to the Holy Land. After a presentation of appropriate background materials (on the rediscovery of Palestine by explorers and archaeologists, and a summary of the current political status), Miller guides the reader on five itineraries (two in Jordan, one in Jerusalem, and a northern and southern trek in Israel). The book is well stocked with outline histories, chronological charts, and a glossary of geographical terms. You guessed it—don't leave home without it!

Plants of the Bible. By Michael Zohary. (Cambridge, $16.95). Let the author describe his own work: "Part one comprises a comprehensive description of the Holy Land, its landforms, soil, climate and vegetal landscapes . . . Particularly stressed is the role of plants in religion and worship, folklore, poetry and art, agriculture and trade. Part two—All the Plants in the Bible—groups them into natural, agricultural, and morphological units. Relevant citations from the Bible accompany the discussion of each plant, and its life history is described in terms of botany, geography, and use." Don't forget the 200 superb full-color plates!

The Dawn of Qumran. By Ben Zion Wachholder. (Hebrew Union College Press/KTAV, $25.00). On the basis of the Temple Scroll, which Wachholder calls the Qumranic Torah, the author lays out a number of new historical interpretations of the community which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. He sees the Qumranic Torah as a kind of constitution for the sect, authored by the Teacher of Righteousness, and he identifies passages in the rabbinic literature as allusions to the Sadducees as successors to the Qumranic sect. While most scholars believe that the community responsible for the scrolls ended about 70 C.E., Wachholder holds that recognizable successors continued for almost 1,000 years thereafter. This monograph should be the focus for extensive and heated discussions.

Ben Sira's View of Women: A Literary Analysis. By Warren C. Trenchard. (Scholars Press, $15.75). In this dissertation (the footnotes are almost as extensive as the text) Trenchard concludes that Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) is personally negative toward women (he speaks of the good and bad wife, the adultress and prostitute, and the daughter). Trenchard concludes: "He (Ben Sira) makes remarks about women that are among the most obscene and negative in ancient literature." Left uninvestigated are the reasons for Ben Sira's misogyny and the effect of his negative thinking on later Jewish and Christian writers.

Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography. Volume III. (JSOT Press, $12.95). This work is a series of essays which attempt to define the exegetical term midrash, to illustrate how it was used within Judaism, and then to look at the gospels themselves in light of midrash and Jewish historiography. The conclusion derived is fairly conservative: "At least we feel able to claim on the basis of what this volume has shown that a creativity in the gospels which sits loose to the historicity of the events and

sayings recorded would need to be proved from the gospels themselves rather than assumed on the basis of 'how Jews wrote history'."

One of the frustrations of students and teachers alike is that seminal studies that change the direction of research in a given area are usually buried in expensive (and for the student, even esoteric) journals, often in a foreign tongue. Fortress Press of Philadelphia and SPCK of London have inaugurated a new series that promises to offer significant aid in making such studies more easily available: **Issues in Religion and Theology.** Two important collections for teaching the New Testament are among the early volumes. The first volume, **The Messianic Secret** ($6.95), edited by Christopher Tuckett, includes nine key essays for the interpretation of Markan Christology, published between 1958 and 1976. Four are translated from the German. The editor provides an introduction setting the essays into the broader picture of Markan studies in the wake of William Wrede, an excellent selected bibliography, and a table identifying the contributors. Volume three in the series, **The Interpretation of Matthew** ($6.95), edited by Graham Stanton, contains eight essays, five of them originally in German. Two of them have given strong direction to subsequent work, though written a generation and more ago: Ernst von Dobschutz's essay "Matthew as Rabbi and Catechist" (1928) and Otto Michel's "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel: a Contribution to the History of the Easter Message" (1950). It will be extremely useful to have them in English for students. Graham provides the same aids to the reader that are found in volume 1. Long may the series flourish. (Edgar Krentz)

Das Alte Testament: Eine Einf0hrung. By Rolf Rendtorff. (Neukirchener Verlag, DM 34). Rendtorff, professor at Heidelberg, has produced an "introduction" in three parts. First he sketches a history of Israel, beginning with the biblical text and supplementing it with extra biblical materials. Next he attempts to reconstruct the life and institutions of Israel, discussing items like law, the cult, kingship, and prophecy. Throughout he proceeds out from the biblical record, dramatically unfolding a picture of the great number of genres contained in the Old Testament. In Part III he interprets the present shape of each of the biblical books, thus presenting a more wholistic approach than is found in many introductions. Rendtorff, of course, subscribes to the critical approach and his own views on the origin of the Pentateuch represent a kind of fragmentary hypothesis. But in this textbook he places very heavy emphasis on the theological editing that led to the canonical form of the text. Dare we hope for an early translation?

Mesopotamien und das Volk Gottes. By Kurt Bergerhof. (Neukirchener Verlag, DM 39.80). This book traces the interaction of the Mesopotamian civilization with the people of God, an influence that was both stimulant and temptation. Through all the spiritual, political, and military conflicts Israel had with the Mesopotamian powers, one thing remained constant: God's fidelity to his elect people in order to make them a sign for the nations. Special chapters are dedicated to creation theology in both cultures and to Israel's struggles with the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. 60 color photographs grace the text.

Qumran. By Phillip R. Davis. (Eerdmans, $6.95). Here is a splendid account of the people who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, including a description of the archeological ruins, the theology and history of the Essenes, and the significance of their priceless manuscripts. Clear black and white photographs and a remarkably uncomplicated text help the reader to appreciate the fresh understandings of early Judaism and its relationship to Christianity that have resulted from the study of these sensational finds during the last thirty-five years. This book is part of a series entitled Cities of the Biblical World.

The Damascus Covenant. An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document". By Philip R. Davies. (JSOT Press, $18.50). The Damascus Document is one of the medieval manuscripts discovered in the Cairo Genizah and first published in 1910. Davies offers a new interpretation of its redaction, with extensive treatment of its allusions to history and its laws.

Though fragments of CD (the standard abbreviation for this document) are found at Qumran, he believes that CD as a whole is older than the Qumran community. The CD community may have originated in the Eastern Diaspora, but eventually found its way to Palestine, where it provided the ideological roots for the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Qumran community arose because of the arrival of one who claimed to be the Teacher expected at the end of days. Davies believes that CD provides more valuable historical information than that which has been inferred from the Pesharim of Qumran. The book concludes with a copy of the text in Hebrew and a new English translation.

The New Testament and Homosexuality. By Robin Scroggs. (Fortress, $14.95). After a careful study of homosexuality in the NT and in the ancient world, Scroggs concludes that what the NT opposed was pederasty, primarily in its more sordid and dehumanizing dimensions. He, therefore, argues that there is not a reasonable similarity between the NT and today's model of homosexual relationships, at least as they are understood within certain Christian groups. NT judgments, he continues, should no longer be used in denominational discussions about homosexuality and should in no way be a weapon to justify refusal of ordination. It is important to note that Scroggs is not homosexual and that he admits the difficult situation in which the church finds itself. He merely affirms that biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate.

Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. Revised by Frederick W. Danker. (Chicago, $20). Danker, Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of New Testament, has revised this abridged lexicon and brought it into conformity with the latest edition of the authoritative Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker lexicon. While the vocabulary here is restricted to the New Testament and gives only the "bare" meanings of words, making the larger lexicon still indispensable, the author has also slipped in new information not available when BAGD went to press. Inclusion of English language derivatives will enhance the user's knowledge of Greek and English.

The Bible and Liberation. Edited by Norman K. Gottwald. (Orbis, Cloth, $35; Paper, $18.95). While liberation themes are common among the twenty-eight articles reprinted in this anthology, a more unbiased sociological method is also explained and demonstrated. The article entitled "Were the Early Christians Middle-Class?" (by Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor Robert H. Smith and first published in *Currents*), for example, is neither liberationist or Marxist since it answers the question in its title with a solid yes. Central issues in this anthology include reactions to Gottwald's own major monograph *The Tribes of Yahweh,* discussions of social class as a hermeneutical factor, and the Bible in political and Marxist thought.

Julius Wellhausen and His Prolegomena to the History of Israel. Edited by Douglas A. Knight (Semeia 25; Scholars Press, $9.95). The eight essays in this volume commemorate the 100th anniversary of Wellhausen's epoch-making publication. Though American scholarship has often been highly critical of him, this volume demonstrates why biblical studies after him were different for everyone. His brilliance and clarity were shadowed, alas, by many negative comments about Judaism. Rudolf Smend, who has collected some 700 letters of Wellhausen, also reveals his personal side. Wellhausen found teaching in Marburg free and natural while the Göttingen ambiance made one aloof and pretentious. Wellhausen wrote: "In Marburg everyone can say to his colleague: you are a blockhead. In Göttingen everyone carries around with him a big secret."

Atlas of the Bible. (Eerdmans, $7.95) Fifteen double-page maps will help non-specialists or children read their Bible with a clear grasp of what happened in Palestine and how this was affected by the great surrounding powers. A thirty-two page gazetteer provides bare bones information about all the important places. The initiated, who want complete information and the most authoritative and up-to-date maps, will still choose the **Macmillan Bible Atlas** (Macmillan, $25.95) or the **Student Map Manual** (Pictorial Archive, $30).

Psalms 1 and 2. By Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P.. (Michael Glazier, each volume $9.95). The author of this paperback, popular commentary has four goals: to study the psalms in their social-religoius setting; to learn the literary form and structure of each psalm; to unpack key words; and to clarify the value of the psalms for public worship, private devotion, and social-moral questions. He seeks to put this information to the service of faith, church life, worship, piety and contemplation. Solid information for the busy pastor! Other recent publications in the "Old Testament Message" commentary series, written by Roman Catholics, include **Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers; 1-2, Samuel; 1-2 Kings, Intertestamental Literature** (each $8.95) and **Sirach** [= Ecclesiastes] ($7.95).

Joshua, World Biblical Commentary 7. By Trent C. Butler. (Word, $18.95). **Psalms 101-150,** Word Biblical Commentary 21. By Leslie C. Allen. (Word, $18.95). The publisher's boast that this series offers the best in evangelical critical scholarship for a new generation is justified! Butler offers a dazzling review of 20th century scholarship on the conquest and amphictyony but errs in his hesitancy to choose decisvely among the hypotheses. On Jericho, for example, he says that archeological evidence is either an open question or in conflict with the narratives in Joshua. Note the series of questions and evasions on p. xxxv. But his massive acquaintance with the secondary literature, his freedom from any party line of interpretation, his skillful tracing of the book through oral stages, cultic use, redaction by a compiler, to its final canonical shape, and his obvious commitment to the divine origin of Scripture make this an excellent option for the congregational or pastoral library. Commentaries on the Psalter often seem to run out of gas about Ps. 100, so the editors of the Word Commentary are to be commended for assigning the task to three different scholars (for our endorsement of Craigie's commentary on Pss. 1-50 *see Currents,* Dec., 1983, p. 382). Allen's procedure is impressive: a fresh translation; notes of text critical and philological importance (excellent, but those without Hebrew knowledge can skip them and still get much from the commentary); form critical and structural observations; and "explanation" in which Allen gives in clear narrative form his interpretation of the Psalm from beginning to end. The three-volume commentary on Psalms in this series promises to be the pick of the litter and state of the art for the next decade. We wait eagerly for Psalms 51-100 (by Marvin E. Tate).

With this issue *Currents* is switching to a more efficient computer mailing system. It would be helpful to us if you would examine your address label to make sure we have your correct name and address. If we have made an error, please do not hesitate to point it out to us. When sending in a correction or change of address, we ask that you include your most recent address label. The *Currents* staff hopes that our new system will help us serve you better.

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The Tale of a Third City

William E. Lesher

President, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

It may be a remnant of our tribal past or perhaps a part of our programmed present that makes it so natural for us, in almost any field of human endeavor to divide people, issues or places into categories, define them, label them, and then think or act toward them in a prescribed way. So the inhabitants of the earth and the places they live have been divided primarily between east and west and then sub-divided into one of four other worlds. People carry political labels, personality labels, and of course religious labels. The practice makes for easy reference and convenience in communications but it regularly results in gross inaccuracies that stifles understanding and blunts human relationships.

One of the latest lines to be drawn in the religious community is between the so-called Evangelicals and the Ecumenicals. The two groups have even been assigned two cities, the sites of two conferences, the contents of which define the groups and the positions they are presumed to defend. Melbourne (Australia) is the label associated with the ecumenicals and Pattaya (Thailand) is identified with the evangelicals. Mebourne's theme, "Your Kingdom Come," focused on the relation of the gospel to the poor. It said that an empathetic understanding of the poor is an integral part of any adequate understanding of the kingdom, and that solidarity with the poor and their struggles for survival and a semblance of human dignity is the mission of the church. Critics of Melbourne seldom hear the defenders of Melbourne describe the emphasis on the eucharist and the relation of the theology of the cross to the mission of the church which were also prominent emphases at the conference. But, the art of categorization does not thrive on such subtleties.

The Pattaya Conference was gathered around the theme "How shall they Hear." It focused on the urgency of evangelism in the world today, on ways of reaching the unreached and on the nature of cross-cultural evangelism. Participants at Pattaya acknowledged the structural dimension of sin, the powers and principalities of the world that create injustice, but their driving concern was for the heart of the gospel message, for what God has done in Jesus Christ and the utter urgency of communicating that message in an understandable way to every human being who has not heard it. There is, according to Pattaya, no way to avoid this obligation that faith places on those who have heard and believe.

Well, which side are you on?

Or, do you resist the choices too?

My sense is that most of us in the Lutheran churches moving toward union feel boxed in by either option and authentically insist that our theology and experience makes us as passionate as any of the participants at Melbourne and Pattaya for a blending of both the evangelical and the ecumenical emphasis.

Indeed, this is what did happen at a third city, Jacksonville Beach, Florida, where a group of Lutherans met, in December, 1983, to address the issues of evangelism and mission. Neither option being offered was accepted completely but a third way was pursued. A working document that struggled directly with the evangelical/ecumenical issue stated that "mission under the sign of the cross of Christ means that evangelism that announces God's acceptance of sinners and social action on behalf of the poor and oppressed are both equally legitimate aspects of the total mission of the church. The cross of Christ, and not various ideologies, is the motive power of the church's participation in the struggles for peace and justice in the situations of hostility and brutality. In Jesus Christ we witness the total love of God that seeks justice for the poor as well as justification for sinners."

Jacksonville Beach is not a label like Melbourne and Pattaya, but it is a healthy sign that the insights of both cities can be joined in a full and faithful response of the church to the conditions of this time.

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